

**The London School of Economics and Political Science**

**The democratic merits of partisanship:  
A comparative analysis of party member  
discourse in France and Hungary**

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# Abstract

In recent years, a number of democratic theorists have suggested a range of principles that parties and partisans should follow to make a positive contribution to liberal democracy, thus establishing a normative ideal for democratic partisanship. This thesis addresses two questions. First, *to what extent does real-world partisanship—understood as the array of practices and discourses that are attached to party leadership, membership or identification—meet these theoretical standards of democratic partisanship?* Second, *how can we explain variations in the extent to which real-world partisans uphold these standards?*

I focus on two specific standards for democratic partisanship. Partisans should first demonstrate *cohesiveness*, defined as the capacity to put forth programs of government grounded in clearly defined normative commitments and distinct from those of their opponents. Second, partisans should display a *commitment to political pluralism*, demonstrating respect for political opponents and endorsing the ineliminable character of political disagreement.

To answer my first research question, I refine these two standards into a series of more specific criteria, and assess the extent to which grass-root partisan *discourse* in two country case studies, France and Hungary, meet these criteria. I draw on original data from 28 focus groups conducted in 2013 with a total of 118 young party activists from four different parties. The data is analysed using the text-analysis software NVivo, on the basis of a coding scheme derived from my theoretical framework.

The analysis of the coded data shows that French partisans fare better than Hungarian partisans on the criteria established. I also find variations in the extent to which partisans within each country uphold the standards. In response to the second research question, I develop some tentative explanations on the reasons for these variations. The qualitative analysis of the interview transcripts reveals that certain types of cultural resources and external events inhibit democratic forms of partisan discourse, while others enable them.

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# Introduction

In recent years, a number of democratic theorists have suggested a range of principles that parties and partisans should follow to make a positive contribution to liberal democracy, thus establishing a normative ideal for democratic partisanship. This thesis addresses two research questions. First, *to what extent does real-world partisanship* - understood as the array of practices and discourses that are attached to party leadership, membership or identification - *meet these theoretical standards of democratic partisanship*? Second, *how can we explain variations in the extent to which real-world partisans uphold these standards*?

To answer these questions, I focus on two specific standards for democratic partisanship discussed by this literature in democratic theory. I derive a series of operationalizable criteria from these standards, and then evaluate the extent to which grass-root partisan discourse in two country case studies - France and Hungary - meets these criteria. For this purpose, I draw on original data from 28 focus groups that I conducted in 2013 with a total of 118 French and Hungarian young party activists. They were all members of the two main government parties in France (the *Parti Socialiste* and *Union pour un Mouvement Populaire*), and Hungary (the *Magyar Szocialista Párt* and the *Fiatal Demokraták Szövetsége*).<sup>1</sup>

The overarching objective of this thesis is to act as a bridge between the empirical study of political parties and the expanding branch of normative democratic theory that takes partisanship as its object. My premise is that both sub-disciplines gain from engaging in greater dialogue. Party studies can benefit from being approached from an explicitly normative perspective, and normative democratic theory can be refined by being more directly confronted with actual manifestations of partisanship. I thus introduce this thesis by situating it in this broader literature. In the three following sections, I emphasise the existing links between the empirical study of political parties and contemporary democratic theory, and highlight the necessity of greater dialogue between these disciplines. In the last section of the introduction I show how my own

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<sup>1</sup> The UMP changed its name to *Les Républicains* on May 28, 2015.

project bridges both literatures, and outline the path I have chosen to answer my research questions.

## **I. PARTY STUDIES AND DEMOCRATIC THEORY: A DIVORCE PERPETUATED**

### **1. The isolation of party studies from contemporary democratic theory**

#### ***a. Normative assumptions in the party literature***

Nancy Rosenblum has spoken of political parties as the "darlings of political science" (Rosenblum, 2008, p. 3). The industry of party and electoral studies has grown consistently since the beginning of the 20th century, booming in the early 1950s and still thriving today (for quantitative assessments of these trends, see Caramani & Hug, 1998; Reiter, 2006). The greater share of the contemporary literature takes interest in two distinct aspects of partisan practice. First, patterns of voting behaviour and partisan attachments among mass publics. Second, the behaviour of parties in both parliamentary and governmental institutions, including patterns of coalition-building and parliamentary voting.

This academic interest flows from the integral role political parties play in the functioning of representative democracy. They are present and indispensable at every step of the electoral process: to organise and raise funds for campaigns, to offer citizens platforms capable of aggregating their dispersed preferences, and for the effective translation of electoral majorities into governing coalitions. They are also central agents of government in democratic polities, controlling the political agenda, forming majorities in parliament to support the government in power, and keeping majorities in check when in opposition. Without parties these processes would be incoherent, disorganised, and incomprehensible for the lay citizen (Goodin, 2008, pp. 204-223). Independent representatives would have no common platform to campaign on with others, governments would be perpetually unstable, and majorities would need to be re-negotiated over each new bill.

If parties fulfil such irreplaceable functions, this also implies that what they do or fail to do has consequences for the vitality of modern democracy. The empirical studies that document changes in party organisation and appeals over the last decades have repeatedly made this point. Consider, for instance, the literature on 'catch-all' and 'cartel' parties, which has described the weakening of European parties' ideological

profile and the disappearances of mass-membership based partisan organisations (Dalton & Wattenberg, 2000; Katz & Mair, 1995, 2009; Kirchheimer, 1966; Mair, 2003a). Many accounts picture these transformations as fuelling an increasingly acute democratic deficit in contemporary societies. Those who endorse the cartel-party thesis, for instance, often present these new partisan forms as "too blunt an instrument to act as a connection between society and the state, and they question parties' general contributions to democracy's well-being" (Allern & Pedersen, 2007). Some scholars, such as Mair or Hay, have linked the retreat of citizens from the political sphere to the disengagement of elites from their functions of representation and mobilisation, and argued that these dynamics are mutually re-enforcing over time (Hay, 2007, pp. 54-60; Mair, 2003a, pp. 13-14; 2006, pp. 48-51).

Changes in the style of partisan communication have also been criticised for their negative impact on democratic processes. The fact that political elites in established democracies increasingly engage in aggressive, personal and empty attacks against political adversaries has also been associated with societal trends in citizen disengagement and radicalisation (Adam & Maier, 2010; Ansolabehere, Iyengar, Simon, & Valentino, 1994; Kahn & Kenney, 1999; McAllister, 2007; J. B. Thompson, 2000, pp. 111-113). Finally, contemporary sociology has recurrently justified its interest in new forms of political participation with the idea that traditional institutions of representation are now failing to fulfil their past functions (Della Porta & Rucht, 2013; Della Porta & Tarrow, 2004; Norris, 2002, 1999). Part of this literature has given up on parties altogether, arguing that local and transnational participatory forms of political activism can form the basis of a new democratic model, one that is better adapted to the post-industrial age (see for instance Warren, 2002).

These accounts of partisan change are in essence normative: scholars do not simply describe what *is*, but instead critically account for contemporary partisanship in light of what they believe *ought to be*. This is the case for any assessment of the democratic character of a given actor, or for any assessment of the democratic consequences of an actor's doings. Indeed, as explained by Skinner, democracy is always an "evaluative-descriptive" term. To use this term is "not only to describe the state of affairs, but also (and *eo ipso*) to perform the speech-act of commending it" (Skinner, 1973, p. 298). If we view democracy as desirable for its own sake, if we assume that parties are central to democracy, then it is also crucial that we be able to formulate rigorous assessments on the democratic contributions of political parties.

***b. A structural bias against normative theorizing***

In practice, however, the basis and criteria on which party scholars make assessments of the democratic contribution of political parties fail to be made explicit. What authors consider as the end-result of these changes in partisan appeals and organisation, for instance the disengagement or radicalization of citizens, is generally taken as sufficient proof of their problematic nature. It remains unclear what standard is being used when scholars speak of partisanship as either conducive to, or impinging on, the vitality of contemporary democracy.

The main reason for this lies in the widespread divide that still exists between empirical studies of politics and normative theorizing. Much of the political sciences still see their role as engaging in facts, not values, as one of description and not prescription. As stated by Gerring and Yesnovits, "(o)ne either studies 'democracy' or empirical instances of democracy, but not both" (Gerring & Yesnowitz, 2006, p. 103). Importantly, this division is particularly present in the study of political parties (for an overview, see Allern & Pedersen, 2007; Shapiro, 2002; van Biezen & Saward, 2008). As expressed by Katz, "although scholars of parties often make introductory reference to their centrality to modern democracy, they rarely go beyond this to consider the distinctions among varieties of normative democratic theories" (Katz, 2006, p. 44).

The acuteness of this divorce can first be explained by the fact that, since the behavioural revolution of the 1960s, much of the empirical work on political parties relies on the minimalist theories of democracy that flourished in the 1950s and 1960s (see for instance Dahl, 1956; Downs, 1957; Eckstein, 1961; Schumpeter, 1956 [1942]). One characteristic that these theories have in common is to claim anormativity (for a critical overview, see Pateman, 2007 [1970]; Skinner, 1973). They endeavour to account for democracy as it is, rather than how it should be, and thus conceive it as a system of well-designed institutions within which political leadership is chosen and regularly renewed through competitive elections. In this configuration, political parties are no more than coalitions of self-interested politicians in open competition to attract the favours of self-interested citizens with fixed preferences. As for partisans respecting the minimal rules of the democratic game, it is seen to depend on the prior existence of a well-designed system of institutional incentives as well as sustained partisan competition (for a critical overview, see Herman, 2015; for an emblematic example of this argument, see Przeworski, 1991).

It is of some consequence, then, that the majority of party studies relies on these theoretical frameworks. Minimalist democratic theory has shaped the ways in which parties have been studied: as institutions of the state and electoral machines rather than as "ideational facts" (Goodin, 2008, p. 214). The more affective and symbolic functions parties perform as institutions of political linkage have been subject to far less empirical examination (Kitschelt, 2010; van Biezen & Saward, 2008). Indeed, if political parties are "merely coalitions of individuals seeking to control government", their values and policies serve first and foremost "to maximise their share of the popular vote, or to perhaps create a minimum winning coalition of parties" (Vassalo & Wilcox, 2006, p. 414). By relying on such frameworks, party scholars also implicitly endorse the idea that in a modern, representative democracy, nothing more can be expected from parties than the perpetuation of a competitive struggle for the attention of free, independently minded voters. In doing so, they deprive themselves of the means to formulate theoretically informed assessments of the extent to which parties uphold democratic standards *beyond* the fulfilment of these minimal functions.

## **2. Partisanship as an object of theoretical enquiry**

### ***a. The place of party in deliberative and participatory democratic theory***

However, contemporary democratic theory also carries responsibility for the lack of interest that the empirical political sciences have shown towards it. Until recently, democratic theory has provided party studies with little tools to conduct rigorous evaluations of the democratic merits of partisanship. Much of the democratic theory that emerged in reaction to the minimalist turn of the 1960s has taken a gear towards establishing radical ideals for democracy, be they participatory or deliberative. In this movement, democratic theory has also disconnected itself from empirical concerns and findings and thus taken limited interest in parties and partisanship.

The renewed interest in direct and participatory democracy during the 1970s and early 1980s ignored or even explicitly shunned traditional institutions of representation, and focused instead on local, small-scale models of decision-making (see for example Barber, 1984; and the articles collected in Saward, 2007, part VII). A similar statement applies to Rawlsian political theory and much of the 'deliberative turn' of the 1980s and 1990s (see for instance Benhabib, 1996; Dryzek, 2000; Gutmann & Thompson, 1996; Rawls, 1993). These more abstract philosophical accounts give a limited role to partisanship. Deliberative accounts of democracy for instance have only

rarely cast parties as potential vehicles of deliberation, or discussed the possibility or implications of intra-party deliberation (for a critical overview, see Chambers, 2009; Rosenblum, 2008, pp. 254-317; van Biezen & Saward, 2008). While an increasing number of studies attempt to apply deliberative principles to 'real-life' situations, much of this research is either based on experimental studies with random, representative samples of citizens, or focuses on the effect of deliberation on local, small-scale decision-making processes (for examples, see Baccaro, 2001; Fishkin, Luskin, & Jowell, 2000; Roberts, 1997). Fewer studies use deliberative principles for studying aspects of the representative process, and national level 'mass politics' more generally (for exceptions, see Chambers, 1998; Steiner, Bächtiger, Spörndli, & Steenbergen, 2004).

Contemporary democratic theory has not only sidelined political parties as objects of enquiry, it has also cultivated a form of suspicion towards partisanship. The 'ideal speech' situation of deliberative democrats would involve actors with flexible positions, capable of compromise for the sake of the public good. At first glance, this ideal sits uncomfortably with partisans' *a priori* commitment to a given political identity (Gundersen, 2000; Muirhead, 2010). In a similar line of thought, Rawls distanced his 'high' political liberalism from the 'great game of politics'. In his work, party politics are associated with partiality, irrationality, and intransigence, and these characteristics are hardly compatible with offering 'public reasons' to justify one's claims, or more generally determining with others the 'common good' (Bonotti, 2014; Muirhead & Rosenblum, 2006, p. 99).

These concerns are in line with a longer tradition of anti-partisan defiance: since the 18th century, Western political thought has, with few exceptions, presented partisanship as a form of factionalism breeding unnecessary political divisions (for a detailed overview, see Rosenblum, 2008, pp. 23-163). These suspicions also echo a more pervasive contemporary culture of anti-partyism. Political representation in general, and political parties in particular, are rarely celebrated for their own sake. They are the second-best solutions for large-scale democratic government that one grudgingly resigns to. In contrast, direct and deliberative models of democracy embody higher, nobler ideals that citizens can yearn towards.

### ***b. An emerging theoretical literature on parties and partisanship***

Since the mid-2000s, a number of democratic theorists have thought to address these shortcomings, and take the traditional institutions of representative democracy as objects of normative theorizing. These works have for instance analysed the

functions that representation plays in democratic societies and the conditions under which claims to representation or the actions of representatives can more generally be deemed democratic (see for instance Disch, 2011; Dovi, 2007; Gutmann & Thompson, 2010, 2012; J. Mansbridge, 2003; Saward, 2009, 2010; Urbinati, 2000, 2006; Young, 2000). Within this larger body of work, a smaller number of theorists have addressed the place and contribution of parties and partisanship in democratic societies from an explicitly normative perspective (see Bonotti, 2011; Bonotti, 2012, 2014; Muirhead, 2006, 2014; Muirhead & Rosenblum, 2006, 2012; Rosenblum, 2008, 2014; White, 2014; White & Ypi, 2010, 2011; Wolkenstein, 2015). This literature constitutes a first theoretical basis on which empirical party studies can rest to formulate more rigorous normative assessments of real-world instances of political representation in general, and partisanship in particular. In the following sections, I briefly outline some of the main tenants these recent works in democratic theory have in common.<sup>2</sup>

A first common premise of this literature is to challenge the basic assumptions of minimalist theories of democracies. For the latter, representation is conceived under the principal-agent model, in which political parties compete to attract the votes of segments of the population with different fixed preferences (Downs, 1957). The recent theoretical literature on political representation and partisanship questions this “image of representation as substitution or identification” (Young, 2000, p. 123). Political participation, at both elite and citizen level, is seen to derive not solely from individual rationality, but also from a form of affective attachment to collective values. As for political representation, it is conceived as the product of ongoing interaction between representatives and constituents. Representatives do not simply mirror already existing political identities in the electorate. Rather, the process of representation is one in which the identities of both representative and citizens are mutually and continuously constituted (Saward, 2010; Urbinati, 2000). By casting wide appeals and promoting coherent programs, parties especially are seen to ‘give form’ to otherwise shapeless political identities, and put forth normative ideals that a multitude of citizens with disparate ideas or interests can converge on and identify with (White & Ypi, 2010).

In conceptualizing representation as a dialogue rather than a mirror, the recent theoretical literature on representation and partisanship also challenges the conceptual boundaries that have traditionally separated models of representative, direct or deliberative democracy. More specifically, representative democracy is only seen to

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<sup>2</sup> In Chapter 1 I will return to this literature in greater detail for the purpose of establishing my own theoretical framework.



fulfil its potential where citizens effectively engage this dialogue, and respond with acts of direct participation and deliberation to the representative claims that parties suggest (Urbinali, 2006, pp. 223-228; Young, 2000, pp. 129-133). At the level of normative theorizing therefore, "party democracy and popular democracy belong together and need no reconciliation: fundamentally, they are aligned" (Muirhead & Rosenblum, 2012, p. 100).

From this particular conception of representative democracy flow more ambitious functions for political parties than those set out by minimalist theories of democracy. If representation is a creative process, then the position of political parties in the public sphere—with privileged access to financial resources, media attention and state power—lends them a considerable amount of influence on the contours of public deliberation. As Schattschneider suggested over half a century ago, "the definition of the alternatives is the supreme instrument of power" (Schattschneider, 1960, p. 66). And when power is exercised in democratic societies this exercise comes with its particular obligations. The next task that this theoretical literature fulfils is thus to define the nature and content of the specific responsibilities that fall on partisans.

Schematically, these responsibilities can be grouped in two distinct categories, which I will return to in more detail in later chapters. First, as intermediaries between citizens and the state, political parties should act as effective agents of political representation, and thus justify their normative ideals and policies in such a way that citizens can engage with them (White & Ypi, 2010, 2011). To this extent, parties need to be 'bilingual': to speak not only the language of the state but also the language of civil society (Bonotti, 2011, pp. 20-22; Muirhead & Rosenblum, 2006, p. 104). Second, partisans in democratic societies are expected to defend their own convictions with respect to the principles of political pluralism. To this extent, they should renounce the holistic ideal of imposing their own viewpoint on society at large, and acknowledge the legitimacy of other, rival claims to representation in their own party system. This pluralistic outlook is central to a number of theories of partisanship. Rosenblum speaks of it as the 'moral distinctiveness of Party ID', Muirhead describes this pluralist outlook as the main characteristic of 'ethical partisanship' and for Bonotti, it is the central 'normative criteria' to establish the democratic character of partisanship (Bonotti, 2011; Muirhead, 2006, pp. 22-25; Rosenblum, 2008, pp. 362-368).

The purpose of these accounts is avowedly normative rather than descriptive. In other words, the above-mentioned traits are not conceived as default characteristics of real-world partisanship. As Muirhead warns us, "(o)ur appreciation of partisanship

should not extend to its every manifestation" (Muirhead, 2014). The literature rather serves the function of setting-up standards that real-world partisans can live up to, or fail to uphold. Partisanship is thus conceived as a double-edged sword for democracy. If the vitality of representative democracy depends on parties fulfilling these functions, then the failures and pathologies of partisanship bring their own democratic perils. Parties can exercise the power they dispose of for the best - engaging citizens and promoting political pluralism - or for the worse - fuelling disengagement and the radicalisation of political passions. Far from being apologetic of real-world parties, these theories offer tools for a constructive criticism of their actual doings.<sup>3</sup>

Finally, these theories of partisanship are not utopian: they do not aim to set up models that would be unreachable in practice, and would serve a function only as distant ideals. Their accounts are not only grounded in abstract principles of political philosophy, but on an understanding of the role that parties have played in the history of established democracies. In the 19th and early 20th century, party systems socialised the citizens of the Western world into mass democracy, and contributed to structure the ways in which we still understand politics (Campbell, Converse, Miller, & Stokes, 1960; Rokkan & Lipset, 1967). The gradual institutionalisation of party systems throughout the modern era is also inseparable from the emergence of a pluralist worldview and the sidelining of holistic conceptions of the common good (Daalder, 2002; Sartori, 1976; Scarrow, 2006). If, as Schattschneider stated "(t)he political parties created democracy and modern democracy is unthinkable save in terms of parties", then it is reasonable for us to be demanding of them (Schattschneider, 2009 [1942], p. 1). The theoretical literature on parties and partisanship thus seeks to highlight the potential of *actual* partisanship to contribute to representative democracy and to raise as a model what partisans can do *at their best*. Faced with the shortcomings of real-world partisans, we can stop dreaming of a democracy that would work without them. We are given the theoretical means to ask for "not less partisanship, but better partisanship" (Muirhead, 2014, p. 109).

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<sup>3</sup> To this extent, it is noteworthy that theorists on both sides of the Atlantic insist most on those characteristics of partisanship that they see missing in their own political environment. American theorists are especially aware of the dangers of extreme partisan polarisation and widespread disrespect for political opponents (see for instance Gutmann & Thompson, 2010, pp. 1132-1134; Muirhead & Rosenblum, 2012, pp. 102-103). This also explains why their theories are more directly centred on the importance of partisans upholding a pluralist ethic. On the other hand, European authors show more preoccupation for the failings of parties to put forward meaningful and clearly differentiated platforms (see for instance Bonotti, 2011, p. 23; White & Ypi, 2010, pp. 821-822; 2011, pp. 391-392). It is also in this light that one can read their theoretical focus on questions such as partisan political justification, or the crucial role of parties in engaging citizens in democratic politics.

### 3. The case for greater interdisciplinary dialogue

Neither the empirical political sciences, nor normative democratic theory, can on their own bring answers to the questions this thesis raises: *to what extent does real-world partisanship meet democratic standards?* and *How can we explain variations in the extent to which real-world partisans upholds these standards?* While the above-mentioned theorists have set forth tools that would allow empiricists to assess the practical contribution of political parties to democracy, this theoretical literature is still largely divorced from the empirical study of political parties. In this section, I briefly discuss the shortcomings of both sub-discipline in answering these questions within their own confines, and emphasise the necessity of establishing a dialogue between them for this very purpose. In this, I join a number of authors who have already argued that more exchanges between the empirical political sciences and contemporary democratic theory would benefit both disciplines (Allern & Pedersen, 2007; Gerring & Yesnowitz, 2006; Reiter, 2006, p. 617; Shapiro, 2002; van Biezen & Saward, 2008).

As emphasised earlier, party studies cannot rigorously evaluate the contribution of political parties to democracy without relying on normative theorizing. Given the widespread use of normative assumptions in the party studies, a more solid engagement with democratic theory would be justified first and foremost from the perspective of academic rigor and transparency. It would enable empiricists to make explicit the criteria and reasons according to which one ascribes the adjective 'democratic' to the actions of political parties, or to their consequences. As summarised by Gerring and Yesnowitz, "(t)here is nothing to be gained, and potentially a great deal to be lost, by smuggling in normative assumptions through the back door. Inexplicit normative theorizing is apt to be slipshod and escapes counter-arguments, for it rests beneath the surface" (Gerring & Yesnowitz, 2006, p. 108).

Yet, relying on normative theory would not only allow party studies to justify their normative assumptions. A more solid theoretical basis would also allow empiricists to address questions that they have until now sidelined, or only addressed indirectly. This normative basis is necessary to rigorously assess the contribution of real-world partisanship to democracy. As emphasised above, the young democratic theory on partisanship provides the principles on the basis of which party studies can derive more specific, operationalizable criteria to assess real-world partisanship. Once these standards are refined, and a methodology designed to apply them, numerous new questions become open to empirical examination. We could then enquire into the reasons that determine empirical variations on the standards established, or assess

correlations between the quality of partisanship and the quality of democracy in various countries.

At the same time, normative theories of partisanship would also gain from being applied empirically. We only have an imprecise idea of how well the standards set up in the literature are met in reality. Theorists can point to examples of extreme deviances from the ideal or to examples of model partisan behaviour. But even in these cases they neither justify nor operationalise their criteria in the rigorous manner that political science requires. Broader assessments of the capacity of partisans to reach these standards are necessarily cautious, and are of a very general nature. Given that real-world *variations* in the extent to which partisans uphold these standards are also not evaluated as a result, these theories have little to say on the potential reasons that could explain variations in the democratic quality of partisanship across different parties or countries.<sup>4</sup> These are all empirical questions that do require a research design, careful case-selection and the nitty-gritty analysis of data that political scientists—rather than theorists—carry out.

Some of the shortcomings of these theories of partisanship come from the fact that they have not been subjected to empirical examination. Our lack of empirical knowledge about the democratic merits of actual partisanship sets limits to the normative contribution of these theories. If we do not know the extent to which real-world partisans meet the standards, it is also harder to know where to set the bar for them. This might partly explain why theories of partisanship often seem to oscillate between the normative and descriptive. At times they describe the democratic functions that parties have fulfilled or are currently fulfilling, at others they set an ideal that partisans should strive towards. When theorists speak of partisans 'at their best', do they mean to say democratic forms of partisanship will always be exceptional in empirical practice? Or are they setting a standard that we can hope and expect all partisans to reach?

The nature of the relationship between partisanship and democracy remains insufficiently specified as a result. Given our lack of empirical knowledge on these questions, existing theories cannot be so specific as to tell us what are the normal and acceptable failings of partisanship, and conversely, at what point do these failings

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<sup>4</sup> Some works nevertheless draw hypotheses on this last issue. Rosenblum for instance argues that we can expect more compliance on the standards she sets up among lay supporters than among elites or party members (Rosenblum, 2008, pp. 356-368). Gutmann and Thomson distinguish between periods of campaigning and periods of governing, the latter being more conducive to respectful behavior towards opponents than the former (Gutmann & Thompson, 2010, 2012).

become problematic for democracy itself. The literature gives us categorical answers on extreme cases, where the empirical evidence is sufficiently blatant. Parties that resort to violence, for instance, are considered as harmful to democracy (see for instance Bonotti, 2011, p. 20; Rosenblum, 2008, p. 363). More borderline cases, however, are addressed in far more vague terms. At what point does a populist rhetoric of disrespect for opponents, for instance, become a problem for democracy? What are the mechanisms by which democracy is affected by such a discourse? These theoretical refinements would also require to study empirically the existing dynamics between the quality of democracy and the quality of partisanship.

Finally, an empirical application of these theories could sensitize this literature to contextual, and especially cultural, factors. Theories of partisanship are, to a large extent, 'culture-blind'. They often draw on examples or counterexamples from their own political environment, predominantly the established democracies of the United States and Europe. But they only rarely discuss the particular context of established, liberal democracies within which these examples are set, or the impact of this context on the terms of their frameworks. It remains to be seen, for instance, whether these frameworks would be applicable in emergent and less established democracies. Or whether cultural factors could influence the extent to which real-world partisanship upholds the standards established. These issues can, again, only be resolved with a more thorough examination of the conditions within which 'good partisanship' thrives or recedes in the real world.

As appears from this section, a dialogue between empirical party studies and normative political theory would be beneficial to both disciplines. It would serve to "trace and express links between democracy as an existing practice and democracy as an unfilled ideal" (van Biezen & Saward, 2008, p. 21). These disciplinary exchanges would further our empirical knowledge of the extent to which political parties contribute to democracy, as well as help us refine the theoretical premises on which we can evaluate these contributions. In the following section of this chapter, I explain how I intend to initiate this dialogue and present the steps I have taken to answer my research questions.

### III. BUILDING THE BRIDGE: A STUDY OF THE DEMOCRATIC MERITS OF REAL-WORLD PARTISANSHIP

To re-iterate, my study addresses two main research questions. First, *to what extent does real-world partisanship* - loosely understood as the array of practices and discourses that are attached to party leadership, membership or identification - *meet theoretical standards of democratic partisanship*? Second, *how can we explain real-world variations in which real-world partisans uphold these standards*? To answer these questions, I set up a series of specific criteria on the basis of the theoretical literature on parties and partisanship. I then apply them to the study of grass-root partisan discourse in two country case studies - France and Hungary. By establishing a dialogue between the empirical study of political parties and normative theories of partisanship, my thesis aims to contribute to both bodies of literature. In the following sections I provide an outline of the remainder of the thesis.

#### 1. Theoretical framework

The first step is to set up sufficiently specific criteria on the basis of which to assess the contribution of partisanship to democracy. This is the objective of **Chapter 1**. As emphasised above, the theoretical literature on parties and partisanship is not designed to be applied empirically. It rather makes a broad defence of the role that parties can and should play in a representative democracy, and thus present us with broad guidelines of appreciation of partisanship. One task this thesis performs is thus to confront these different accounts in the literature, and categorize their arguments. I then refine their propositions and on their basis suggest a series of limited and operationalizable criteria to evaluate the democratic merits of real-world partisanship.

In line with the recent theoretical literature on political representation, I conceptualise democracy in a more stringent way than the minimalist frameworks that most party studies rely on. There are two characteristics that I focus on especially. First, the *vitality* of representative democracy requires the participation and deliberation of its citizens and, more generally, their belief in "the worth of engaging with collective political agency so as to exercise the fundamental democratic principle of collective self-rule" (White & Ypi, 2010, p. 809). Second, the *endurance* of liberal democracy requires that a pluralist ethos or 'way of life' be shared by its members and, more specifically, that they consider the free expression of a plurality of values, opinions and beliefs as legitimate or even desirable.

According to contemporary democratic theory, parties play a key role in both of these aspects of democracy. The main argument here, already emphasised above, is that they do more than simply reflect the fixed preferences of citizens: they also contribute to shape them. They thus have the power to further citizens' political engagement, and the development of a pluralist ethos, but they can conversely fuel citizen disengagement and the radicalization of political passions. To this extent, the vitality and endurance of representative democracy is partly dependent on partisans' doings and failings.

My first chapter summarizes the different suggestions of theorists concerning what parties can do to contribute positively to these dimensions of liberal democracy. On the basis of this literature, I focus on two specific standards for democratic partisanship. First, to further citizen engagement, parties should campaign on the basis of claims that display the general quality of *cohesiveness*. To be cohesive, parties should articulate a strong idea about the nature of the common good with a program of government, both of which should be clearly differentiated from the ideas and policies of their opponents. Second, to further democracy as a way of life parties should themselves display a form of *commitment to political pluralism* both in their attitudes towards political opposition and in their attitudes towards political disagreement. Starting from these two general characteristics, I derive more specific criteria to evaluate the extent to which real-world partisanship upholds these democratic standards.

## 2. Research design

**Chapter 2** sets up a research design appropriate to the empirical application of this theoretical framework. The main challenge that I had to address stems from the very problem that motivates this study: the absence of an established, well-accepted scale for evaluating the democratic merits of partisanship. The Freedom House ratings, for instance, provide such a scale for measuring the institutional performance of democracies: they attribute the highest possible score to the most advanced democracies in the world, and the lowest possible score to the most authoritarian regimes. We can assume that the extent to which partisans will uphold the standards of democratic partisanship will also vary across different countries, parties or individuals. Yet in the absence of available data on this question, we do not know, unlike institutional performance, what the 'maximum' and 'minimum' of democratic

partisanship look like. This also means that if we consider a given partisan at random, we cannot locate the democratic merits of his discourse in a broader universe of cases.

To address this challenge I adopt a *comparative* approach: I compare patterns of partisan discourse across four different parties in two different countries. I choose two European countries—France and Hungary—which score very differently on institutional standards of democracy. In the absence of available comparative data, I make an informed guess and expect variations on institutional indicators for democracy to be mirrored by variations in the democratic quality of partisan discourse. With this choice of case studies, I aim to provide an initial estimate of the degree of variation in the democratic merits of partisanship within the common political space of the EU. Given that France fares among the highest on institutional standards, and Hungary among the lowest, we can also expect partisanship to be among the most democratic in France and the least in Hungary. To this extent, the absence of an established scale justifies selecting my cases on the dependent variable.

I chose to organise 28 group discussions, seven groups in each party, each involving between three and six young members from the same local party branch. This amounted to a total of 117 participants, and produced a considerable quantity of data. The discussions lasted between one and two hours and were structured around a series of twelve cards each representing a specific area of public policy. The discussion guidelines were designed to encourage a conversation in which participants would have as much autonomy as possible. I thus chose to encourage a general discussion over my participants' assessments of partisan agreements and disagreements on these twelve areas of public policy they were asked to consider. I also sought to obtain data that would allow me to evaluate democratic partisanship without having to ask participants directly about the extent to which they uphold its standards. Asking my participants to discuss the different cards I gave them to examine, I could then analyse the ways in which they justified the positions of their own party on different issues, and examine the ways they talked about their political opponents in this process.

The 28 group discussions were transcribed verbatim, and analysed through a process of *coding*. This process was carried out using NVivo, a Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS). As I explain in Chapter 2, the coding scheme applied to the transcripts is directly based on the theoretical framework outlined earlier. In extracting results from this coding process, I compared the occurrence and co-occurrences of different codes according to nationality (whether the groups were conducted in France or Hungary) and according to partisan affiliation



(whether the groups were affiliated with the PS, the UMP, the MSzP or the Fidesz). To this extent, it was possible to establish variations in patterns of speech across partisan groupings of different nationalities and political affiliation.

My choice of case studies and my focus groups were also designed to provide tentative answers to my second research question: *how can we explain variations in the extent to which real-world partisanship uphold democratic standards?* As I emphasised earlier, we can expect the discourse of French partisans to be more in line with standards of democratic partisanship than the discourse of Hungarian partisans. It still remains to be determined not only to what extent this is the case empirically (see above), but also how and why this would be the case.

The research design for this thesis does not allow me to validate or refute hypotheses on the reasons that explain variations in patterns of discourse among the four groups of partisans under study. Methodological rigor would require a large-n study for this purpose. However, the comparative analysis of partisan discourse nevertheless allows me to draw some tentative explanations for the variations I uncover. As I explain in the conclusion of this thesis, these explanations could then be further explored by future research.

For the purpose of formulating these explanations, I take as a given that the extent to which partisans meet the criteria set out in the preceding chapter does not only depend on their good-will or intrinsic morality, but that they are also constrained by the environment in which they operate. More specifically, I establish two categories of factors that are likely to act as either opportunities or constraints on the ability of partisans to develop a cohesive and pluralist discourse. First, the cultural "tool-kit" that partisans have at their disposal in formulating their claims (Pateman, 1971). Second, the 'external events'—political, economic or social—that occur out of parties' direct control and that they need to provide an answer to. To this extent, France and Hungary also constitute good choices from this perspective, precisely because they function within two highly differentiated cultural contexts, yet within a partly overlapping external environment.

These categories are very general, and do not in themselves constitute explanations for any given outcome. It is the empirical analysis that will serve to make inferences as to whether, how and which specific factors influence the degree to which partisans uphold standards of democratic partisanship in the concrete cases I analyse. Political discourse is a particularly good source of evidence to uncover these factors. From the interpretative perspective that this analysis adopts, discourse is indeed one

place where the meaning that subjects give to their environment is most visible and amenable to study (for an extensive defence of this argument, see White, 2009).

### 3. Empirics

**Chapters 3, 4 and 5** cover my empirical analysis. They are organised thematically, each chapter comparing the extent to which French and Hungarian partisans uphold the different standards of democratic partisanship set-out in the theoretical framework. In Chapter 3 I focus on the standard of *cohesiveness*, and in Chapters 4 and 5 on the standard of *commitment to pluralism*. More specifically, Chapter 4 deals with partisan attitudes towards political opponents and Chapter 5 with their attitudes towards political agreement and disagreement. Each chapter is organised in the same way. I start with an operationalisation of my criteria, and then present my empirical evidence for France and Hungary in turn. I rely on the quantitative data produced from the coding process and on a large number of examples from the interviews as my primary evidence. On this basis, I discuss the evidence for democratic partisanship on the different criteria established in Chapter 1. I also pay particular attention to the specific cultural resources and external events that participants refer to, the ways in which partisans use these in their discourse, and the functions these references serve. I conclude each empirical chapter by comparing patterns of partisan discourse across countries and partisan affiliation and discuss possible explanations for the variations I uncover.

In my **Conclusion**, I summarize my results and highlight how they contribute to our empirical knowledge of political parties and the theoretical literature on partisanship. In addition, I discuss the implications of my results for both partisans and external political actors and outline avenues for future research.

# Chapter 1: Setting standards for real-world partisanship

In this chapter, I define the two main standards for democratic partisanship on the basis of which I will evaluate French and Hungarian partisan discourse in Chapters 3, 4 and 5. These standards overlap with the two main qualities that the theoretical literature on parties and partisanship attributes to partisans *at their best*.

I call the first standard *partisan cohesiveness*, a quality that is attached to the claims that partisans make in favor of their party's platform. Partisans are cohesive in their claims when they can develop a program of government that is firmly anchored in a certain idea of the common good, and is clearly distinct from the platform of their opponents. To this extent, cohesiveness is dependent on the coherence of partisans' ideas, and the strength with which they communicate them to others. This quality is necessary for partisans to fulfil their role as intermediaries between citizens and the state, and more specifically, for them to convince citizens of "the worth of engaging with collective political agency so as to exercise the fundamental democratic principle of collective self-rule" (White & Ypi, 2010, p. 809).

The second standard is *partisan commitment to political pluralism*. Partisans uphold this standard when their discourse and practices are aligned with a *pluralist* conception of the political realm. These discourses and practices should express respect for the fact that there exists a plurality of legitimate interpretations of the fundamental principles that constitute the common good and that their party's own positions is only one among them. This quality may be seen to form part of a more general contribution that partisans - as opinion leaders and agents of the state - can make to sustaining liberal democracy as a *way of life* or as a *political ethos* and thus to the long-term consolidation of the democratic regime itself.

## I. LINKING CITIZENS AND THE STATE: THE COHESIVENESS OF PARTISAN CLAIMS

This first part of this chapter aims at establishing criteria on the basis of which to evaluate the democratic merits of the claims French and Hungarian partisans make in support of their party's platform. I take as a starting point the idea that parties are essential bridges between civil society and the state in representative democracies. More specifically, they have a responsibility to foster the engagement of citizens with public life. I define 'civic engagement' broadly, as an affective orientation that disposes individuals towards feeling concerned for the good of their political community and towards taking action in order to contribute to this good. Civic engagement thus corresponds closely to what White and Ypi have termed the 'democratic ethos': "a positive conviction among citizens of the worth of engaging with collective political agency so as to exercise the fundamental democratic principle of collective self-rule" (White & Ypi, 2010, p. 809).

The literature on parties and partisanship offers reasons for why parties may be unique in their capacity to further this sense of civic engagement. It argues especially that unlike other political actors, parties campaign on the basis of coherent accounts of the common good, linking a variety of issues within a given normative framework. They also stand out because, once in government, they dispose of the direct use of state power to put these claims into effect. On the basis of the theoretical literature on partisanship, I argue that partisans should uphold the standard of *cohesiveness* in their discourse and practices. I break down this standard in three specific criteria to assess the claims of French and Hungarian partisans.

### 1. Representative government as popular self-rule

If we are to make the claim that parties have an essential role in encouraging civic engagement, it first needs to be established why the latter would matter to the effective functioning of democracy in a representative system. This is the function of this first section.

#### *a. The traditional divorce between representation and participation*

The relation between civic engagement and political representation has long been uncomfortable and ambiguous. Democratic theory has traditionally conceived of representative democracy as a form of government which, in contrast to deliberative and direct forms of democracy, does not require strong involvement from its citizens. It

is for this reason that representative government has long been considered more appropriate for large and complex communities, where citizens have neither the time nor leisure to take care of public affairs. In one of the early descriptions of the principles of representative democracy, Constant defines the 'freedom of the ancients' as characteristic of small-scale communities (Constant, 2010 [1819]). Here citizens are directly involved in political decision-making but sacrifice in return much of their freedom in the private sphere. In contrast, the 'freedom of the moderns' is characteristic of large-scale societies where political influence is reduced to the designation of representatives. Citizens lesser political influence is traded against greater freedom in the private sphere. This distinction was widely shared among early modern democratic theorists, from the views Madison made explicit in the federalist papers to Tocqueville's account of democracy in America (Hamilton & Madison, 1948 [1788] ; Tocqueville, 1945 [1835]).

In the post-war period, democratic theory systematised the idea according to which representative democracy can function with only minimal civic engagement. Influential theorists such as Dahl, Eckstein or Downs adopted Schumpeter's procedural approach to democracy (Dahl, 1956; Downs, 1957; Eckstein, 1961). With him, they defined democracy as those "institutional arrangements for arriving at political decisions in which individuals acquire the power to decide by the means of a competitive struggle for the people's vote" (Schumpeter, 1956 [1942], p. 269). The role of citizens was reduced to a minimum: instead of the extensive participation demanded by classical ideals of democracy, their limited involvement required casting a ballot during elections.

According to Pateman, the specific context of the post-war era goes far to explain the rise of these minimalist conceptions of democracy, their questioning of the very ideal of maximum participation, and their primary concern for the question of political stability (Pateman, 2007 [1970], p. 118). For many at the time, the two totalitarianisms were a demonstration that democracy as Rousseau understood it, democracy conceived as requiring extensive mobilisation from its citizens, was a potential gateway to holistic ideals and authoritarian rule (as a paradigmatic example, see Berlin, 1969). As Pateman also insists, the post-war development of survey based studies offered additional arguments against the widespread participation of citizens to the political process. These revealed widespread disinterest for politics and authoritarian views among the disenfranchised. Mass participation thus appeared not only unrealistic, but potentially harmful to democracy itself. In this context, those

avowedly normative ideas of democracy that set the empowerment of citizens through political participation as an ideal were sidelined. In their place, modern democratic theory could be "scientific" and "empirically grounded (in the) facts of political life" (Pateman, 2007 [1970], p. 119).

### ***b. The role of civic engagement in representative democracy***

There has been a substantial change in context since the post-war era. Indeed, a consistent drop in all indicators of political participation and interest characterizes the past four decades across established democracies (Biezen van, Poguntke, & Mair, 2012; Hay, 2007; Mair, 2006). The share of voting citizens has declined, and those taking up party or trade union memberships are fewer and fewer. The negative implications of this empirical reality for democracy in Europe have also become apparent. Citizens are not simply retreating to the private sphere. A growing number of them feel unrepresented and distrustful of traditional political institutions. Far-right parties have capitalised on this situation, drawing support from those disaffected with mainstream partisanship. The trend towards disengagement in established democracies appears, in large part, as an expression of civic frustration, one that can create its own forms of political and social instability.

There is therefore cause to re-visit the traditional mantra according to which representative democracy can be singled-out from other democratic forms - direct or deliberative - and conceived as the regime that can most easily do away with the engagement of its citizens. In this line of thought, a number of scholars have taken representation as an object of normative theorizing over the past two decades (see especially J. Mansbridge, 2003; Saward, 2010; Urbinati, 2006; Young, 2000). One of the noteworthy contributions of this scholarship consists in challenging the traditional conceptual barriers that exist between representative, direct, and deliberative understandings of democracy. Some of these works have complexified traditional understandings of representation itself, insisting that the *active involvement of the represented* is necessary for the representative to fulfil his democratic purpose.

Young for instance depicts ideal representation as a movement between moments of authorisation and moments of accountability, both of which involve citizen participation and deliberation (Young, 2000, pp. 129-133). For this representative process to effectively enable popular self-rule, constituents will need to have organised and discussed in anticipation of an upcoming moment of authorisation. Following it, citizens discuss in recollection of debates that led to this authorisation, and anticipate

future moments of authorisation. Thus, in Young's words, "(u)nder normative ideals of communicative democracy, representative institutions do not stand opposed to citizen participation, but require such participation to function well" (*op. cit.*, p. 126). Similarly, in her understanding of 'representation as advocacy', Urbinati has stressed the importance of opinion and consent formation, the process of representation necessarily involving forms of deliberation between representatives and constituents, and among constituents themselves (Urbinati, 2000; 2006, pp. 223-228). Similarly to Young, she contends that "elections (...) make responsible and limited government, but not representative government" (Urbinati, 2006, p. 224), one essential factor being the circumstances under which citizens who are part of the representative process come to make political judgements.

To this extent, the involvement of lay citizens in the representative process is essential to the democratic legitimacy of this very process. Put more bluntly, claiming that representative government enables democratic self-rule amounts to a fiction, if those who are supposed to be sovereign do not feel represented. As Kateb has emphasised, "there would be no political authority at all without the willing participation of the people in the electoral system. There would be no person or group who could properly claim it or confer it or validate it if the people did not take part" (Kateb, 1981, p. 371). The engagement of citizens, in this sense, is necessary if we are to conclude with Kateb that "(i)mprecisely put, but not metaphorically, the electoral system is a form of people's self-rule" (Kateb, 1981, *ibid*).

## **2. The role of partisanship**

### ***a. The partisan dimension of civic engagement***

If the engagement of citizens is essential to representative democracy, it is necessary to enquire into the conditions under which such engagement can emerge and thrive. One essential, albeit insufficient condition for citizens to take interest in public life is that they hold political convictions, that they have certain ideas about the nature of the common good. As expressed by White and Ypi, citizens should hold "normatively grounded, powerful notions of the possibility of a better society" to engage with public life, or in other words, they should believe that "there are political goals that deserve to be pursued, and that there is a relationship between them such that they need to be pursued as part of a more or less coherent whole" (White & Ypi, 2010, p. 811).

If engaged citizenship requires a certain understanding of the common good, this understanding is always partisan *in the minimal sense*. The engaged citizen does not necessarily identify with a party *stricto sensu*, but the type of conviction that leads to engagement does involve taking sides, and does involve standing with others in defence of this conviction. First, political conviction discriminates among the causes that are worth fighting for, and rests on a partial interpretation of foundational values. The engaged citizen resembles Mill's 'one-eyed man', convinced "that some principle or cause in the political world is right and something else wrong, something is better and something else is worse" (Muirhead, 2014, p. 99). Second, defending one's convictions in the public realm is not a solitary enterprise - it involves standing with others for a certain idea of the common good (Muirhead, 2014, ch. 5; Rosenblum, 2008, pp. 340-348). To prompt engagement, normative goals have to be pursued with the idea that it is a matter for "us" to do so, that there is a collective responsibility to pursue these goals which are in some way "ours" (White & Ypi, 2010, p. 812).

The civic value of partiality and collective loyalty can also be highlighted by dispelling the myth of 'independence' as good citizenship (Rosenblum, 2008, ch. 7). Independents' rebuttal of partisan commitments puts these citizens outside, rather than above, public life, depriving them of the passions that drive citizens to get informed and take part in collective action. Their absence of loyalty will likely lead to "weightlessness", "detachment" and "unconcern for power" rather than more astute and informed reasoning (Rosenblum, 2008, p. 351). And if independents stand only for themselves, there is little reason for them to engage with public life.<sup>5</sup> As summarised by Muirhead, "the path to independent judgement, and a discerning appraisal of practical affairs needs to 'go through' the partisan's perspective. To dispense with the partisan's insight is not to arrive at some pure independence or 'view from nowhere'—it is likely to avoid politics altogether" (Muirhead, 2006, p. 723).

### ***b. The creative role of political parties***

If civic engagement requires both normatively grounded convictions and identification with a group that shares these convictions, it is crucial to stress that neither exist prior to the political process itself. As Muirhead emphasises, "somewhere

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<sup>5</sup> This divide between self-declared partisans and independents finds empirical grounding. Self-declared independents are less knowledgeable about politics and less capable of taking in new political information. They are likely to be less interested in politics more generally and spend less time informing themselves. They are also less likely to vote or take part in civic life (Blais, 2006; Keith et al., 1992).



the variety of individuals sentiments, interests and convictions needs to be collected (...) The point is that this has to happen somewhere: a group large enough to claim democratic legitimacy does not exist spontaneously (...) It must be created" (Muirhead, 2006, p. 719). Such a view runs counter to both the rational-choice model of voting behaviour - which supposes that citizens make political choices based on a set of pre-defined, personal interests - and the cleavage-based model - which views political cleavages as the translation of socio-economic lines of division. Both of these classic models endorse, with different premises, the "image of representation as substitution or identification" (Young, 2000, p. 123).

Representation thus plays a performative role in fuelling forms of political conviction: political representation does not simply channel pre-existing claims, it works to constitute the represented themselves. Excluding the case of strict imperative mandates, the interpretation of what voters demand is not only a possibility open to the representative—it is in fact inseparable from the act of representing itself. The necessity of interpretation in the representative act derives from the fact that there is no "single common good that transcends the diversity of (constituents') interests, experiences, opinions" (Young, 2000, p. 126). The groups to be represented never offer themselves as homogenous, pre-defined entity with clear and encompassing sets of interests. This is why the representative claims of political agents play a crucial role in the emergence of such groups (Bourdieu, 1991; Disch, 2011; Saward, 2010).<sup>6</sup>

The 'bilingualism' of political parties, with one foot in society and the other in the state, puts them in a privileged position to accomplish this role (Bonotti, 2011, p. 20). This idea of democratic mediation is "implicit in many of the other functions (generally associated with parties), such as representation, interest articulation and aggregation, participation and legitimisation" (Widfeldt, 1999, p. 15). As institutions of the state, parties have access to financial assets, media attention and political power that social movements - for instance - do not dispose of (White & Ypi, 2010, pp. 817-818). As civil society organisations, parties use these resources to mobilise existing members, organize support and generate new sympathies (Ware, 1996). If the partisan enterprise is particularly creative, it is also because of the form it takes: an agonistic

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<sup>6</sup> As emphasised by Bourdieu, "(it) is because the representative exists, because he represents (symbolic action), that the group that is represented and symbolised exists" (Bourdieu, 1991, p. 204). A similar stance is developed by Disch, according to whom representation "aims, then, not to reproduce a state of affairs but to produce an effect: to call forth a constituency by depicting it as a collective with a shared aim (...) Political identities and demands do not emerge directly from social divisions, but rather (...) social differences and the politics to which they give rise are influenced by elite discourse" (Disch, 2011, pp. 107-108).

clash of opposing views. In this process, parties not only make claims to represent citizens, they also 'create the terms of contest' and thus the necessary conditions for public deliberation over rival conceptions of the common good (Muirhead & Rosenblum, 2006, p. 103).<sup>7</sup>

## 2. The cohesiveness of partisan claims

Parties, then, are among those institutions best placed to generate the types of political convictions that push citizens to engage with public life. This does not mean that parties necessarily make good use of their privileged position in the public sphere. The contemporary disaffection with representative politics in both established and emerging European democracies suffices to demonstrate that parties can well fail to perform this function of mobilisation (for detailed accounts, see Farrell, 2000, pp. 20-79; Hay, 2007, pp. 12-39; Mair, 2006, pp. 34-43; Pharr & Putnam, 2000). If it is acknowledged, however, that parties have a unique responsibility in this regard, it does open the door for political theorists to isolate the conditions under which they can effectively generate such political loyalties. In the following sections, I draw on normative political theory to isolate criteria on the basis of which to evaluate the claims of political parties in this regard.

The general argument is that partisans should display *cohesiveness* in their discourse and practices to convince citizens of the validity of their claims and of the worth of political engagement more generally. This quality of cohesiveness is defined by three distinct criteria. First, the normative criterion, characterised by the advocacy of a coherent account of the common good. Second, the executive criterion, characterised by the establishment of links between the normative goals a party promotes and their execution through the use of governmental power. Finally, the condition of differentiation, characterised by the ability of parties to establish a clear distinction between their party's normative goals and policies and those of their opponents. These are the criteria on the basis of which I will evaluate the discourse of French and Hungarian partisans in Chapter 3.

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<sup>7</sup> A 'contextualist' turn in public opinion and political psychology studies is providing mounting empirical evidence that citizens' opinions and representation do indeed shift according to the ways in which political parties frame issues (Chong & Druckman, 2007; Druckman, 2004; Manza & Cook, 2002.; Sniderman & Theriault, 2004). Chong and Druckman have for instance demonstrated, using experimental data, that party frames can moderate ideological extremes and that the 'relative strength' of these frames does affect citizens' engagement with them (Chong & Druckman, 2007).

*Criterion 1: Standing for a vision of the common good*

The first requirement for political parties is to provide an account to the political community of the ends that justify the exercise of political power and of the principles that underlie such an exercise. It demands from parties that they stand for a distinct vision of the common good, rooted in rival interpretations of the meaning of fundamental principals such as equality or freedom. This normative condition lies at the heart of one of the very first definitions of party. Indeed, Burke accounted for parties as "a body of men united, for promoting by their joint endeavours the national interest, upon some particular principle in which they are all agreed" (Burke, 1990 [1770], p. 86). This partisan enterprise is directed towards the *demos* as a whole, and is therefore fundamentally distinct from what factions are. Indeed, the latter are designed to further the interests of particular groups in society and exhibit "no concern to justify (their) program to the community *in toto*" (White & Ypi, 2011, p. 383).

Parties are bilingual agents of political linkage insofar as they link particular segments of society with such broader conceptions of the public good. Muirhead and Rosenblum summarize this idea:

"As shapers and articulators of public reason, parties speak to *all* citizens as citizens, not as socially situated in this or that social class or income group or as having a particular comprehensive doctrine. They refine and generalise particularist appeals by casting them in terms appropriate to public reason. As agents of a publicly recognised overlapping consensus, they connect particular interests with general principles" (Muirhead & Rosenblum, 2006, p. 104).

To this extent, the normative commitments of political parties locate particularistic appeals in a broader understanding of the political world, coherently connecting its different aspects across time, space, and subject matter.

That parties advance such understandings is central to furthering citizens' engagement with the political world. By weaving individual concerns together in an overarching narrative, parties contribute to citizens making sense of their own grievances not as strictly personal dissatisfactions, but as issues of political relevance. In the words of White and Ypi, they provide citizens with the tools to formulate "a critical appraisal of their joint political institutions, (...) to form judgements on matters of common concern and to articulate such judgements in a way that could appeal to the understanding of all" (White & Ypi, 2010, p. 811). By highlighting commonalities across the experiences of isolated individuals, they also give citizens the sense that their grievances are shared by a circle wider than their own, thus facilitating group

identification and the emergence of political constituencies (White & Ypi, 2010, pp. 815-816).

This normative dimension is also central because political action needs to be *justified* according to some principles citizens can, if not embrace as their own, at least accept as reasonable. Such acts of justification are necessary to ensure that coercive power is being exercised in a non-arbitrary fashion, and more generally, to safeguard the legitimacy of the decision-making process (Chambers, 2010). This requires that parties make the rationale that motivates their policies explicit, or in other words, that they spell-out the values, interests and visions of the 'good society' their legislation intends to further (Bonotti, 2014; White & Ypi, 2011). Beyond the role normative principles play in legitimizing political action, an overarching ratio is necessary for making party programs intelligible to citizens and to win the adhesion of constituents. As Muirhead emphasises, "the arcane and lawyerly details of alternative policies (cannot) excite passions, generate loyalties, or sustain lasting commitments" (Muirhead, 2014, p. 67).

Fundamentally, then, it is when parties put forward normative conceptions of the common good that they can make a distinctive contribution to representative democracy. If one considers 'self-rule' as central to the democratic project, then its realisation entails that politicians compete for office over distinct understandings of the common good. Were these to be abandoned, this would lead to the predominance of appeals on the basis of personality and group belonging, the pervasiveness of clientelism and patronage, and a replacement of public policy by administrative decision-making politics (Goodin, 2008, pp. 209-211). Even in a regime that would uphold democracy's minimal procedural requirements, the 'ratio' required for the political community to understand itself as such, and thus for the political community to be self-legislating, would be absent. A democracy without parties as 'ideational facts' would be no democracy at all (Goodin, 2008, p. 213).

#### *Criterion 2: Offering means for the realisation of normative goals*

The second requirement for political parties is that they provide citizens with the sense that these normative goals can effectively be realised through the use of state power (White & Ypi, 2010, pp. 812-813, 816). This entails that political parties campaign not only on the basis of conflicting interpretations of the common good, but that they set forth a series of policy proposals making for a coherent political program. Granted they obtain a parliamentary majority by popular suffrage, parties should

demonstrate that they can execute their programs through legal means. As expressed by Bonotti, parties at their best "provide heuristic tools which anticipate predictable patterns of policy-making and offer 'packages' of policies and measures which (they) intend to implement if they achieve control of the government" (Bonotti, 2014, p. 320).

It is precisely the role of political parties to give meaning to both normative objectives and governmental practices by making their interconnection intelligible to citizens. Normative thinking without practical outlet is insufficient to engage citizens with the political process. As emphasised by Muirhead and Rosenblum, "when principles of justice do not seem to have a connection to our aims and purposes, even reasonable principles could not be rational for us personally, as concretely-situated individuals" (Muirhead & Rosenblum, 2006, p. 103). It is by addressing particular grievances through policy-making that parties demonstrate the practical relevance of their normative commitments and give constituents reasons to maintain their loyalty.

Another way of phrasing this is to say that a given vision of the common good can only properly be deemed *political* where it involves both *choice* and *agency*. As rightly emphasised by Hay, "politics and the political involves actors doing things with consequences. Politics occurs, and can only occur, in situations in which actors can make a difference" (Hay, 2007, p. 66). If governments cannot exercise their agency and choose their policies, the replacement of one majority by another will not change the legislation citizens are offered. Where parties demonstrate such impotency, citizens will likely cease to believe in the possibility for their normative goals to be realised. Parties will then breed not engagement with the political, but resignation at best, animosity at worst.

This is all the more true because parties are the only political actors that dispose directly of the coercive power and taxing capacity of the state. While social movements may offer normative objectives, their limited financial and organisational resources curtails the scope of their actions. Moreover, their exclusive anchorage in civil society deprives them from the autonomous capacity to realise these objectives through direct changes in legislation (White & Ypi, 2010, pp. 817-818). It thus appears necessary for political parties to put forward policy proposals they can effectively implement in government for citizens to believe in the reality of popular self-rule under a representative government. As summarised by Connolly, "(i)f we wish to see ourselves as free, free as a people, we must believe that state institutions of electoral accountability carry with them sufficient efficacy to promote the collective ends we most prize (...) Thus one's self-identification as a free individual is bound up with a

common believe in the capacity of the state to promote publicly defined purposes" (Connolly, 1991, p. 198).

*Criterion 3: Distinguishing normative goals and policies from those of opponents*

Finally, parties need to differentiate their platforms from that of their opponents, and justify their value in a comparative fashion. In other words, parties need to offer citizens *distinct* normative goals and policy proposals. This is essential to citizens' engagement with the political process for several reasons. First, positioning with regard to a political 'other' is necessary for parties to assert their own commitments, and to mobilise citizens on their basis. This squares with the post-structuralist notion of a 'constitutive outside', according to which "difference is the condition of the possibility of constituting unity and totality at the same time that it provides its essential limits" (Mouffe, 2000, p. 33). The very identity of partisans - as all other forms of identity - can only but be constructed through differentiation. Partisan identities strong enough to mobilise civic passions are thus adversarial in nature: they define themselves not only with regard to what they are, but also with regard to how they diverge from other partisan identities.

The attachment of voters to particular parties only makes sense where such differences exist and are asserted - indeed, "when parties do not stand for distinct ideals and programs, what sense can it make to identify with one or the other?" (Muirhead, 2014, p. 65). This explains why political parties are generally more confrontational in their stance during electoral campaigns than they are in government. As Guttmann and Thomson insist, "(t)heir support and ultimately their success in the campaign depend on reaffirming their uncompromising commitment to core principles, and on distinguishing their positions sharply from those of their opponents. Voters need to see the differences between the candidates as clearly as possible" (Guttmann & Thompson, 2010, p. 1128)

Differentiation is necessary not only for parties to gain support, but also to justify to citizens their claim to the exercise of political power. White and Ypi show that parties make an "important contribution to political justification" precisely because they are more likely than other political agents to make claims that are both *comparative* and *adversarial* (White & Ypi, 2011, p. 385). Political justification should be comparative because "to justify a political principle, an act of public policy, or a political program is to show what makes it preferable to alternatives" (White & Ypi, 2011, p. 385). Further, the *quality* of political justification is dependent on its potential

for being challenged by competitors, thus demanding an adversarial context. As White and Ypi insist, "only in the presence of (...) at least one other agent (who) seeks to actively assess the validity of a political proposal and where disputing arguments are in turn tested, will the conditions for meaningful political justification be present" (White & Ypi, 2011, p. 386). To offer reasons that are likely to convince citizens of the legitimacy of their normative and programmatic choices, political parties must therefore compare and contrast them with those of their opponents.

The final, and perhaps most straightforward case to be made in favour of partisan differentiation is that it offers citizens a meaningful choice between political alternatives. This idea has been at the core of minimalist theories of democracy, which cast the free competition of political parties for citizens' votes as a defining feature of the democratic regime (Downs, 1957; Przeworski, 1999; Schumpeter, 1956 [1942]). Only when offered a plurality of options can voters find an alternative closer to their own interests and choose a different majority at the next elections if their expectations are disappointed.

This echoes the classic ideal of 'responsible party government', which gained currency in the post-war American context.<sup>8</sup> The central claim of this model is that in order for citizens to exercise self-rule in a representative democracy, parties should offer them a real choice between alternative programs of government. The ideal prescribes that parties in government exercise political agency to demonstrate the credibility of their political promises and that citizens can hold them accountable when they do not demonstrate such credibility. As expressed by Muirhead, "parties that take clear stands in campaigns, and that muster the cohesion to enact those plans when they are in power, give voters a clear and easy way to express or withhold their approval at the next election" (Muirhead, 2014, p. 176). But the ideal of 'responsible party government' also creates obligations for parties in the opposition. As Hofstadter spells out:

"(the opposition should contain) within itself the potential of an actual alternative government—that is, its critique of existing policies is not simply a wild attempt to outbid the existing regime in promises, but a sober attempt to formulate alternative policies which it believes to be capable of execution within the existing historical and economic framework, and to offer as its executors a competent alternative personal that can actually govern." (Hofstadter, 1969, p. 4)

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<sup>8</sup> This notion was most clearly spelled-out in the work of Schattschneider, and in the American Political Science Association's 1950 annual report (American Political Science Association, 1950; Schattschneider, 2009 [1942]).

Albeit from a very different ontological and epistemological standing point, agonistic theories of democracies also value the confrontation of partisan alternatives as the condition for democratic self-rule. As Mouffe states, "modern democracy calls for (...) a clear divide between the government and the opposition, and this supposes that clearly differentiated policies are on offer, giving the possibility for citizens to decide between different ways of organizing society" (Mouffe, 2005, p. 120).

## II. SUSTAINING DEMOCRACY AS A WAY OF LIFE: THE COMMITMENT OF PARTISANS TO PLURALISM

In this second part of the chapter, I consider an additional set of conditions drawn from the theoretical literature on parties and partisanship for evaluating the contribution of partisanship to liberal democracy. I argue that, in addition to complying with the standard of cohesiveness, the discourses and practices of partisans should also be in line with a pluralist conception of the political community. Following Galston, political pluralism may be defined as an account of the political world according to which "there is no single, univocal summum bonum that can be defined philosophically, let alone imposed politically" (Galston, 2002, p. 30).

I justify the importance of partisan commitment to political pluralism for liberal democracy by considering the theoretical debate on the conditions for the emergence and preservation of liberal democratic regimes. That such conditions involve *a minima* a given set of institutions is an uncontroversial starting point in the literature. I follow the perspective of cultural institutionalists to argue that over time, the compliance of elites and citizens to democratic rules is dependent on the commitment of political actors to these institutions (Dryzek & Holmes, 2002; Hall & Taylor, 1996; Herman, 2015; Miller, White, & Heywood, 1997; Plasser, Ulram, & Waldrauch, 1998; Plattner & Diamond, 1996). This squares with a tradition in political philosophy that considers the democratic regime first and foremost as a *way of life* or *form of society* nourished by the ethical commitments of its members (Galston, 2002, 2005; Kateb, 1981; Lefort, 1988a; Macedo, 1990; Mouffe, 2000; Rosenblum, 1998, 1989; Ryn, 1978).

Theorists of parties and partisanship are in line with these approaches, as they insist on the particular moral obligations that fall on partisans in liberal democracies. Indeed, as opinion-leaders and decision-makers, the discourse and practices of partisans are more directly crucial to the perpetuation of the norms of liberal democracy than the discourse or practices of lay citizens. I rely on these works to define more specific criteria for assessing partisan commitment to political pluralism in



two specific domains: partisan attitudes towards political opponents, and partisan attitudes towards political agreement and disagreement. It is on the basis of these criteria that the discourse of mainstream partisans in France and Hungary will be evaluated in chapters 4 and 5.

## 1. Liberal democracy as a way of life

### *a. Institutions and ethics*

The idea according to which a well-designed set of institutions is the necessary—if not sufficient—condition for the perpetuation of liberal democratic regimes is deeply grounded in Western political thought. This idea is intimately linked with the assumption that "liberal democracy (...) can function in the absence of *civic virtue*" (Rosenblum, 1998, p. 10). Enlightenment thinkers from Kant to Montesquieu emphasised that under a good constitution, the private vices of individuals can come to serve the common good (Rosenblum, 1998, pp. 10-11). Such insights also presided over the making of the American constitution, the inbuilt checks-and-balances aiming to channel men's tyrannical ambitions.<sup>9</sup>

This tradition still has a strong resonance today. Its clearest contemporary expression can again be found in the procedural understandings of democracy that have flourished since the 1950s, and structure much of contemporary political science (Dahl, 1956, 1971; Downs, 1957). According to proceduralists, well-designed institutions and a highly competitive political arena are seen as the two defining characteristics of a democratic regime, and form the essential conditions for its perpetuation (for representative examples, see Alevizakos, 2008; Clark, 2002; O'Donnell, Schmitter, & Whitehead, 1986; Przeworski, 1991, 1999; Schmitter & Karl, 1991; Schneider & Schmitter, 2004). Democracy endures in such a setting not because individuals are committed to the regime as such, but because a well-designed system creates incentives towards its perpetuation. Individuals have a greater interest in accepting limitations to their own power, and thus to play by the rules, than in

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<sup>9</sup>As Madison asserts in Federalist No.10, "(it) may be a reflection on human nature that such devices (as checks and balances) should be necessary to control the abuses of government. But what is government itself but the greatest of all reflection on human nature? If men were angels, no government would be necessary"(cited in Williams, 2014, p. 162).

attempting to subvert the system.<sup>10</sup> Democratic institutions thus act like Adam Smith's invisible hand, turning the sum of selfish interests into a collective good.

Insisting on the unnecessary character of human virtue in democratic regimes may function to alleviate a form of 'liberal anxiety' (Rosenblum, 1998, pp. 10-15). A system that requires perfectly virtuous behaviour from all citizens at all times is bound to be fragile, while one that accommodates the imperfect nature of men is more likely to endure. This perspective nevertheless eludes the normative meaning that the term 'democracy' unavoidably carries with it (Skinner, 1973). As Ryn emphasises, "(a)lthough considerable sophistication sometimes goes into the procedural type of definition, the fundamental question is left unanswered. What is the ultimate justification for the procedures that are endorsed?" (Ryn, 1978, p. 11). Indeed, if the sum of selfish interests produces a common 'good', this still begs the question: why would we consider a democratic regime as desirable in the first place? Who defines this good, and according to what standard can it be said that the collective well-being is furthered by such a regime? Collective struggles for civil, political and social rights are central to the history of first wave democracies precisely because their attainment has acted as an authoritative ideal for generations of citizens since the late 18th century (Huntington, 1991; Marshall, 1992). The historical emergence of democratic institutions has been, to this extent, only the most visible expression of a more profound reordering of the ways in which societies conceive of legitimate power relations (Lefort, 1988b). The fact that so many scholars have taken an interest in defining democracy and assessing the conditions for its emergence and perpetuation in itself reveals the depth of our societies' commitment to this new order.

Cultural institutionalists have long been insistent that the functioning of institutions depends not only on the rationality of self-interested individuals, but on the internalisation by these actors of specific norms of behaviour and discourse (Hall & Taylor, 1996). This implies that institutional rules and procedures are conceived as visible expressions of such underlying norms, rather than as prior external constraints that in turn influence individual behaviour. Bevir and Rhodes for instance analyse the functioning of the British State under New Labour government as a complex ensemble of practices and discourse carried by its actors, rather than as a separate authority imposing itself on individuals (Bevir & Rhodes, 2010). If, as summarised by Mouffe, it is because they "are inscribed in shared forms of life and agreements in judgements that

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<sup>10</sup> This is because the uncertainties and costs that come with non-compliance outweigh the certain benefits that both majorities and minorities obtain from taking part in the democratic game.

procedures can be accepted and followed", then the efficacy of democratic procedures themselves are also likely to depend on the existence of such agreements in society (Mouffe, 2000, p. 68). Such an insight is shared by scholars adopting a cultural approach to democratisation (see for instance Dryzek & Holmes, 2002; Herman, 2015; Miller et al., 1997; Plasser et al., 1998; Plattner & Diamond, 1996). They insist on the attitudinal transformation that are necessary at mass and elite level to ensure the survival of democratic regimes on the long-run. According to this perspective, the consolidation of democracy requires that "democracy becomes so broadly and profoundly legitimate among citizens that it is unlikely to break down" (Diamond, 1994, p. 15).

Liberal democracy may thus be adequately described as a *way of life*. Following Lefort, I understand under such a term "those morals and beliefs that testify to the existence of implicit norms determining notions of just and unjust, good and evil, desirable and undesirable, noble and ignoble" (Lefort, 1988a, pp. 2-3). In adopting this approach, I concur with a number of political and moral philosophers who have insisted on the *ethical* foundations of liberal democracy (Cruikshank, 2014; Galston, 2002, 2005; Hallowell, 1954; Kateb, 1981; Lefort, 1988a; Macedo, 1990; Mouffe, 2000; Rosenblum, 1989; Ryn, 1978). Ethics within a given community may be defined as a shared system of beliefs that determines "the nature of ultimate value and the standards by which human actions can be judged right or wrong" (Singer, 2015). To claim that liberal democracy has ethical foundations is thus to define it not only in terms of the institutions that compose it, but as a distinct way of life - or, drawing on Lefort again, as a 'form of society' - that rests on its members sharing a certain idea of the common good.<sup>11</sup>

In other words, well-designed institutions are a necessary but insufficient condition to curb the potential excesses of majority rule, or prevent the rebellion of minorities in the democratic game. Democratic procedures fulfil their function not merely because individuals view compliance as the most cost-effective course of action, but because they attribute value to these procedures, and thus view compliance as the

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<sup>11</sup> Crucially, this may also be characterised as a *contextualist* approach to democracy: it breaks not only with institutionalist perspectives, but also with universalistic ones. Rawlsian political theory for instance tends to assume that there exist principles that would be considered acceptable by any *reasonable* person, and that it is thus possible to establish an ideal of justice based on such principles (Rawls, 2001, 2005). Contextualists such as Walzer or Rorty are on the contrary more likely to agree with Mouffe when she asserts that "the normative dimension inscribed in political institutions (...) always refers to specific practices, depending on particular contexts, and (...) is not the expression of a universal morality" (Mouffe, 2005, p. 121).

*right* course of action. As summarised by Hollowell, "(c)onstitutional government is a kind of self-restraint which the people in a democracy impose upon themselves; (...) its continued presence depends less upon the institutional checks provided than upon the commonly shared knowledge that there are restraints and upon the willingness of individuals voluntarily to submit to those restraints" (Hollowell, 1954, p. 64).

### ***b. Setting limits to the democratic ethos***

The ethical requirements that we demand from citizens need to be both carefully justified and limited in scope. Understanding democracy as a way of life cannot imply that perfectly virtuous behaviour is expected from all citizens at all times. This would be an unrealistic, utopian claim, and would set an unattainable standard for democratic societies. To claim that ethical commitments are necessary for democracy to function properly is not to assume that all citizens should be irreproachably ethical. Indeed, it is arguable whether institutions would be necessary at all if this were the case.<sup>12</sup>

It is also important to stress that the ethical qualities that make democracy possible are not either present or absent within a given society depending on the irrevocable cultural traits that characterize it. The logic of democratic ethics is essentially dynamic. Ethical requirements are an ensemble of norms that require to be perpetually defended, promoted and diffused by an array of actors in society, from lay citizens to the media.<sup>13</sup> Democratic institutions for instance, *do* guide individual behaviour. By formalizing the norms of acceptable and unacceptable behaviour, and giving legal authority to ethical precepts, institutions contribute over time to socialise individuals into ethical behaviour.

To this extent, the existence of opposite pulls, the persistence of unethical behaviour within society, but also of unethical tendencies within each citizen, is both unavoidable and unproblematic. Demanding their complete elimination is not only unrealistic, but would prove dangerous to liberal democracy itself. In requiring demonstrations of virtue from its citizens, the state can easily come to impose

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<sup>12</sup> Even Rousseau came to concur that democracy as conceived in the *Social Contract* would require a 'nation of gods' to function properly (Zeitlin, 1997, pp. 173-174).

<sup>13</sup> As emphasised by Connolly, it is for instance necessary that "the news media, judiciary, and electoral system function to keep the terms of contestation among coalitions reasonably open and to protect elemental rights to life, a significant degree of personal self-governance, freedom of expression, and full citizenship in a representative government." (Connolly, 1991, p. 213). In a similar vein, Mouffe states that "(d)emocratic individuals can only be made possible by multiplying the institutions, the discourses, the forms of life that foster identification with democratic values" (Mouffe, 2005, p. 96).

limitations on the civil and political freedoms that are constitutive of liberal democratic regimes (Rosenblum, 1998, pp. 13-14).

What we need to establish, then, are the limits within which democratic ethics should express themselves in order for democracy as a way of life to thrive. There are two separate sets of questions here. The first concerns the actors that should display such ethical dispositions: if one cannot require virtuous behaviour from all citizens in all spheres of activity, then one should establish principles on the basis of which to formulate more nuanced and modest requirements. The second set of questions concerns the nature of these ethical requirements or, in other words, the criteria according to which we can recognise ethical behaviour and discourse in a democratic society. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to offer comprehensive answers to these vast questions. The purpose of the following sections will be more limited: to explain how understanding democracy as a way of life affects the obligations of mainstream partisan actors specifically. I will first argue that more stringent ethical requirements fall on partisans as compared to lay citizens given the particular functions they perform within the political system. I will then outline what is to be understood by an 'ethical conscience' as applied to partisans.

## 2. The role of partisanship

### *a. The contours of pluralist partisanship*

A number of theorists have argued that specific ethical responsibilities fall on partisans in liberal democracies. The clearest expression of this thesis has been formulated by Bonotti, who discusses these in light of the theoretical literature on political obligation (Bonotti, 2012). According to Bonotti, partisanship is associated with a number of *positional* duties. Positional duties may be defined as the specific legal and non-legal obligations that are attached to a given public office. While legal obligations are associated with formal sanctions, the non-legal obligations that fall on partisans are first and foremost of a *moral* nature.<sup>14</sup> Rosenblum and Muirhead adopt a slightly different approach by discussing the virtues that partisans display *at their best* in liberal democracies. In this context, Rosenblum speaks for instance of the "moral

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<sup>14</sup> As Bonotti insists himself, legal and non-legal obligations may overlap, the degree of overlap partly depending on how extensively and formally legal obligations are defined (Bonotti, 2012, p. 155). For instance, while the degree to which hate speech is prosecuted in liberal democratic countries varies, one may still assert that partisans have a moral obligation not to promote intolerance towards minority groups.

distinctiveness of party ID" (Rosenblum, 2008, p. 363). She uses this term to describe the qualities that partisans display when they not only "operate within an agreed-on constitutional framework" but are instead "active, avowed, intentional agents" in support of the liberal democratic regime (Rosenblum, 2008, pp. 124, 363). Muirhead also uses the term "ethical partisanship" to designate cases where partisans fulfil obligations that are of a moral rather than legal nature. These include demonstrating "a willingness to contemplate the possibility that one's own views might not constitute the whole truth" and thus to "decide political questions without allowing that decision to overwhelm one's critical capacities" (Muirhead, 2014, p. 98).

What most of these authors emphasise, is how important it is to uphold a *pluralist* conception of the political community.<sup>15</sup> A commitment to political pluralism may be seen as the mother of all democratic virtues or, as Rosenblum insists, the first "condition for developing moral capacities" (Rosenblum, 1998, p. 18).<sup>16</sup> Political pluralism may be defined as an account of the political world according to which "there is no single, univocal summum bonum that can be defined philosophically, let alone imposed politically" (Galston, 2002, p. 30). To this extent, it is a moral stance rather than a descriptive concept. It is prescriptive in the sense that it defines a goal to be attained, a type of ethics that needs to be infused in the spirit of democracy. Pluralism asserts itself as a specific ethos that is opposed to—and should be defended against—holistic or monistic accounts of the moral universe. These claim that the latter is ordered according to a unique, definitive and exclusive account of the common good (Galston, 2002, p. 6).

For partisans to further a pluralistic account of the political world, they should have what Muirhead has termed *negative capacity*: a form of self-restraint with regard

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<sup>15</sup> At this point, it is important to specify that I do not understand commitment to political pluralism as a deep, psychosocial disposition that motivates individuals. When I say that a partisan is committed to political pluralism, I am stating that his discourse and practices conform to the moral obligations that fall on partisans in a liberal democracy—I am not making a claim about his intentions or motives. I explain in more detail the reasons for this in Chapter 2, Part I, 2, a.

<sup>16</sup> It is important to emphasise here that there is no agreed-on set of civic virtues in the literature and that different authors insist on different aspects of the ethical life (see Rosenblum, 1998, pp. 12-13 for a discussion). I insist here on these two particular dimensions not only because they are recurrent in the literature on partisanship, but because they are arguably at the basis of a number of other virtues that the more general theoretical literature has discussed.

to their own convictions (Muirhead, 2014, p. 106).<sup>17</sup> Partisans endorse pluralism - and are therefore ethical from a democratic perspective - when, retaining their own views, they still see that they cannot impose them on others. They accept that their party's status is that of a part in the polity, and that it cannot claim to represent the whole (Bonotti, 2011; Sartori, 1976, ch. 1). As democratic subjects, their task is thus to resist the "drive towards dogmatism" and "reject the clean, consistent stance of subjugating difference merely because it is at odds with identities (they) live and endorse" (Connolly, 1991).

This negative capacity is a fundamental endorsement of political pluralism as *the* moral worldview of liberal democracy. As famously argued by Lefort, "the revolutionary and unprecedented feature of democracy (is that) the locus of power becomes *an empty place* (...), it cannot be occupied—it is such that not individual and no group can be consubstantiated with it" (Lefort, 1988a, p. 16). At the heart of this mutation of symbolic power is a moral revolution, "instituted and sustained by the dissolution of the markers of certainty" (Lefort, 1988a, p. 19). Power cannot be permanently occupied in a world characterised by indeterminacy, where no claim to the good is accepted as complete and definitive. The negative capacity of partisans is thus an endorsement of the most basic principle of liberal democracy: that the moral universe is characterised by a plurality of legitimate claims to the common good, and that, consequently, the political authority devolved through elections to a party representing only one of these claims is necessarily and always of a provisional nature.

### ***b. Moral obligation and the democratic functions of partisans***

If more stringent moral obligations weigh on partisans than on lay citizens, it is because their discourse and practices have greater consequences for the polity as a whole. The position of partisans in the public sphere—with privileged access to financial resources, media attention and state power—lends partisans much leverage for shaping the contours of a public deliberation. As Schattschneider emphasised, the definition of alternatives by political parties is *de facto* an exercise of political power

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<sup>17</sup> This idea of self-restraint is recurrent in the literature. Ryn argues that "man's ethical conscience (...) is better described as a principle of self-examination or censure set apart from particular human feelings and actions", and that the politician must thus entertain "the possibility that his own view of how the moral end can be promoted by government is mistaken. (Ryn, 1978, pp. 14, 174). Muirhead speaks of the 'negative capacity' of partisans who "stand for something, but (...) see that theirs is not the only reasonable place one can take a stand" (Muirhead, 2014, p. 106). Kateb speaks of the 'constitutional delicacy' of the politician who "wants to win but only in accordance with rules, only after a fight, only after, perhaps, aiding the antagonist to become equal" (Kateb, 1981, p. 362).

(Schattschneider, 1960, p. 66). If representation is performative and partisans contribute to the emergence of political identities within a given citizenry, then the extent to which partisans are committed to political pluralism is key to the development and endurance of pluralist ethics within society at large. To this extent, it is also essential to the more general perpetuation of democracy as a 'way of life'.

Yet partisans that campaign on holistic rather than pluralistic platforms not only encourage the development of non-ethical tendencies within a given citizenry. They also represent a threat to the integrity of democratic institutions once in power. As state actors, partisans form governments, decide on policy, and hold key administrative positions. As emphasised above, checks-and-balances may well create positive incentives for state actors towards compliance. But if only material interests are at stake, it is a matter of time before a party receives a sufficient majority to grant itself undue power through constitutional reform at the detriment of its opposition.<sup>18</sup>

For partisan actors to choose institutionalised competition over radical constitutional reforms, it is thus necessary that they comply not only with the legal obligation of following existing procedures, but with the moral obligation of not exploiting the system's institutional loopholes (Herman, 2015). For this reason, theorists of democratic consolidation have long emphasised that the survival of democratic regime requires the absence of actors that are both disloyal to democracy and in a position to obtain a parliamentary majority (Linz, 1978; Linz & Stepan, 1996). The survival of democracy's institutional framework is thus not only dependent on a well-designed system of incentives, but on the inner-check of partisans. They should recognise that they cannot claim to hold the whole truth on the nature of the common good, and refrain from denying their opponents any legitimacy in representing the political community.

### **3. The commitment of partisans to pluralism: two domains of expression**

In the following sections, I will focus on two domains in which partisans can demonstrate, or fail to demonstrate, commitment to pluralism. The first domain concerns the relation of partisans to their opponents, and especially, the extent to

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<sup>18</sup>In first-wave democracies, political majorities have undoubtedly modified constitutional rules to their own advantage - from the common act of gerrymandering to the modification of electoral systems (Boix, 1999). Constitutional reforms that have challenged democracy 'procedural minimum' - free elections and the guarantee of citizens' basic civil and political rights - are nevertheless the exception, not the rule (Alexander, 2001). There is a case to be made here that a deeper commitment of partisan to the system of regulated rivalry has also contributed to the stabilisation of first-wave democracies.



which they demonstrate *respect* for political opposition. The second concerns the ways in which partisans relate to the question of political agreement and disagreement. For both, I will establish criteria to evaluate the pluralist nature of French and Hungarian partisan discourse in Chapter 4 and 5.

#### ***a. Partisan attitudes towards political opponents***

Studying the ways in which partisans relate to opponents is essential for evaluating their commitment to political pluralism and their capacity to exercise self-restraint. As emphasised in the first part of this chapter, to suggest cohesive political programs to citizens - and thus give them reasons to engage with politics - partisans need to offer alternative normative ideals, as well as an indication of the means they intend to use for executing these. In trying to convince voters of the validity of their claims, it is thus necessary for partisans to compare their platforms to those of their opponents (White & Ypi, 2011). They will argue for the superiority of their own program and criticise their opponents' platform. More fundamentally perhaps, the very engagement of partisans is rooted in the conviction that their own ideas and policies are superior to those of their opponents. At the basis of partisan identity there is thus a story of "why 'we' deserve to govern, and why 'they' do not" (Rosenblum, 2008, p. 358). As Rosenblum continues, "Party IS in part negative association. Unlike other political identities, party IS mutually exclusive; one cannot be both Democrat and Republican" (Rosenblum, 2008, *ibid*).

Partisans committed to political pluralism will engage in such necessary opposition *while* recognising the legitimacy of opponents in formulating contradictory claims. This is a clear example of the exercise of negative capacity: placing our opponents' right to disagree above our conviction in the superiority of our own claims. Partisans that uphold pluralist standards can hold both propositions together. They want to win, yet are sufficiently conscious of the partiality of their claims to not desire a 'complete' victory. They can be impassioned and principled, yet know that there are other legitimate reasons to be impassioned and principled than their own. To sum-up, partisans ideally exercise loyal opposition: the fact that they disagree with other partisans should not alter the respect they have for them.

Respect is not the simple toleration that stems from grudgingly resigning to co-existence. It is a more voluntary "reciprocal positive regard" between opponents that consider each-other as equals in an inclusive and pluralist political community (Gutmann & Thompson, 2010, pp. 1129-1130). The importance of maintaining such

respectful attitudes towards political and moral opposition is a central feature of both agonistic and deliberative approaches to democracy. The former contend that democracy rests on the nurturing of agonistic rather than antagonistic relations with political opponents. According to Mouffe, opponents are thus first and foremost aware of their "shared adhesion to the ethico-political principles of liberal democracy" in this configuration (Mouffe, 2000, pp. 101-102). This then makes it possible for "the 'them' (to be constructed) in such a way that it is no longer perceived as an enemy to be destroyed, but as an 'adversary' that is, somebody whose idea we combat, but whose right to defend those ideas we do not put into question" (Mouffe, 2000, *ibid*). Deliberative approaches also view 'reciprocity' as a key condition for democratic subjects to deliberate in the face of moral disagreement, a condition that involves viewing opponents as both 'competent subjects' and 'moral and political equals' in Habermasian vocabulary (Gutmann & Thompson, 1996, p. 17).

In the following sections, I offer three criteria on the basis of which one can distinguish between respectful and disrespectful attitudes towards political opponents. Partisans respect their political opponents when they criticise them on the basis of their practices and discourses rather than on their intentions (Criterion 1), recognise that the position of opponents is anchored in a distinct interpretation of shared fundamental principles (Criterion 2), and consider their opponents as moral agents that are oriented towards the common good (Criterion 3).

*Criterion 1: Criticising opponents on practices, not intentions*

The first criterion concerns the basis on which partisans formulate criticism towards their opponents. To respect political opponents, rival partisans should refrain from engaging in what Gutmann and Thomson have coined 'motive-cynicism': raising doubts on the integrity of the reasons opponents have to say or do something (Gutmann & Thompson, 2010, p. 1133). For instance, to accuse opponents of being moved by their own private interest—or of being under the influence of private interests—is typical of this type of rhetoric. Such accusations may range from simple references to the vote-seeking attitude of opponents, to more serious accusations of being corrupt and moved solely by material gain.

Partisans need not ignore that their opponents strategically target voters, and that a certain measure of corruption exists in even the most established democracies of the world. Commitment to political pluralism does not amount to naivety. It is rather a recognition that, if the motives of those who engage with politics, including their own,

are always mixed, then questioning the full integrity of their opponents' motives is both hypocritical and destructive to the political debate. Not only are attacks on motives often grounded in assumptions rather than facts, they also preclude the constructive criticism of opponents' discourse and practices that should form the basis of partisan debates. In this context, pluralist partisans may instead use their own normative assumptions as a basis for criticising their opponents. A pro-choice partisan could, for instance, criticise anti-abortion policies for leading to a restriction of the freedom and well-being of women in society, rather than accuse their opponents of catering to a radical fringe of their electorate. This argument is indeed compatible with recognising pro-life activists as moral agents motivated by legitimate principled commitments.

*Criterion 2: Considering opponents as principled*

The second criterion for respectful political discourse is an acknowledgement of the principled nature of opponents' positions. Partisans should assume that, even if they disagree with their rivals' stances, these "act not only for their own political gain but also out of a desire to do what they think is right" (Gutmann & Thompson, 2010). Assuming the 'mixed motives' of opponents is thus to see that, while these are partly moved by the desire to win elections and gain office, opponents are also committed to advance a set of principles they believe in.

Assuming that opponents act on principle is a straightforward sign of respect, to the extent that principled political commitment carries intrinsically positive connotations. To say that a politician has principles and stands by them is in-and-of itself a recognition of political merit. Pushing this argument further, to recognise the principled nature of opposition may also be seen to derive from partisans' belief in the morality of opposition. As Gutmann and Thomson emphasise, to "treat (a) position as expressing a moral rather than a purely strategic, political or economic view" also involves that "an opponent's position is based on moral principles about which people may reasonably disagree" (Gutmann & Thompson, 1996, p. 82). Indeed, why would disagreements persist in the face of joint commitment to the common good? The pluralist - and thus ethical - response to this question attributes the persistence of political disagreements to different understandings of the exact content of the 'common good', and of its practical implications.

While pluralist partisans know that they may share with opponents a commitment to freedom and equality, they are also aware that their opponents disagree on the exact definition of these principles, on their practical implications, or on

the relation of these principles to one another. As Connolly insists, these principles are 'essentially contested' precisely because they are both appraisive - that is valued as social goods - and internally complex (Connolly, 1993, p. 10). In his own words, "(p)olitics involves the clash that emerges when appraisive conceptions are shared widely but imperfectly, when mutual understanding and interpretation is possible but in a partial and limited way, when reasoned argument and coercive pressure commingle precariously in the endless process of defining and resolving issues" (Connolly, 1993, p. 40). By recognising that opponents have different understandings of shared principles, partisans are recognising the essentially contested nature of these concepts, and thus, the ethical necessity of political pluralism.

*Criterion 3: Viewing opponents as oriented towards the common good*

Finally, the most outright and basic sign of respect for opponents is to recognise that they are 'moral agents' and thus fundamentally committed to advancing the good of the political community. This is ultimately the imperative to which both previous criteria lead to. While the 'common good' may be seen as an overly general and impractical concept, it is crucial to the practice of pluralist forms of partisanship. It amounts to a belief that adversaries are committed to addressing widely accepted societal problems (sickness, poverty, crime), and that their action is guided by a concern for fundamental principles such as freedom, equality and the preservation of democracy's 'procedural minimum' (Galston, 2013). In other words, partisans need to believe that they share with their adversaries a will to better the political community, that despite their divergences they have a common good to defend. As Muirhead insists, "this is the basis of good faith and civic respect; it is what makes the permanent and peaceful disagreement of rival partisans possible" (Muirhead, 2014, p. 251).

Indeed, the opposite scenario would consist in believing that opponents are fundamentally oriented towards *harming* the political community and thus, that they are outside the sphere of common morality. Gutmann and Thomson raise the example of pro-life activists that depict pro-choice activists as being 'in favour of killing babies' (Gutmann & Thompson, 1996, p. 80). To say that opponents are proponents of the death of infants is essentially to suggest that they are fundamentally immoral. It would be similarly unethical if a pro-choice activist attributed a desire to encourage teen rape pregnancies to pro-life activists. If they have such base intentions, opponents are then *de facto* illegitimate to govern. They also fail to meet the very basic condition for being included in a political discussion.

### ***b. Partisan attitudes towards political agreement and disagreement***

Partisans' attitudes towards the question of political agreement and disagreement also provide an adequate ground for assessing their commitment to political pluralism, and thus their capacity towards self-restraint. If partisans were to only follow their own convictions without exercising a form of 'negative capacity', they would wish for an absolute and irrevocable consensus to be established in favour of their own views. As Muirhead emphasises "partisans in their most pure and most ambitious form do not want contestation to endure but to be settled in their favour" (Muirhead, 2014, p. 70). Indeed, if a partisan believes that his own conception of justice is superior to his opponents', why would he not wish for his own views to triumph completely and indefinitely? As emphasised above, the commitment of ethical partisans to the principles of political pluralism should act as a break on these holistic drives. Beyond respect for political opponents, ethical partisans will also have a certain appreciation of the value and limits of partisan agreement and disagreements in a pluralistic political community. At their best, partisans value and argue in favour of what Sartori has termed 'pluralistic unanimity': "the coexistence of a unitary political framework and a pluralism of parties pursuing particular goals without threatening the fundamental values and institutions of the framework itself" (Sartori, 1976, p. 16).

I will discuss two criteria for evaluating the commitment to pluralism that partisans show in their attitudes towards political agreement and disagreement. First, pluralist partisans appreciate the necessity of shared principles across partisan lines in maintaining a coherent political community. Second, pluralist partisans recognise that, within the limits of these shared principles, political contestation is not only unavoidable, but perhaps also valuable for its own sake.

#### *Criterion 1: Acknowledging the necessity of shared principles*

Commitment to political pluralism first involves allegiance to a non-partisan and suprapartisan idea of the political community. This means not only that the loyalty of partisans to the political community should have precedence over their allegiance to the party, but that they should also refrain from equating allegiance to their party with allegiance to the community. In other words, partisans should be dedicated to an idea of the political community that includes all parties, yet transcends them. The dedication to the political community, in all its plurality and complexity, is what acts as a break on the selfish drives of partisan conviction. As Rosenblum emphasises, ethical commitments "arise from 'identification' with the political community and feelings of

belonging: we are affiliated and therefore morally obligated, not vice-versa" (Rosenblum, 1998, p. 52). Ryn goes even further to equate ethical conscience with communal allegiance. According to him, "community can emerge only in a society where the forces of egotistical interests are tempered by concern for the common good. In disposing us against what is merely arbitrary and selfish, ethical conscience disposes against what separates us from others" (Ryn, 1978, p. 83).

The political community starts with the idea of the common good. What makes the political community is what we share with others that transcends particular group interests and our defence of particular convictions. Following Galston, we can identify three separate components of the 'common good' in democratic societies (Galston, 2013). The first refers to the existence of 'matters of common concern', issues that should be considered collectively because they result from social linkage. The health, education and security of citizens may be seen, for instance, as 'common goods': they are among the societal objectives that partisans will claim they wish to achieve, regardless of their position on the political spectrum. What these objectives exactly entail, their relative importance to one another, and the means by which they should be achieved, will remain a topic of constant contestation. Pluralist partisans will nevertheless know that the community is partly defined by a common concern for the realisation of these objectives.

Second, the idea of political community is grounded in a series of fundamental principles that define the common good *at large*. Even agonistic theories of democracy, that give a central role to political contestation, recognise the need for a "certain amount of consensus" and more specifically, "a shared adhesion to the ethico-political principles of liberal democracy" (Mouffe, 2000, p. 103). Such principles are generally listed in the Preamble of a democracy's constitution. While some of these—justice, equality or freedom—are common to most democratic constitutional frameworks, their order and emphasise may diverge from one to another. Some principles may also be particular to certain constitutional arrangements.<sup>19</sup> In any case, this mutual ground for partisanship does not preclude very different interpretations of the meaning, relative importance and implications of each principle. But partisans' allegiance to these principles, and awareness of a common, suprapartisan allegiance to these principles, should trump their dedication to particular interpretations. In the words of Muirhead,

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<sup>19</sup> As Galston emphasises, "(e)very political community assumes a distinctive form and identity through its constitution. A constitution, we may say, represents an authoritative partial ordering of public values" (Galston, 2002, p. 66).

"(w)hat matters is that the principles at some general level are taken (by partisans) as a given" (Muirhead, 2014, p. 239).

Finally, the institutions of a democracy may also be seen as a common good. They provide the framework within which, and procedures with which, collective decisions can be made and implemented, disputes settled and the voices of minorities protected. In other words, "(i)f the Preamble states the ends of the union, the body of the Constitution sets forth the institutional means for achieving them" (Galston, 2013, p. 13). The institutions of democracy are therefore both suprapartisan and non-partisan: they put every party on an equal level, and thus ensure that partisan contestation remains open and the place of power 'empty'. This is also why constitutional drafting and major constitutional amendments are generally seen to require the assent of a multiplicity of parties. To be accepted by all, rules should be seen as belonging to the common and not as favouring one particular group over another.

That partisans consider these different components of the common good as foundational of the political community at large is a key condition for their commitment to pluralism. As emphasised above, partisans can only respect their opponents if they see them as oriented towards the common good, and therefore if they see their opponents as one legitimate part of the political community. In the absence of this common symbolic space, partisans are deprived of a vocabulary with which to settle disputes. Respected adversaries then turn into dangerous enemies. The unity and stability of democracy depends on partisans recognising this common good. As emphasised by Bonotti, "(p)arties do not normally question, for example, whether justice, freedom, equality, etc. are valuable goals that ought to be pursued by the government in charge", and they refrain from challenging the institutional framework that regulates partisan contestation (Bonotti, 2011, pp. 21-22).

Finally, partisans should not only avoid challenging the content of this 'common good', but also its consensual nature. Where they fail to do so, they lose sight of the fact that "for democracy to exist, no social agent should be able to claim any mastery of the foundation of society" (Mouffe, 2000, p. 21). Indeed, partisan contestation over the foundations of the political community entails the confrontation of holistic rather than

pluralistic appeals. At best, this leads to a polarised political debate, at worst to a state of civil war.<sup>20</sup>

*Criterion 2: Endorsing the ineliminability of disagreement*

That partisans accept the idea of such shared, foundational agreements does not preclude their attachment to partisan contestation. In fact, such foundational agreements are the primary condition for them to endorse dissent as a permanent and even beneficial characteristic of a democratic society. These common principles establish a frame within which contestation does not threaten to destroy the political community. Once accepted, they instead provide an opportunity for the expression of alternative partisan convictions. Foundational principles do not therefore settle arguments. They are an opportunity to disagree, they provide the terms within which disagreement may become a permanent feature of the polity, and therefore within which democracy is made possible.

Partisans committed to political pluralism should therefore know that political disagreement over the *meaning* and *implications* of these common principles is not only ineliminable in a liberal democracy, but core to its perpetuation. As underlined earlier, foundational principles are "essentially contested concepts" (Connolly, 1993). Their normative weight and internal complexity entails that no single agent can ever account for them in such a way that all will agree. Any identity built around a given interpretation of these principles will exclude other identities built on diverging interpretations, and thus cause disagreement.<sup>21</sup>

From the ambivalence of foundational principles flows the inevitability of partisan disagreements. Partisans will disagree on the interpretation of those principles and societal objectives that constitute the common good. They will also offer different solutions to the inevitable tensions that arise from holding together multiple principles and thus prioritise some principles over others. From these diverse interpretations and ordering of goods, partisans will rank societal objectives in different ways. Finally, partisans will consequently disagree over the means that are

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<sup>20</sup> Muirhead accurately describes the unravelling of such a dark scenario, where partisanship becomes destructive to the political community: "(w)hen partisanship runs too deep, it threatens to expose (our foundational) settlements and, in the process, to weaken the agreement that stands at the base of modern politics" (Muirhead, 2014, p. 73). In such circumstances, "losers may decide that violence or secession is preferable to peaceful opposition and constitutional obedience" (Muirhead, 2014, pp. 2-3).

<sup>21</sup> Theorists of deliberative democracy, such as Gutmann and Thompson, have also stressed the unavoidable persistence of such forms of moral disagreements, deliberation only making possible the mutual understanding necessary for finding common solutions to practical problems (Gutmann & Thompson, 1996, 2012).



most appropriate for realizing given societal objectives, as policy-solutions will also be driven by diverse interpretations of the common good (Galston, 2013, pp. 11-14; Schmidt, 2008). For any given question, partisan disagreement on "the specification of ends as well as the choice of means" is thus unavoidable, and this because "(a) situation requiring choice will typically present a multiplicity of genuine but heterogeneous human goods, not all of which can be attained (or maximised) simultaneously" (Galston, 2002, p. 90).

Pluralist partisans are aware of this moral indeterminacy and do not attempt to foreclose it. They accept the partial nature of their claims - and thus the fact that these spur opposition and contestation - as a permanent and necessary fact. This, according to Rosenblum, is the "categorical moral distinctiveness of party ID": ethical partisans "do not want or expect the elimination of political lines of division" because they are committed to the "system of regulated rivalry that defines representative democracy" (Rosenblum, 2008, p. 364; 362). They fight while accepting the impossibility of a final victory, without hope that their struggle will end future contestation and bring about a permanent consensus (Muirhead, 2014, p. 107). Beyond the incentives created by well-designed institutions, this commitment is what enables partisan majorities to accept the provisional nature of political authority and partisan minorities to accept their status as temporary losers of the democratic game.

## CHAPTER 2: A research design for studying partisanship

In the following chapter, I provide a justification for the research design chosen for this study. The empirical contribution of this thesis consists of a textual analysis of 28 group discussions conducted in 2013 with a total of 117 French and Hungarian young party activists. These group discussions were held with three to six participants at a time in the local sections of the two main centre-right and centre-left party organisations in the countries considered. In France, these included the *Parti Socialiste* (PS) and *Union pour un Mouvement populaire* (UMP), in Hungary the *Magyar Szocialista Párt* (MSzP) and *Fiatal Demokraták Szövetsége* (Fidesz). I explain my epistemological standpoint, defend my case study selection, and justify the specific methodology for this project in light of my two main research questions: *to what extent does real-world partisanship meet the standards of democratic partisanship?* and *how can we explain variations in the extent to which partisans upholds these standards?*

### I. STUDYING PARTISANSHIP THROUGH PARTISAN DISCOURSE

In the following sections, I explain the ontological and epistemological standpoints for this study. First, I situate my study in the broader literature that has argued for an interpretative approach to politics, studying political phenomena and change through the practices and discourses of political subjects. In the second section, I emphasise why I choose to study partisanship by focusing on partisan discourse and what I mean when I say that a given partisan upholds the standards of democratic partisanship. Finally, I explain how this thesis will approach and explain variations in the extent to which partisans uphold these standards.

#### 1. Text and practice-oriented approaches to politics

The choice of a relevant research design essentially depends on the nature of one's object of study and research question (Silverman, 1993, p. 25). Considering the focus of this research—the extent to which partisans uphold theoretical standards of

democratic partisanship—interpretative approaches to politics appear most appropriate.

Interpretative approaches to politics accommodate a variety of methods, from discourse analysis to participant observation, while sharing an interest for the ways in which *meaning is created, negotiated and transmitted within society*. Their main assumption is that the understanding individuals have of their environment is crucial to what they do and to the ways in which they themselves influence their environment. A central focus is therefore placed on the interactions between the individual and his milieu, with cultural resources especially acting both as constraints and opportunities for the production and negotiation of meaning (Gamson, 1992; Pateman, 1971; Swidler, 1986; White, 2009). Typically, instances of meaning-making activities constitute the main object of interpretative studies. They are thus generally divided between those that focus on language, with approaches including frame analysis, discourse analysis, dialogical analysis, etc., and those that focus on practice, the main method here being that of participant observation (for an overview as applied to the study of mass politics, see White, 2009).

Interpretative studies remain in minority in the political sciences, but they have enjoyed wider recognition in the last ten years (Bevir & Rhodes, 2010; Schatz, 2009; White, 2009; Yanow & Schwartz-Shea, 2006). Interpretative approaches are relevant precisely because they allow scholars to address questions that cannot be answered through quantitative or classic comparative methods. Interpretative methods can escape accusations of anecdotism and idiosyncrasy through the application of both procedural rigor (involving careful case selection, and explicit, transparent, and replicable methods of data interpretation) and philosophical rigor (involving logic and argumentation) (see Seale, 1999; Silverman, 1993, chapter 8). Under these conditions, interpretative studies may claim to uncover 'immanent' or 'emergent' forms of causality, in which the material and the discursive affect one another in a loop-like fashion (Gofas & Hay, 2007). According to this logic, events trigger ideas and discourse about them. Ideas and discourse structure and give meaning to the ways in which individuals decide to take action on the basis of these events. Finally, these actions give rise to new events. In Tønder's words, "as the idea engages the world, causing it to follow this or that (...) path, the ideational itself becomes that which gives meaning to the outcome of this path" (Tønder, 2007, p. 69).

## 2. Partisan discourse and democratic partisanship

In the broader context of these types of approaches, I emphasise the status and meaning I give to the notion of democratic partisanship. I then outline how I apprehend and explain the empirical variations I uncover in the democratic merits of partisans.

### *a. The status of democratic partisanship*

In assessing the extent to which partisans uphold standards of democratic partisanship, I do not claim that I uncover the nature of partisans' deep morality and reveal their hidden psychological dispositions. When I say that a partisan is committed to political pluralism, for instance, I am stating that his discourse and practices are in line with a pluralistic conception of the political realm. I am not making a claim about his intentions or motives. There are three main reasons for this.

First, social scientists have only imperfect access to the intentions or 'deep beliefs' of individual subjects - what is accessible to our analysis is what our subjects do or say (White, 2009). To this extent, discourse can, and perhaps should, be analysed independently from the reasons that push partisans to formulate it. Second, it would be unrealistic to understand commitment to pluralism as 'pure virtue', or conceive of pluralist partisans as 'honest' politicians solely motivated by the common good. Machiavelli's legacy guards us against applying the standards of private ethics to assess the morality of those choosing to pursue political power (D. F. Thompson, 1987). Even theorists that insist on the virtues of partisanship do not deny that politicians have 'mixed motives', and therefore that they are at least partly motivated by their own personal ambition (Muirhead, 2014, p. 18; Muirhead & Rosenblum, 2006).

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, it is unnecessary for partisans to have pure ethical motives to fulfil their moral obligations. What is of primary interest for this study is the extent to which they support democracy *in their discourse*. While it is plausible to suppose a connection between democratic speech on the one hand and ethical motives on the other, this connection is not necessary to my argument. A partisan could, in principle, campaign on the basis of a perfectly pluralist discourse not because he believes in his own words, but because he is convinced that voters will endorse this discourse. By contributing to the diffusion of these ethical norms, by legitimizing them, he would nevertheless be contributing to their reinforcement within society and thus, to the perpetuation of democracy as a way of life.

***b. An approach to empirical variations in the democratic merits of partisanship***

This thesis aims not only at assessing the degree to which real-world partisans live up to the standards of democratic partisanship, but also at providing explanations for the *reasons* that can explain the more specific variations I will uncover. Indeed, if we agree that partisan respect for the criteria detailed in Chapter 1 is desirable for democracy, then it is also necessary to inquire into the conditions that would make such respect more widespread.

The research design for this thesis does not allow me to validate or refute hypotheses on the reasons that explain variations in the democratic merits of the four groups of partisans under study. Methodological rigor would indeed require a large-n study for this purpose. The comparative analysis of partisan discourse nevertheless allows me to set forth tentative explanations in response to this question, explanations that can then be further substantiated using other methods or focusing on other cases.

In line with the interpretative approaches outlined earlier, I take as a starting point that the extent to which partisans fulfil the criteria set out in the preceding chapter does not only depend on their good-will or intrinsic morality, but that they are also constrained by the environment in which they operate. As emphasised by Lewis, "(while) actors are the only efficient causes or sources of activity in the political world, social structures are material causes that influence political affairs by conditioning the course of action that actors choose to pursue" (P. A. Lewis, 2002, p. 22; see also Haughton, 2005, pp. 7-12; Sibeon, 1999). To this extent, partisans are both the bearers of previously existing structures, and core political actors with sufficient agency and power to contribute over time to the gradual transformation of these structures. Whether or not partisans uphold the standards established in Chapter 1 will thus partly be dependent on the environment in which they evolve. To explain variations in patterns of partisan discourse, we will therefore need to take into account the structure of constraints and opportunities that fall on partisans.

In the following sections, I establish two categories of factors that are likely to act as such opportunities or constraints on whether partisans develop a cohesive and pluralist discourse. First, the cultural "tool-kit" that partisans have at their disposal in formulating their claims. Second, what I call "external events" - political, economic or social - that parties do not fully control, yet need to respond to. These categories are very general, and do not in themselves constitute explanations for any given outcome.

It will be the task of the empirical analysis to determine whether, how and which specific factors influence partisan cohesiveness and/or pluralism in the concrete cases I analyse.

### *Cultural resources*

In its semiotic understanding, culture functions as a 'tool-kit', an array of signs, symbols, ideas, memories, that are available to actors and of which they can make use in their discourses and practices (Gamson, 1992; Pateman, 1971; White, 2009). The symbolic political resources offered by history, what Nora has termed a polity's "*lieux de mémoire*" (Nora, 1996), are fundamental in that they give sense to partisanship beyond the defence of circumstantial and transitory interests. The boundaries of collective memory will thus have a bearing on the type of discourse that will resonate within a given population, and which partisans will adopt. In their discourse, partisans are both empowered and limited by their cultural context. Gamson, for instance, has spoke of the "cultural resonance" of particular political claims, arguing that "some frames have a natural advantage because their ideas and language resonate with a broader political culture" (Gamson, 1992, p. 135). Saward makes a very similar point, insisting that "the cultural moment (...) sets the limits or parameters for the aesthetic possibilities" of representative claims, as these "tap into existing understandings of what might make for a successful (i.e. accepted) representative claim in a given context" (Saward, 2010, pp. 75-77).

Within one and the same polity, rival parties are likely to draw on different cultural resources to build their own claims. This also means that they are constrained in different ways by the cultural context they have in common. Indeed, partisanship itself is intricately bound with political memory. Rival partisans are likely to ground their commitments and build their appeals on resources provided by the history of their own political family: the types of ideas that their camp has promoted since its inception, and the personalities, events, achievements, hymns and symbols that have shaped the political tradition they are committed to (Marlière, 2007; Muirhead, 2014, pp. 128-130; Rosenblum, 2008, p. 355). While these resources will not strictly determine whether partisanship is cohesive or pluralist in a given polity, we can expect the resources that partisans dispose of to be more or less favourable to their development of cohesive or pluralist claims.

### *External events*

'External events' constitute another main source of constraints and opportunities for partisan discourse. Under this term, I understand the political, economic and social phenomena that happen outside of the full control of parties and that partisans need to respond to (for an example of event-based analysis, see Berezin, 2009). Socio-economic crises, terrorist attacks, political scandals, natural disaster, the actions of political allies or opponents, or the decisions of international organisations would fall under this category. External events may also cover more diffuse and long-term processes that affect the doings of nation-states, such as financial globalisation, global warming, long-term trends of immigration or regional integration.

These events or series of events prompt partisans to take a stand. Partisans will thus draw on them to form their own political discourse. Different types of events may either facilitate or inhibit the extent to which partisans uphold the standards of democratic partisanship. Like cultural resources, they may affect the patterns of speech of different groups of partisans in different ways. While no event will in itself determine the response of partisans, we can nevertheless expect that certain events will be more or less favourable to rival partisans developing cohesive or pluralist responses.

### *Partisanship and democratic change*

I conclude this section with some thoughts on the relationship between the quality of democracy in a given country and the above-mentioned sources of constraints and opportunities on partisan discourse. As made explicit in Chapter 1, the upholding by partisans of democratic standards has the potential of nourishing the faith of citizens in collective political agency and the ethical norms that should ground democracy as a way of life. If partisans are constrained in the extent to which they can uphold these standards by the cultural symbols and external events they can draw on, then these will affect democratic progress or recession *indirectly*, via the political actors that interpret and use these resources.

This also means, however, that neither the past nor the present context condemn a democracy to failure, stagnation, survival or success. If partisans are constrained in the discourse they develop, they still need to choose which cultural resources and events to focus on, they still need to interpret them and they still need to combine the multiple elements that constitute their available 'tool-kit'. Over time cultural change happens because these resources acquire new collective meaning through the uses they generate. Events also come to be read in a different light as a

result. Any process of democratic change especially is likely to involve a gradual transformation of the meaning given to cultural resources and external events by key political actors, including partisans.

## II. COMPARING FRANCE AND HUNGARY

In this section, I first argue that studying partisanship in France and Hungary provides a good estimate for variations in the democratic merits of partisanship within the common political space of the European Union. I then show that these two cases are appropriate to formulate explanations on the reasons for the variations in patterns of partisan discourse I uncover in my study.

### 1. Assessing the democratic merits of partisanship

There are likely to be strong variations in the extent to which real-world partisans meet the standards of democratic partisanship. If the democratic merits of partisanship are likely to vary across different countries, parties or individual partisans, this means that there is no *general* answer to the question: *to what extent does real-world partisanship meet the theoretical standards of democratic partisanship?* Given the qualitative nature of this study especially, I can only answer this question for a limited number of specific cases.

One of the main challenges that my research design has to address in this regard stems from the very problem that motivates this study: the absence of an established, well-accepted scale on which to locate specific instances of partisanship according to their democratic merit. The Freedom House ratings, for instance, provide such a scale for measuring the institutional performance of democracies: they attribute the highest possible score to the most advanced democracies in the world, and the lowest possible score to the most authoritarian regimes. As emphasised above, we can assume that the democratic merits of partisanship will vary across countries, parties or individual partisans. Yet in the absence of available data on this question, we do not know, unlike institutional performance, what the 'maximum' and 'minimum' of democratic partisanship look like. This also means that if we consider a given partisan at random, we have no way of locating the democratic merits of his discourse in a broader universe of cases.

In response to these challenges, I adopt a *comparative* approach across four different parties in two different countries. I choose two European countries—France



and Hungary—which score very differently on more widely accepted, institutional standards for democratic compliance. In the absence of available comparative data, I make an informed guess and expect variations on institutional indicators for democracy to be mirrored by variations in the democratic quality of partisan discourse. That such correspondences exist is plausible, and this whether we consider that the good health of democratic institutions is conditional on the quality of partisanship itself, or that the quality of partisanship depends on the prior existence of a democratic tradition in a given society.

To compare patterns of partisan discourse in an established and a less established democracy—and thus to choose cases on which we can expect a wide variation in the degree to which partisans meet democratic standards—is a good choice for this particular study. This comparison will provide a first estimate of how much actual variation in patterns of partisan discourse we find between countries that fare very differently on institutional standards of democratic performance. By choosing France and Hungary, I can more specifically provide a first estimate of the degree of variation in the democratic merits of partisanship within the common political space of the EU.

Within the European Union itself, France is indeed among the countries that fare the best on institutional standards of democratic performance, and Hungary among the countries that fare the worst on these standards. Consider for instance Freedom House's *Nations in Transit* Democracy Score, a measure that is only applied to countries of the former Soviet bloc. Experts attribute a score to each country, with a scale varying from 1 for most democratic to 7 for least democratic (for details on the methodology, see Freedom House, 2014).<sup>22</sup> Table 1 offers an overview of the NIT democracy scores for the 10 post-communist countries that joined the EU in 2004 and 2007. From 2011 to 2014 Hungary's NIT scores were worse than the regional average.<sup>23</sup> The only two countries that scored higher than Hungary in these three years are Romania and Bulgaria.

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<sup>22</sup> The NIT Democracy score is a global indicator that aggregates five different measures for democratic performance: transparency of electoral process, freedom of civil society, independence of the media, national democratic governance, local democratic governance, judicial independence and corruption. Experts attribute a score to each country on all five indicators, with a scale varying from 1 for most democratic to 7 for least democratic (for details on the methodology, see Freedom House, 2014).

<sup>23</sup> Each year's NIT Democracy Scores corresponds to the countries' performance in the preceding year. I am therefore particularly interested in the 2014 democracy score, which estimates the performance of CEE democracies in 2013, the year in which I conducted my interviews.

Country	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
<b>EU Members*</b>										
Bulgaria	3.18	2.93	2.89	2.86	3.04	3.04	3.07	3.14	3.18	<b>3.25</b> ▼
Czech Republic	2.29	2.25	2.25	2.14	2.18	2.21	2.18	2.18	2.14	<b>2.25</b> ▼
Estonia	1.96	1.96	1.96	1.93	1.93	1.96	1.93	1.93	1.96	<b>1.96</b>
Hungary	1.96	2.00	2.14	2.14	2.29	2.39	2.61	2.86	2.89	<b>2.96</b> ▼
Latvia	2.14	2.07	2.07	2.07	2.18	2.18	2.14	2.11	2.07	<b>2.07</b>
Lithuania	2.21	2.21	2.29	2.25	2.29	2.25	2.25	2.29	2.32	<b>2.36</b> ▼
Poland	2.00	2.14	2.36	2.39	2.25	2.32	2.21	2.14	2.18	<b>2.18</b>
Romania	3.39	3.39	3.29	3.36	3.36	3.46	3.43	3.43	3.50	<b>3.46</b> ▲
Slovakia	2.00	1.96	2.14	2.29	2.46	2.68	2.54	2.50	2.57	<b>2.61</b> ▼
Slovenia	1.68	1.75	1.82	1.86	1.93	1.93	1.93	1.89	1.89	<b>1.93</b> ▼
<b>Average</b>	2.28	2.27	2.32	2.33	2.39	2.44	2.43	2.45	2.47	<b>2.50</b>
<b>Median</b>	2.07	2.11	2.20	2.20	2.27	2.29	2.23	2.24	2.25	<b>2.31</b>

**Table 1: Freedom House NIT Democracy scores from 2005 to 2014**

Source: <https://freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/Data%20tables.pdf>

While the NIT ratings are particular to post-communist countries in Eurasia and the Balkans, we can compare France and Hungary's democratic performance on Freedom House's general ratings for Civil Liberties and Political Freedom that also range from 1 for most democratic to 7 for least democratic<sup>24</sup>. For France, from 2005 up to 2015 both ratings remained at a high 1 (Freedom House, 2015a). If we consider the same data for Hungary, Freedom House has ranked Hungary's Civil Liberties rating down to 2 since 2012, and its Political Freedom rating down to 2 since 2015<sup>25</sup> (Freedom House, 2015b). Other common indicators for democratic performance display a significant gap between both countries. In 2014, the Global Democracy Ranking project for instance ranked France as the world's 15th most democratic country in the world, and ranked Hungary as 36th (Global Democracy Ranking, 2014). The Economist Intelligence Unit Democracy index for 2014 similarly positioned France as 24th and Hungary as 51th, labelling the first a 'Full Democracy' and the second a 'Flawed Democracy' (The Economist Intelligence Unit, 2014).

If the only relevant criteria to be considered were ratings on these scores, one could nevertheless claim that there would have been better cases to choose. Scandinavian countries, but also Canada or New Zealand for instance, are

<sup>24</sup> Following the same system of expert ranking both ratings combine a series of indicators. The Civil Liberties ratings combine four different sub-categories of indicators: Freedom of expression and belief, Associational and organisational Rights, Rule of Law, and Personal autonomy and individual rights. The Political Freedom rating combines three different indicators: Electoral process, Political pluralist and participation, and functioning of government (for details on the methodology, see Freedom House, 2015c).

<sup>25</sup> Here again each rating corresponds to an expert assessment of the country's democratic performance in the previous year: the 2012 rating evaluates the year 2011; the 2013 rating evaluates the year 2012, etc.

systematically ranked higher than France by these different rating agencies. Similarly, there is a long list of countries in the world that are doing far worse than Hungary. Choosing France and Hungary in particular thus requires more thorough justification.

First, there is the practical - yet non-trivial - argument for choosing countries of which I master the language: I am fluent in French, and have a strong working knowledge of Hungarian. As described later in this chapter, partisan *discourse* is the primary empirical source of this thesis. My empirical work involved recruiting and conducting group discussions with participants in their mother tongue and conducting a close textual analysis of the transcripts of these interviews.<sup>26</sup> Conducting these interviews in English would have had strong limitations given the uneven mastery of the English language by European party members. The political norms that characterize a given political community are also embedded within a particular language. Mastery of the native tongue of my interviewees was thus an essential requirement for choosing *any* country case study.

There is, however, a more general case to be made in favour of these particular cases. Despite uneven levels of democratic consolidation, the political systems of France and Hungary display a number of characteristics that facilitate the comparison of partisanship across their national borders. First of all, political and civil rights are at least minimally upheld in both countries under study. This may be seen as a prior condition for French and Hungarian partisanship to be broadly comparable and thus evaluated according to the same criteria. A country like Russia certainly fares worse on democratic standards as compared to Hungary, but the lack of effective political competition between Russian parties would also make Russian partisanship more difficult to compare with partisanship in an established European democracy.

Second, the party systems of France and Hungary display a number of similar traits. Both electoral systems have a strong majoritarian component, resulting in highly polarised dynamics between the two main governmental parties and a series of secondary, satellite parties on their left and right flanks. In this regard, Hungary has also displayed more robust, bipolar patterns of party competition as compared to many other CEE countries (Grzymala-Busse, 2002, 2007). This trait has been considered as particularly favourable to the rooting of parties in society. Indeed, the Hungarian political landscape has displayed comparatively lower electoral volatility, higher levels

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<sup>26</sup> I transcribed the French interviews on my own. Given the time-consuming nature of this process, I then delegated the transcription of the Hungarian interviews to three different Hungarian research assistants (see Acknowledgements).

of party identification, and higher turnout rates than most other post-communist democracies (P. G. Lewis, 2006; Rose & Mishler, 1998). Partisanship is thus likely to be more meaningful in Hungary, and more comparable to partisanship in France, than in many other post-communist countries that have shown less regularity in their patterns of party competition over the last 20 years (Casal Bértoa & Mair, 2010; P. G. Lewis, 2006; Rose & Mishler, 1998; Sikk, 2005).

Finally, the fact that both France and Hungary are EU members not only means that they need to uphold a procedural minimum with regard to human rights, democracy, and the rule of law, but also that their societies, and economies are subjected to similar external pressures. Both countries also have the landmarks of European history as a common cultural heritage. As I will develop in the following section, this is important because it allows to keep some variables constant in providing explanations for the empirical variations this thesis uncovers in patterns of partisan discourse.

## **2. Explaining variations in patterns of partisan discourse**

As I emphasised earlier, we can expect French partisans to comply better with democratic standards than Hungarian partisans. The empirical analysis will determine whether this is actually the case. In addition, I will suggest a range of potential explanations to account for variations in patterns of partisan discourse. More specifically, I seek to determine whether, how, and which specific cultural resource or external events act as constraints or opportunities in the cases under analysis.

For this purpose, France and Hungary appear to be particularly good cases to study. Indeed, the political history of both countries—and therefore the 'tool-box' of cultural resources that partisans dispose of—are very dissimilar. There is nevertheless a share of overlap in the types of events that French and Hungarian partisans have to respond to. This particular balance should facilitate my analysis, and the identification of relevant constraints or opportunities for democratic forms of partisan discourse.

### ***a. Contrasts in French and Hungarian political history***

#### *France*

France is rather uncontroversially considered as one of the historical models of a liberal, consolidated democracy. It was the first European country to see a liberal democratic revolution in the late 18th century, an event that proved hugely influential

for both modern political thought and the course of 19th century European history (Hunt, 2010). The history of French democracy has not been linear since then. Between 1789 and 1870, the country experienced three different revolutions leading to regime changes. This process involved alternations between several different periods of constitutional monarchy (1789-1791, 1814-1848), Republican rule (1792-1804, 1848-1852), and Empire (1804-1814, 1852-1870). This initial regime instability led Furet to speak of the French Revolution as a process that lasted a century, only ending with the beginning of the Third Republic in 1875 (Furet, 2011a, 2011b). This date signalled the start of the longest period of regime stability since the absolute monarchy, lasting until 1940.

After being defeated by Nazi Germany in May 1940, France experienced an authoritarian relapse under the collaborationist Vichy regime (1940-45). Following the Second World war, the country actively participated in refounding the international and European order. It became a permanent member of the UN Security Council in 1945 and was one of the founding members of the European Communities from 1953 onwards. After unstable years under the fourth Republic (1946-1957), the fifth Republic started with what has often been interpreted as a constitutional coup from the President of the French Council of Ministers, Charles de Gaulle. In 1957, he pushed through a new constitution in the period of turmoil of the Algerian war of decolonisation and in 1962 obtained that the Presidential office become electable.

Following this period, France has experienced a period of relative political stability. In the late 1970s, the Socialist Party started to moderate its views and managed to absorb the rather powerful French Communist Party. The party won its first general election in 1981, after several decades of being relegated to the opposition. Since then, the socialist party and those parties that carry the Gaullist legacy have alternated in power.

### *Hungary*

While Hungary saw several liberal and democratic uprisings between 1848 and 1956, these all resulted in a quick relapse into authoritarian rule (for an overview, see Kende, 2004; Molnár, 2007). The 1848 revolution against Habsburg domination was crushed in the spring of 1849, following a war of independence. The country became fully independent only after World War I and the dismantling of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. At the same time, the country lost two-thirds of its territory and half of its population under the 1920 treaty of Trianon. The inter-war period was dominated by

the authoritarian regency of Miklós Horthy (1920-1944). The nationalist and conservative elite at the time mourned the loss of Hungarian territories to its neighbouring countries, and championed an anti-semitic worldview in which Hungarian Jews were seen to undermine the nation's true interests. These were cast as responsible for the 1919 Communist Revolution, which gave way to Bela Kun's short-lived Hungarian Soviet Republic (March-August 1919). The Jewish elite was also resented for its economic and cultural influence, which led Miklós Horthy's regency to enact the first anti-Jew laws in Europe's inter-war history in 1920. In the last six months of World War II, the Arrow Cross of Ferenc Szálasi orchestrated a coup with the help of Nazi Germany, accelerating the genocide of Hungary's Jewish population.

Following World War II, Hungary experienced a brief Second Republic from 1946 to 1949 under Soviet supervision and in 1949 became the Socialist People's Republic of Hungary. Following a period of terror and repression, a revolution broke out on October 23, 1956. The uprising was then brutally repressed, Soviet tanks causing the death of 10 000 civilians in Budapest alone. Between 1956 and 1988, the country was ruled by the General Secretary János Kádár. He practiced what came to be known as 'Goulash Communism' from the early 1960s onwards, adopting a more market-oriented approach to economics, and a more liberal approach to human rights than in most other countries of the Soviet Bloc.

Hungary's first extended experience of democracy started at the end of socialist rule, with democratic elections held in May 1990, following a two-year period of democratic transition. Since then, the country has been a major and emblematic actor of the region's 'return to Europe'. It is a leading member of the Visegrád group since 1991 and was one of the first beneficiaries of the EU's pre-accession PHARE program in 1989. It applied for EU membership in 1994 and started accession negotiations in 1998 (for an overview, see Batory, 2008; Grabbe, 2006). As part of the 2004 round of EU accession, it was until recently considered by most analysts and diplomats as the paradigmatic example of a newly-formed, yet consolidated, Central European democracy (see for instance King, 2000, pp. 166-169).

These positive trends in Hungarian democratisation nevertheless came to a halt after 2010. With a supra-majority in Parliament, the party Fidesz has enacted a series of constitutional and legal measures that have contributed to undermine the

procedural basis of Hungarian democracy (Dani, 2013; Herman, 2015).<sup>27</sup> Table 2 below shows Hungary's ranking on the seven different scales that make for the NIT Democracy Score between 2006 and 2014.<sup>28</sup> According to this measure, Hungary's democratic performance has considerably declined over the last decade, and even more so since 2011.

NIT Edition	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Electoral Process	1.25	1.75	1.75	1.75	1.75	1.75	2.25	2.25	2.25
Civil Society	1.25	1.50	1.50	1.75	1.75	2.00	2.00	2.25	2.25
Independent Media	2.50	2.50	2.50	2.50	2.75	3.25	3.50	3.50	3.50
National Democratic Governance	2.00	2.25	2.25	2.50	2.50	3.00	3.50	3.50	3.75
Local Democratic Governance	2.25	2.25	2.25	2.50	2.50	2.50	2.50	2.75	2.75
Judicial Framework and Independence	1.75	1.75	1.75	1.75	2.00	2.25	2.75	2.50	2.50
Corruption	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.25	3.50	3.50	3.50	3.50	3.75
Democracy Score	2.00	2.14	2.14	2.29	2.39	2.61	2.86	2.89	2.96

**Table 2: Detail of Freedom House's NIT scores for Hungary from 2006 to 2014**

Source: <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2015/hungary>

\* \* \*

France has a long history of democracy and has played a leading role in international politics in the past two centuries. In contrast, Hungary's history has been dominated by authoritarian regimes of different political orientations up to 1989. It was also long dominated by other powers and still remains somewhat at the margins of European politics. Given these divergent historical paths, if cultural resources and the ways in which cultural resources are used by partisans matter to the democratic merits of partisanship, then this should be apparent in the discourse of French and Hungarian partisans. It will be part of the empirical analysis to determine which resources are used by partisan discourse and how their use affects partisan discourse.

<sup>27</sup> I account for these changes in more detail when describing each of my four parties later in this chapter (see part II, 1, b).

<sup>28</sup> On Freedom House's NIT score, see footnotes 22 and 23.

### ***b. A partly shared external environment***

Despite these different cultural contexts, there is a share of overlap in the types of events that French and Hungarian partisans have had to respond to in the past decades. More generally, both countries are affected by similar long-term processes.

In France, the post-war decades had brought economic growth and allowed the foundation of a strong welfare state. The economic downturn that has affected advanced democracies since the oil and currency crisis of 1976 have, however, deeply affected the French economy. Since this period, France has been faced with high rates of unemployment (between 10% and 15%) and low economic growth. Overall, these trends have strained the state in its capacity to provide welfare and fulfill its social functions. Privatisations, budgetary cuts and market liberalisation measures have thus characterised much of France's economic policy since the 1980s. The negative economic downturn has continued in the past decade as a consequence of the 2007 financial crisis and increasingly stringent budgetary requirements agreed upon at EU level.

In this respect, there are parallels with the Hungarian situation. Hungary been deeply strained by economic hardship since the early 1990s and has had to consequently dismantle the strong instruments of welfare set up in socialist times. In the 1990s, the region was under strong external pressure from international creditors, such as the IMF, and political organisations such as the EU, to reach stringent economic benchmarks in a relatively short period of time (Barr, 2005; Roland, 2001). This lead to tough reforms, including mass privatisation, market liberalisation and a tight monetary policy (Begg, 1997; Brada, 1996). The social consequences were a drastic rise in unemployment and economic inequality and the inability of the state to fulfil its past social functions (Janos Kornai, 1994; János Kornai, 2006). The economic crisis of 2007 hit Hungary particularly hard, forcing Hungary to ask for a \$25 billion loan from the IMF, World Bank and EU in 2008.

This shared context should facilitate my analysis. It is likely that partisans will need to respond to similar types of 'external events', for instance engage the question of the 2007 economic crisis or decide how to position themselves with regard to particular EU decisions. If partisans draw on similar events in their discourse, it will also make it easier to compare their responses and the degree to which their responses comply with democratic standards. This should help to more clearly distinguish the independent effects of cultural resources and external events on the democratic quality



of partisan discourse. If similar events generate responses that comply very unevenly to the democratic standards, this would hint at other explanations for the variations we notice. If similar events generate responses that uphold the standards of democratic partisanship unevenly, this could suggest that these types of events do influence the democratic merits of partisan discourse.

***c. A large number of potential cultural resources and external events***

Some last points in conclusion to this section. First, while partisans in both countries arguably have fewer cultural resources in common to draw on than events in common to respond to, this dichotomy remains an obvious simplification. Hungarian and French partisans do have many cultural resources in common. The landmark events of European history for instance have affected both countries in the past. On the other hand, there are also many events that are particular to the national political context of each country. Finally, although both countries are subject to similar external pressures, these trends nevertheless remain far more dramatic in the Hungarian context. Hungary has not just cut down on the welfare state, it dismantled a socialist economy. It has not only beared the pressures of the EU as one of its members, but had to enact radical changes to go through the tough process of EU accession.

Ultimately, there is a large number of potentially relevant cultural resources and events for partisan discourse. There are also a large number of potential interpretations that could be given by partisans of these resources and events. As I will develop in later sections, this is exactly why an inductive analysis of partisan discourse is warranted. We cannot know which resources partisans will use, which events they will draw on, and what effects these uses will have on the democratic merits of their discourse without conducting this analysis.

Second, it is important to keep in mind that these resources and events can also play a role in variations in the democratic merits of partisanship *within* the French and Hungarian political systems. As underlined above, different groups of partisans within a given country will have a 'tool-box' of cultural resources that in part differ from those of their opponents. They may also not interpret the resources that they have in common in the same way. As a result, parties may also provide very different responses to the same external events. An economic crisis, for instance, will not mean the same thing for a right-wing partisan as for a left-wing partisan (White, 2013). Finally, the actions of either mainstream parties also act as 'external events' for their opponents. Partisans have very limited control over their rivals' discourse and practices, and they

will need to respond to what their opponents do or say. To a certain extent, these actions also act as 'external event' for the party that initiated them: they will generate consequences that the initiating party will need to deal with.

### III. THE FOCUS ON YOUNG PARTY MEMBERS IN THE POLITICAL MAINSTREAM

As outlined in the introduction to this thesis, I define partisanship loosely as the array of practices and discourses that are attached to party leadership, membership or identification. The inductive character of this work and its focus on political discourse means that I cannot study all different categories of partisan actors, or all parties represented in the French and Hungarian Parliament. I decided to focus in my empirical analysis on the discourse of young members of the main governmental parties on the left and right side of the political spectrum.

In the following sections I offer some background on the four parties under study, and justify why I focus on the political mainstream in both countries. I give some information on the more specific population of partisans that I interviewed and stress the benefits of studying young party members over other potential groups of partisans.

#### 1. The choice of mainstream political parties

##### *a. The four parties under study*

##### *The French PS and UMP*

France has known regular alternations of power between two main party blocs since the decline of the powerful communist party in the early 1980s. At the time of my interviews in 2013, these parties were named the Parti Socialiste (PS) and the Union pour un Mouvement Populaire (UMP)<sup>29</sup>.

The PS was created during the 1969 Congress of Alfortville as successor to the *Section Française de l'Internationale Socialiste* (SFIO). It won its first majority in 1981, a second in 1988, a third in 1997, and a fourth in 2012. In 2013, at the time of my interviews, the PS was thus in government under the presidency of François Hollande.

While the French PS has gone through many episodes of crisis and renewal in the course of the 20th century, it is responding with considerable difficulty to the

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<sup>29</sup> The UMP changed its name to *Les Républicains* on May 28, 2015.

challenges economic integration have raised more generally for European social democracy over the past few decades (Goetschel & Morin, 2007; Lefebvre & Sawicki, 2006). Since it accepted governmental responsibilities in the early 1980s, the party has been deeply divided between its left-wing, that has argued for continued state-interventionism and a Keynesian economic policy, and its reformist wing, which advocates that the party endorse a version of the German SPD approach to social-democracy.<sup>30</sup>

The division of the party during the 2005 referendum campaign on the European constitutional treaty or the lack of cohesive internal support for the 2007 presidential candidate, Ségolène Royal, are two of the most striking examples of the PS's internal dissensions (Blier, 2008; Crespy, 2008; Wagner, 2008). These divisions have also been expressed acutely since François Hollande's election in 2012, who stands for the more centrist wing of his own party. A sizeable left-wing minority in the PS parliamentary group has thus regularly voiced opposition to the current governments' economic policy-choices (for a recent example, see Bekmezian, 2014). In parallel to these increasingly acute ideological divisions, the party has steadily lost a substantial share of its membership: from a high 204 172 members in 1989 to less than 150 000 in 2015 (Desmoulières, Bonnefous, Chapuis, Faye, & Goar, 2015; Lefebvre & Sawicki, 2006, p. 158).

Its main centre-right opponent, the UMP, was created in November 2002 out of an alliance between De Gaulle's *Rassemblement pour la République* (RPR) and two other parties of the centre-right, *Démocratie Libérale* and the *Union pour la Démocratie Française* (UDF) (Haegel, 2012). In the past three decades, the centre-right has had a parliamentary majority in the periods 1986-1988, 1993-1997, and 2002-2012.

Until the late 1990s, the French centre-right was strongly influenced by its Gaullist heritage. Despite adopting more pro-market positions than its main socialist opponents, it remained attached to the French tradition of strong social policy and emphasised the importance of public services. In the last decade, the French UMP has adopted more stringent positions on budgetary stability and defended the economic liberalisation brought by the accelerated pace of European economic integration. Responding to the rise of the far-right FN, the party has also initiated a much-noted

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<sup>30</sup> The main current in the PS, *Mobiliser les Français*, obtained 67.9% of all votes during the 2012 PS Congress of Toulous. This current brings together a very large majority of party members, and personalities. These have ranged from Dominique Strauss-Kahn and Manuel Valls on the right flank of the party, to Martine Aubry and Laurent Fabius on its left. The motion also stands for a rather loose agenda as a result.

shift to the right on questions related to immigration, justice and security, since the early 2000s (Haegel, 2012, pp. 239-297). This shift has been most clearly embodied by the personality of Nicolas Sarkozy, Minister of the Interior for four years in the period 2002-2007, and President of the French Republic from 2007 to 2012. Crucially, his motion, *La Droite Forte*, has become dominant in the UMP, with 27,8% of internal votes during the 2012 UMP congress. At the height of its popularity after the 2007 Presidential elections, the UMP counted close to 370 000 members; in 2015, this number had dropped to 200 000 (Desmoulières et al., 2015; Goar & Chapuis, 2012).

### *The Hungarian MSzP and Fidesz*

Since 1994, power has regularly alternated between two main party blocs in Hungary, the *Magyar Szocialista Párt* (MSzP) and *Szabad Demokraták Szövetsége* (SzDSz) on the liberal side of the political spectrum and the *Fiatal Demokraták Szövetsége* (Fidesz) and *Kereszténydemokrata Néppárt* (KDNP) on the conservative side of the political spectrum.

A legacy of "national-consensus" socialism facilitated the early conversion of the Hungarian communist party to social democracy, giving birth to the MSzP on October 7, 1989 (Grzymala-Busse, 2002; Kitschelt, Markowski, Mansfeldova, & Toka, 1999). Like other reformed communist parties in CEE, the Hungarian MSzP was eager to prove that it embraces the Western 'way of life' (Grzymala-Busse, 2002, 2003). This not only involved accepting the transition towards democratic rule, strongly committing to European integration, but also orchestrating the end of the socialist economy when it assumed governmental responsibilities between 1994 and 1998. Like in most other Central European countries, the reformed communist party adopted a free-market approach to economic policy (Evans & Whitefield, 1993, 1995; Grzymala-Busse, 2003; Kitschelt, 1995; Kitschelt et al., 1999; Tavits & Letki, 2009).

The MSzP obtained electoral majorities again in 2002, and in 2006. The party's involvement in a number of scandals since the mid-2000s and the fact it had to manage the local consequences of the 2007 financial crisis, has induced a serious loss of popular support. The MSzP only achieved 19.30% of all votes in the 2010 national elections, against 52.7% for the Fidesz. Following this defeat, sections of the MSzP splintered and formed two alternative parties: the *Demokratikus Koalíció*, led by Ferenc Gyurcsány, and *Együtt 2014*, also headed by an ex-MSzP nominated Prime Minister, Gordon Bajnai (see Saltman, 2012). While the three parties reached a coalition agreement on January

14, 2014, following an arduous cycle of negotiations started in April 2013, their common platforms still only convinced 25.9% of voters in the Spring 2014 elections.

The Fidesz has been the main political opponent of the MSzP since the mid-1990s. Hungarian students founded the organisation in 1988 as a party of anti-communists and liberal democrats. After obtaining less than 10% of the vote in the 1990 and 1994 elections, the party initiated a turn to the Right and adopted a primarily national-conservative platform in the second half of the 1990s (Fowler, 2004). The party gained its first majority on the basis of this platform in 1998. They have since then emphasised the importance of religion, tradition and family in society, and adopted a strongly nationalistic rhetoric. Fidesz has been especially keen on championing the rights of the 2.5 billion Hungarian minorities abroad. The party has also been using strong anti-communist rhetoric to criticise its main political opponents (Bozóki & Kriza, 2008; Palonen, 2006).

In opposition between 2002 and 2010, the Fidesz further radicalised its rhetoric. It started adopting strongly Eurosceptic stances following Hungary's entry into the EU in 2004. The party also developed a more interventionist stance on socio-economic issues, championing a form of economic patriotism in industrial and agricultural issues especially (Centre for Fair Political Analysis, 2013; Tavits & Letki, 2009). During this time, the Fidesz developed strong organisational capacities and a faithful membership basis (Enyedi, 2015; Enyedi & Linek, 2008). While MSzP members have been ageing and their number declining steadily since the early 1990s, Fidesz increased its membership from less than 5000 in 1990 to 40 000 in 2011 (Saltman, 2014, pp. 105-106).

The party was granted a supra-majority in the Hungarian Parliament in 2010 and 2014, obtaining over 50% of the vote in both cases. Continuing on its trajectory, Fidesz has enacted a series of institutional changes during these mandates that have thoroughly recast the rules of the political game. The most controversial measures enacted by this party have been a Media Law effective since early 2011; a new Constitution effective since early 2012; five major constitutional amendments to this Fundamental law between 2012 and 2014; and a large number of organic laws that could only be changed with a new, supra-majority (Hungarian Parliament, 2011; Political Capital, 2011). These measures have attracted criticism from a number of independent international organisations for threatening the independence of the judiciary, the freedom of the press and the impartiality of electoral monitoring bodies (see Council of Europe, 2013; European Parliament, 2013; Norwegian Helsinki

Committee, 2013; United States Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, 2013).

### ***b. Why focus on the political mainstream***

As outlined above, I study partisan discourse *in the political mainstream* of both countries under consideration. There are several reasons for this choice. Parties of the centre-left and of the centre-right in France and Hungary are the ones that have the potential to form a majority in Parliament and are primary partners in any governmental coalition. These parties have a history of political leadership, they have greater access to the media, they have more developed networks and deeper roots in society and their programs have the potential to affect policy directly. In other words, parties in the mainstream hold the bulk of state power and dispose of the greatest means to influence public opinion. For democracy as a whole, it is thus particularly important that they uphold democratic standards because mainstream parties have a greater potential to directly affect the stability and quality of democracy. In contrast, the norms that parties at the fringe of the political spectrum uphold will necessarily have a more limited effect on democracy as a whole.

This point applies particularly well in newly-established democracies, where parties have an even greater transformative power than in more consolidated democratic regimes. In an institutional and legislative context that is relatively malleable, mainstream parties are both the main political players and those who determine the rules of the game (Grzymala-Busse, 2007). The extent to which they do so within the boundaries of democratic standards will affect the successful transition to a democratic regime and its further consolidation. A democratizing society is also one in which new cleavages are defined and new political identities emerge. Jowitt for instance speaks of the post-communist context as a “genesis environment”, characterised by “the dissolution of existing boundaries and related identities and the corresponding potential to generate novel ways of life” (Jowitt, 1992, p. 266). In this process, the attempts of parties to represent citizens and mobilise them around competing platforms will have a strong influence on the stabilisation of political identities. Whether mainstream parties uphold democratic standards or not will likely influence the spread and consolidation of democratic norms within society at large and this even more so than in consolidated democracies.

The extent to which mainstream parties uphold the standards of democratic partisanship also provides precious information on the extent to which parties in

general uphold these standards within a given political system. We can take the democratic quality of partisanship within the political mainstream as a 'median' for the party system as a whole, and thus assume that fringe parties are more radical and also less respectful of democratic standards than mainstream ones. This also means that if basic democratic norms are being infringed at the very centre of the party system, where one would expect greater moderation, it is likely that these norms are also being infringed in more radical sectors of the polity. If we were to study fringe parties and find that they disregard basic democratic norms, this would not only be unsurprising. It would tell us very little on the extent to which partisanship at large upholds these standards within a given political system.

Finally, there is a case for studying the democratic merits of partisan discourse on *both* sides of the political spectrum. Partisan identities are defined relationally: partisans respond to their opponents and need opposition to ground and justify their own identities. The particular dynamic that exists between both mainstream parties is thus likely to affect the extent to which their partisans uphold democratic standards. As a consequence, it seems important not to study a given partisan identity in isolation from the other partisan pole it defines itself against. We need to understand specific expressions of partisanship within a broader context of political competition.

## **2. The choice of young party members**

### ***a. The population under study***<sup>31</sup>

I completed the fieldwork for this research in Paris during the Spring of 2013, and in Budapest during the Fall of 2013. I analyse 28 of the group discussions I conducted during this period, seven discussions on each side of the political spectrum in both of the countries under study. With three to six participants in each group, this amounted to a total of 117 participants.<sup>32</sup> This group, which I will refer to as *young partisans* for the sake of simplicity, is mainly composed of members of the youth organisations of the parties under study.<sup>33</sup> Because I offered a guarantee of anonymity to participants at the stage of recruitment, I will only offer general information on the local groups of partisans that accepted to participate in the study. For this reason, I also use fake names for all of the participants I quoted in my empirical chapters.

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<sup>31</sup> For a more detailed account of the composition of my groups, see Appendix 2.

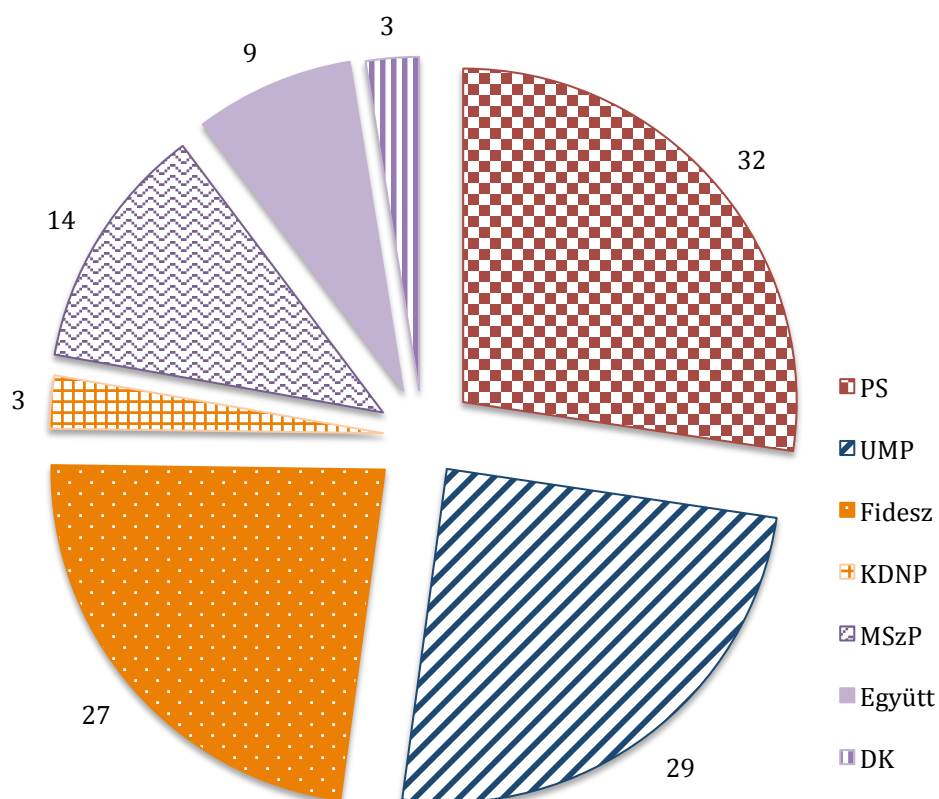
<sup>32</sup> In total I conducted 38 groups of two to six participants. For an explanation of how I selected the 28 groups analysed here, see Appendix 1, footnote 154.

<sup>33</sup> The total sample includes two partisan sympathisers who were not members.

My recruitment strategy consisted in initially contacting grass-root partisans with a sufficient level of responsibility within a given group of party members, for instance the heads of local sections of the youth party organisations in Paris and Budapest. I asked them to act as intermediaries between myself and a potential group of participants. I obtained many of my contacts in Paris and Budapest by searching the websites of the four main youth party organisations. As I started conducting groups, I also participated in different types of political events, including local town hall meetings, general assemblies, conferences, and meetings of party elites and grass-roots activists. In this process, I met more party members who either accepted to be contacted directly about the project, or gave contacts they thought would be useful.

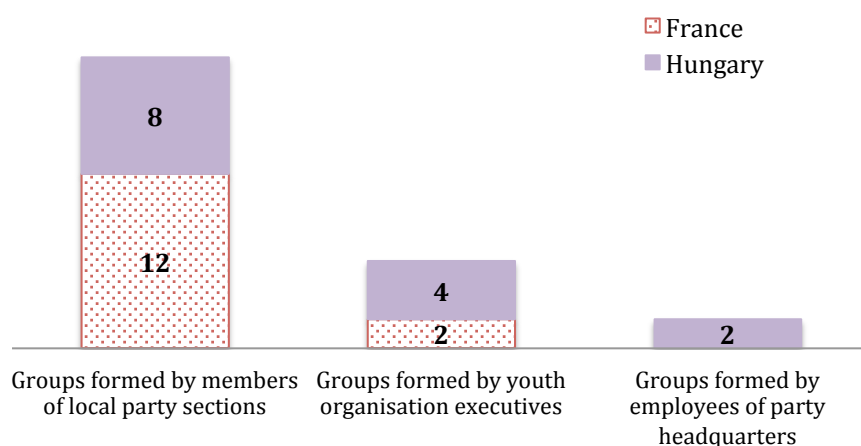
A large majority of groups were comprised of members of the local sections of four partisan youth organisations: the PS's *Mouvement des Jeunes Socialistes* (MJS), the UMP's *Jeunes Populaires* (JP), the MSzP's *Societas*, and the Fidesz's *Fidelitas*. In Hungary, the atomisation of the current opposition to Fidesz required that I adopt a loose definition of the current mainstream left. I therefore contacted not only MSzP activists participate, but also members of Együtt 2014/PM and DK, their coalition partners for 2014 (see section III,1,a of this chapter). On the right-side of the Hungarian political spectrum, a large majority of participants were activists of the Fidesz, with only a few members from their close electoral ally, the KDNP. Figure 1 below gives an indication of the distribution of participants according to partisan affiliation.





**Figure 1: Distribution of participants according to partisan affiliation**

While most participants were recruited from local sections of the different youth organisations listed above, I also targeted a number of other partisan structures where I was likely to find young party members. These included local party sections that had young demographics, party university sections, and the newly recruited staff of party headquarters. A large majority of my participants were therefore in their 20s. Figure 2 below reveals the distribution of the 28 groups according to the specific types of partisan organisation that participants in these groups were recruited from.



*Figure 2: Distribution of groups according to the type of partisan organisation their participants were recruited from*

### ***b. A disproportionately radical cohort?***

In justifying to focus on the discourse of party members specifically, rather than elites or supporters, I first need to address an obvious objection that could be raised against this choice: the radical positions of activists as compared to those of other groups of partisans. The idea according to which grass-root activists are more extreme than both leaders and voters was systematised by May in the 1970s, and is known as the 'law of curvilinear disparity' (May, 1973).

The available empirical evidence on the political attitudes of party members, and the evidence supporting May's law more specifically, is both scarce and mixed (for a review of the literature, see Heidar, 2006, pp. 308-309). In-group deliberation has been argued to produce polarisation and radicalisation, and some empirical studies in the American political context especially have supported May's law in this regard (Fiorina, 1999; Sunstein, 2002). But a number of empirical studies also provide a more nuanced picture of these questions. Norris's study of the British Labour and Conservative parties in the 1992 elections shows that leaders and activists are subject to mixed ideological and electoral incentives (Norris, 1995). Narud and Scare's study of several Norwegian parties also found that the law applied inconsistently to different parties and issues (Narud & Scare, 1999). Finally, a more recent study of the Irish Fine Gael finds that the positions of party activists are in fact very close to those of a loyal voter, and far more moderate than one would expect (Gallagher & Marsh, 2004).

May's law also tends to overestimate the ideological homogeneity of party memberships and the ideological 'correctness' of party members. As expressed by van

Haute, "the literature on party membership often takes for granted that members are happy, loyal and love and support their party" (van Haute, 2011, p. 170). Her work on party members in Belgium reveals a far more complex picture, with surveys revealing "a substantial proportion of respondents who were very critical about their own party" (op. cit., p. 170; see also van Haute & Carty, 2012). More generally, little data is available on how members reflect on and position themselves vis-à-vis the identity and strategies of their own party. The study of partisan *discourse* is necessary for partisanship to be analysed in all of its nuances, details and contradictions, and little work of this type has been conducted so far (for some exceptions, see Marlière, 2007; Weltman & Billig, 2001).

The literature on the attitudes of *young* party members is even more scarce (for exceptions, see Bargel, 2009; Bruter & Harrison, 2009a, 2009b; Cross & Young, 2008), and it gives little indication on how their attitudes might be different from the opinions of their elders. While young people are often associated with more radical ideas, this is not necessarily to be expected from young party members. As Bruter and Harrison have shown in their survey-based study of youth party membership in six European countries, a significant proportion of young party activists in Europe, 26%, are 'professional minded' (Bruter & Harrison, 2009b, p. 1272). This means that they are primarily motivated by achieving a political career, rather than advancing particular political ideas, and that they are also less ideological than the average party member.

### ***b. A meaningful group for studying partisanship at large***

For the reasons outlined above, we can assume that we will obtain a fairly accurate image of French and Hungarian partisanship in general by taking the positions of young party members as a proxy. But there are other reasons for choosing party members over elites or supporters. First of all, the discourse of young activists will arguably offer a more faithful image of the general programs that parties campaign on as compared to the discourse of lay voters. Indeed, activists are more intensely and frequently in contact with the discourse of their leaders, and will regularly seek information on their party's policies and ideas. To this extent, one could cautiously endorse de Swaan's assertion that "the best overall indicator of a party's policy position in the long run would be the attitudes of its activists" (cited in Mair, 2001, p. 15).

The opinions of younger activists may be even more revealing in this regard. Indeed, they will be most influenced by the norms that party elites currently carry in both countries under study. Because political socialisation happens early in the life

cycle, older cohorts may hold ideas that are outdated and will lose their present relevance with generational renewal (Hooghe & Stolle, 2003; Hyman, 1969). A related argument is that young members are the depositary of the future of parties and therefore of partisanship. At the most prosaic level it is among their ranks that future party elites will emerge (Bruter & Harrison, 2009a, pp. 211-222; 2009b, pp. 1284-1285). These last points are particularly relevant in post-communist countries, where young partisans represent the first generation that has been socialised within a formally democratic system. In this regard, they are both the children of a period of political transition in which parties have been crucial and a cohort that holds responsibility for the future consolidation of democracy.<sup>34</sup>

Party activists are also worth studying precisely because they are the actors that deliver the party's message directly, and in person, to the citizenry at large. As outlined in Chapter 1, it is because party organisations are unique intermediaries between citizens and the state that their democratic merits have consequences for the vitality and endurance of democracy at large. In this regard, grass-root activists are closely associated with partisan functions of democratic linkage. As Poguntke emphasises, members are 'the most tightly knit connection between party elites and voters' (Poguntke, 2002, p. 9). Crouch has similarly stated that a "major function of the intermediate circles is to link political leaders to the electorate in a two-way interaction via the various levels of the party" (Crouch, 2004, pp. 70-71). It is thus precisely because the party on the ground has this function of mediation that it is particularly important for grass-root activists to uphold democratic standards. They are among the political actors best positioned to communicate these norms to citizens in person. For this reason, but also because party members have more actively and voluntarily embraced their status as partisans compared to lay supporters, we can argue that party members have a greater and more direct moral responsibility to uphold democratic standards than supporters (Bonotti, 2012).

Finally, there are practical reasons for choosing to focus on young party members. As I will explain below, they are more suited to the focus-group methodology that I have chosen for this study. Young grass-root partisans are more 'social-minded' than their elders, and local sections more likely to be spaces of socialisation for them (Bruter & Harrison, 2009b, p. 1272). This sociability served the study in several ways.

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<sup>34</sup> It is worth specifying that party memberships are quite young in newly formed democracies compared to Western European trends and that young people are playing an essential role in the current evolution of Central European party systems (on the Hungarian case especially, see Saltman, 2014; see also Scarrow & Gezgor, 2006, p. 9).

First, I had to attend party-organised events to meet potential participants. The range of activities organised by youth party organisations in both countries typically made the youth far more accessible than older generations. Second, it was essential for the discussions to take place among individuals that were familiar with one another and were engaged in day-to-day political activism together. Organizing such groups was thus also facilitated by the fact that youth party organisations act as strong peer-groups for many of these grass-root members (on French youth party organisations, see Bargel, 2009; on Hungarian youth party organisations, see Saltman, 2014). Because I was part of the same age group as participants, they also related to me more easily. This is likely to have made them feel more comfortable and has facilitated the conduction of group discussions. Finally, party elites would have been more concerned with their public image than grass-root partisans with few responsibilities in the party hierarchy. To this extent, we can also expect the discourse of young activists to be less contrived and more genuine than the one of elites.

#### IV. METHODOLOGICAL CHOICES

In this last part I make the case for using focus-group methodology to study partisan discourse and offer a more specific account of the discussion guidelines used in my focus groups. I then describe how I processed and analysed the transcripts of my interviews to answer my research questions.

##### 1. Studying partisanship in group discussions

###### *a. The benefits of focus-group methodology*

In line with the interpretative approaches to politics outlined earlier, my use of focus group methodology rests on the idea that political attitudes are best studied not as fixed and attached to an individual, but as resulting from a process through which meaning about public affairs is constructed with others. In this sense, the group is not merely an occasion to study a collection of individual opinions. It allows to explore socially shared knowledge and places of dissensus, reasoning and argument, and more generally, political meaning in construction (Belzile & Oberg, 2012, p. 467; Marková, 2007; White, 2011b, pp. 40, 45). As expressed by White, focus groups find their best use for exploring "common-sense assumptions and routinised discursive practices which underlie these, in which the terms of debate are set and the possibilities for

subjecthood and political understanding laid out" (White, 2011b, p. 40). Discussions among partisans are thus likely to be places where the norms that underlie partisanship are both defined in common and expressed. As phrased by Gamson, "to talk about issues with others, people search for a common basis of discourse (...) Finding a mode of discourse in conversation means finding a working frame that can be shared by the other participants" (Gamson, 1992, pp. 191-192).

Observing partisans talking among themselves thus provides a site to study the norms that they share and construct in common. Focus group methodology is also more appropriate than other methods for subsequently explaining the variations in patterns of partisan discourse that I uncover. As this task is done inductively, by focusing on the cultural resources and events that participants choose to draw on, participants should also be as little constrained as possible in these choices by the research setting itself. As a point of comparison, one-on-one interviews provide a context in which the power of the moderator over the conversation is far greater, and participants are also more constrained by the frame of the question itself in the points they develop (Steiner et al., 2004, p. 54; White, 2011b, p. 45). This is even more of an issue in survey-based studies, as the closed nature of questionnaires tends to considerably foreclose the answers obtained (Bourdieu, 1993).

In the context of this study, it is nevertheless an asset that participants are at least minimally constrained by the focus-group setting and especially that they have a clear audience: me as moderator and you as reader. Indeed, the group discussions thereby acquire a semi-public character. The norms at play will partly be the ones that participants use in regular sociable interaction, but also those they consider the moderator, as well as the audience of the study, are likely to respect (Gamson, 1992, pp. 18-21). We can thus expect partisans to adopt at least in part the discourse that they consider is expected from them 'publicly'.

To this extent, whether or not the discourse of partisans complies with democratic standards also reveals what partisans consider to be a 'correct' political discourse, and which are the norms that they believe they should uphold. My participants will have tried to give a certain impression to their audience. What they *chose* to say in front of their fellow party members, in front of the researcher, and in front of those who will read this research is what they thought would produce the best possible impression on all three audiences. This public dimension of partisan discourse is important precisely because I do not seek to study partisanship stripped from its

attempts at convincing and persuading others.<sup>35</sup> Rhetoric and strategy are consubstantial to the 'great game of politics', and are by the same token an integral part of the public face of partisanship (Disch, 2011, pp. 109-110; Muirhead & Rosenblum, 2006, p. 104). It is also within this very public sphere that the discourse of partisans has the greatest impact and is therefore of greatest interest to this study.

### ***b. Organising the focus groups***

As emphasised by Gamson, "the sociable interaction component (of a group discussion) is variously encouraged or discouraged by the facilitator style, group size, setting, and topic" (Gamson, 1992, p. 193). I designed the group discussions with this in mind. First, the discussions were purposefully conducted with a small number of participants, a minimum of three and a maximum of six. Small groups are more adapted to the exploratory nature of this research, as they spur discussions of greater depth, and are more inclusive than larger ones (see Gamson, 1992; Krueger, 1998, p. 73; White, 2011b). Choosing grass-root activists with few responsibilities in the party hierarchy meant that partisans would be less worried about the direct political consequences of their discourse. The relatively young age of my participants, most of them being in their mid-20s, also made them more open to sociable interaction.

In addition, the recruitment process allowed to increase this sociability. As already emphasised, I asked one partisan with some authority to invite other activists in his own political circle. This means that I assembled participants who knew each other and were used to talking politics with each other. I also invited my intermediaries to suggest a place to meet, and suggested that it be in a public place, generally a bar or café, where the group was used to go together.

I made sure that participants did not know more than they needed on the nature of the study itself and the questions they would be asked before the meeting. If I had presented the study as one seeking to assess the extent to which they uphold democratic standards, this would have certainly biased my results. Participants would have been tempted to pre-empt my results, and calibrate their own answers to this effect. I thus presented the project in far more general terms, emphasising that I am undertaking a comparative study of the political opinions of French and Hungarian young party members. This is, for instance, how I presented the project in the email I

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<sup>35</sup> If this were my goal, I could use participation observation methods, spending time in party headquarters and witnessing partisans' day-to-day interaction.

sent to potential group leaders,<sup>36</sup> or when I encountered potential participants in local party events.

### *c. Discussion guidelines<sup>37</sup>*

I started each discussion by presenting the project to my participants, assuring them that their anonymity would be respected and asking them for the authorisation to record them. I would then ask participants to tell me a bit about themselves and their background.<sup>38</sup> I would sometimes ask participants a few additional questions on their local party structure, day-to-day activism, or the structure of their party's youth organisation.<sup>39</sup> After these presentations, I gave each of them an identical series of twelve cards matching twelve different areas of public policy particularly debated over the last few years in France and Hungary<sup>40</sup>. Each area of public policy was illustrated with an image: in France a satirical drawing by Plantu, published in the journal *Le Monde*; in Hungary more illustrative pictures (see Figure 3 and 4 below).

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<sup>36</sup> For my template emails, see Appendix 3.

<sup>37</sup> For a verbatim account of the discussion guidelines, see Appendix 4

<sup>38</sup> This part of the discussion was removed from the transcripts and NVivo file made available to examiners to secure the anonymity of participants (for access to the raw data, see Appendix 7). All names given by participants at this point of the discussion were also changed to preserve their anonymity. This applies to the examples cited in this thesis, and the data made available to examiners.

<sup>39</sup> This was mostly to further my own knowledge of the internal workings of the parties, but I scarcely used this information in my thesis.

<sup>40</sup> 10 out of 12 cards were equivalent in both countries. The two cards that were particular to both national contexts were, in France 'Sexual minorities and social change' and 'Legal and illegal immigration' (Card 4 and 6 from left to right in Figure 3) and in Hungary 'Institutional reforms' and 'The place of the nation in politics' (Card 4 and 7 from left to right in Figure 4).





**Figure 3: Visual prompts for the French group discussions**

From left to right: Card 1: Maintaining and reforming the public service, Card 2: Relations to the EU, Card 3: Religious and/or national minorities, Card 4: Sexual minorities and social change; Card 5: Justice and security, Card 6: Legal and illegal immigration; Card 7: The fight against unemployment and employment policy, Card 8: Public morality, Card 9: Industrial and/or agricultural politics, Card 10: Fiscal Policy, social policy and redistribution of wealth, Card 11: Financing the public debt and deficit/improving public accounts, Card 12: Environmental politics.



**Figure 4: Visual prompts for the Hungarian group discussions**

From left to right: Card 1: Maintaining and reforming the public service, Card 2: Relations to the EU, Card 3: Religious and/or national minorities, Card 4: Institutional reforms; Card 5: Justice and security, Card 6: The fight against unemployment and employment policy, Card 7: The place of the Nation in Politics, Card 8: Public morality, Card 9: Industrial and/or agricultural politics, Card 10: Fiscal Policy, social policy and redistribution of wealth, Card 11: Financing the public debt and deficit/improving public accounts, Card 12: Environmental politics.

If I chose satirical images in France and more illustrative pictures in Hungary, it is because I could not find an equivalent to the French illustrator Plantu in Hungary - both in terms of notoriety and relative partisan neutrality. While Plantu is clearly from the centre-left, he remains critical towards both left and right-wing personalities. He is also one of the most famous contemporary satirists in France, and I was confident that his drawings would not be perceived as a biased choice by participants. I could not find a Hungarian equivalent to Plantu, a satirist that would not have appeared first and foremost as a partisan to my participants. I do not believe, however, that using satirical drawings in France and images in Hungary fundamentally influenced the outcome of this research. Indeed, the images were presented as mere illustrations of the themes under discussion, and were only marginally the direct object of commentary from my participants.

Once the cards were distributed and participants had had the chance to look at them, they were asked to take the time to establish a classification of the different cards. They were to do this on their own and not in discussion with others. More specifically, they were asked to classify the cards *according to how much disagreement they perceived to exist between their own party and their main opponents on these different issues*. Interviewees were explicitly encouraged to organise cards in the way they saw fit: in a number of categories (for instance, topics of agreement and topics of disagreement), or on one given scale (from the most consensual topic to the most conflictual one). They were also told that they were free not to classify certain cards if these did not fit in the categories, or in the scale, that they had established.

Once they had finished this classification, the discussions were schematically divided into three parts.

Part 1: In the first and main part of the discussion, which took up about two-thirds of the total, partisans were invited to talk about the different cards and their classification, starting from the most consensual cards and going towards the most conflictual ones. I would start with a question such as: "would someone like to tell us about a one of the topics he found most consensual?" A participant would then generally volunteer, and after being prompted, would describe the forms taken by political agreement on a certain topic, or offer a justification for why he chose to classify a given topic as 'consensual'. At that point I would open up the discussion and ask if the others agreed with the first speaker, and told them they should feel free to give their opinion. Once everybody had had a chance to say what they wanted, I asked again if someone would like to suggest a second card, still among the more consensual

ones. This process continued until the most conflictual cards had been discussed. Very soon I did not need to ask these questions anymore: participants would suggest new cards for discussion when a topic had been discussed at sufficient length, and react to each others' classifications without being prompted.

Part 2: At the end of this process, I asked participants an additional series of questions. I aimed at getting participants to express a normative judgement on the overall balance of agreement and disagreement on the issues they had to discuss. I would sometimes start by asking a question such as: "Do you feel like overall there are more topics of agreement or disagreement between the two main political parties?" I would then ask questions such as: "If we consider your classification of these topics overall, do you think, in your personal opinion, that the balance between areas of agreement and areas of disagreement is right between political parties?" or "Do you think that your political system would need more political disagreement between political parties? Or would your political system rather need less disagreement and more areas of consensus between political parties?"<sup>41</sup>

Part 3: The third, and final, series of questions related to participants' personal experiences of encounters with political opponents. I would first ask participants whether they had opportunities in their everyday life to discuss politics with people of different political opinions than their own. I would then ask in what circumstances these encounters occurred, and whether these discussions generally went well, or whether they were problematic.

This discussion protocol served several purposes. First, it allowed me to minimise my influence in the discussion and enhanced partisans' interaction. In the best of cases, these guidelines allowed to generate quasi-autonomous group discussions, in which my interventions were reduced to a minimum. The use of visual prompts served this purpose particularly well (for other examples of focus group studies using visual prompts, see Gamson, 1992; Meinhof, 2004; White, 2011b). Indeed, using this protocol had the advantage of keeping participants on track without foreclosing the discussion altogether. I offered considerable freedom to participants, in

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<sup>41</sup> In France, participants established a clearer separation between 'consensual' and 'conflictual' topics, which also created two relatively distinct parts in the discussion of the cards themselves. For this reasons, I generally divided this second part of the discussion, on partisans' normative assessments of political agreement and disagreement, in two parts in the case of France. For instance, once participants had discussed all of the topics that they considered as 'consensual', I would ask: "If we consider all the cards that you classified as consensual, would you say that it is a good thing that there exists an agreement between mainstream parties on these topics? Or on the contrary would you prefer there be more dissensus between the two main parties on these questions?" These questions would be reversed once participants had discussed the topics they classified as conflictual.

how they chose to organise the cards, in the topics they chose to discuss, in the length at which they decided to discuss them, and in the interpretation they gave of the different cards.

Second, this protocol also ensured that participants would exercise this freedom within clearly defined boundaries, and without me having to intervene in order to reset its terms. The ways in which participants organised the cards at the beginning of the discussion acted as a constant and physical reminder of the discussion guidelines, and limited the possibility for conversations going off-track. Focusing on the same topics<sup>42</sup> and asking the same questions in all groups also ensured that I would be able to compare the discourse of different partisans at the point of analysis.

Finally, this protocol generated data that addressed my research questions without having to ask participants directly about the cohesiveness of their claims, their respect for opponents, or their tolerance of political disagreement. I obtained the necessary evidence to examine the extent to which partisans uphold the standards of democratic partisanship established in Chapter 1. I consider these standards in turn:

- *The cohesiveness of partisan claims:* Part 1 of the discussion provided evidence concerning the cohesiveness of partisan claims. To justify classifying a certain card as a topic of political agreement or disagreement, partisans were required to talk about their own platforms and the ways in which these resemble or differ from those of their opponents. This part of the discussion thus allowed me to analyse the ways in which, and the extent with which, partisans talked about their party's normative goals, linked these goals to concrete programs of government, and differentiated these ideas and policies from those of their opponents.
- *Pluralism in partisan attitudes towards opponents:* Part 1 of the discussion also provided evidence on partisans' respect for their political opponents. In talking about what sets their own party apart from their opposition on the topics under discussion, participants also criticised and valued their opponents in different ways. This allowed me to evaluate the extent to which they criticised opponents on their practices rather than their motives, recognised the principled nature of political opponents, and recognised the orientation of opponents towards the common good.
- *Pluralism in partisan attitudes towards political agreement and disagreement:* Part 2 and 3 of the discussion were more directly relevant for assessing pluralism in partisan attitudes towards political agreement and disagreement. In explaining why

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<sup>42</sup> As specified in footnote 40, 10 out of the 12 topics under discussion were equivalent in both countries.

they would rather welcome more partisan disagreement or more partisan agreement on the issues considered, activists also expressed a judgement on the more general value of agreement and disagreement within their polity. In accounting for their own experiences of interpartisan dialogue, partisans would give reasons for why they attached value to these encounters, or, on the contrary, failed to see their purpose.

## **2. The analysis of partisan discourse**

The 28 group discussions were transcribed verbatim and analysed through a process of coding. Coding in qualitative analysis may be defined as the process by which codes, or key words, are associated with portions of text—a word, a sentence, or a paragraph—throughout the data. In this context, a code is generally "a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute" to the portion of data it is associated with (Saldaña, 2013, p. 3). The same codes are used repeatedly, and different codes often used simultaneously throughout the data-set. Counting these occurrences and co-occurrences allows for the identification of recurrent patterns and themes, thus facilitating the formulation of rules, correlations and explanations emerging from the data. It also allows scholars to identify variations in these patterns across different groups of speakers.

I carried out the coding using NVivo, a Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS). Although similar software (Atlas TI and QDA minor particularly) can be used to perform quantitative content analysis - for instance through the investigation of statistical regularities in key-word usage, grammatical constructions or word co-occurrences - this research does not rely on CAQDAS to perform coding in any automatised way. This software nevertheless performs important functions in my analysis of the transcripts. First, it facilitated a process traditionally performed with pen and pencil by qualitative researchers: coding is not only accelerated by the use of software, it is also rendered more systematic and accessible for review. NVivo for instance would allow for the systematic removal or modification of a given code throughout the dataset, and produces a neat display when multiple codes are associated with the same unit of text. Second, once the cycles of coding are complete, connecting codes and identifying patterns in the data is greatly facilitated by the use of such software. NVivo for instance performs 'coding queries' to identify portions of texts in which certain codes co-occur and variations in the occurrences of given codes depending on the speaker or source analysed.

The theoretical framework detailed in Chapter 1 directly inspired the coding scheme that I applied to the transcripts.<sup>43</sup> To evaluate the *cohesiveness of partisan claims*, much of the coding process was for instance concerned with the types of arguments that participants used to describe the position of parties. To offer some examples, I associated specific codes depending on whether partisans classified a given topic as one of disagreement or agreement between political parties (coded CONFLICTUAL or CONSENSUAL); depending on the types of actors that partisans evoked (coded SELF-FOCUSED, OPPONENT-FOCUSED or COMPARISON) or depending on the dimensions of party programs that participants talked about when accounting for partisan differences or similarities (coded IDEAS or POLICIES).

To evaluate respect for political opponents, I coded among other things the types of criticisms that partisans direct towards their opponents (for instance the codes ILL INTENTIONS and FLAWED PRACTICES). Finally, to evaluate partisans attachment to partisan agreement and disagreement, I coded instances where partisans formed normative judgements on these issues (for instance the codes VALUE OF AGREEMENT or VALUE OF DISAGREEMENT). At the beginning, and in the course of each empirical chapter, I will offer a more detailed account of how I operationalise each of the criteria established in Chapter 1.<sup>44</sup>

In extracting results from this coding process, I compared the occurrences and co-occurrences of different codes according to nationality (whether the groups were conducted in France or Hungary) and according to partisan affiliation (whether the groups were affiliated with the PS, the UMP, the MSzP or the Fidesz). To this extent, it was possible to establish variations in patterns of speech across partisan groupings of different nationalities and political affiliation. In the three empirical chapters to follow, I rely on these numbers and on examples from the interviews as my primary evidence. In conjunction, their analysis allows to highlight variations in the democratic merits of different partisan groupings and thus to answer my main research question: *to what extent does real-world partisanship meet the standards of democratic partisanship?*

In the process of this analysis, I also pay particular attention to the specific cultural resources and external events that participants refer to, and the extent to which and ways in which they use these in discourse. The empirical analysis of partisan

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<sup>43</sup> For a detailed account of how I developed my codebook and of the coding process itself, see Appendix 5, part 1 and 2.

<sup>44</sup> Appendix 5, part 3 contains my codebook, which constitutes a detailed description of all of my codes, and the types of arguments and discursive content they refer to.

discourse detailed in chapters 3, 4 and 5 thus involves making frequent and detailed references to the cultural and external contexts of both countries. I focus on the functions that specific events, traditions, and symbols serve in partisan discourse. I especially determine whether the patterns that characterize partisans' use of cultural resources and external events are generally in line or in contradiction with democratic standards. On this basis, I discuss possible explanations for the more general variations in patterns of partisan discourse that I uncover in the conclusions of each empirical chapter.

## CHAPTER 3: The cohesiveness of partisan claims

In this first empirical chapter, I assess the extent to which French and Hungarian partisans uphold the standard of *cohesiveness*. As argued in Chapter 1, the vitality of representative democracy is conditional on the cohesiveness of partisan platforms. This is what allows parties to act as a bridge between citizens and the state, and to foster civic engagement more generally.

For the purpose of this analysis, I focus on the ways in which French and Hungarian partisans talk about the platforms of rival parties when they account for partisan agreements and disagreements on the twelve topics under discussion. In chapter 1, I offered three criteria to evaluate the cohesiveness of partisanship. I summarize these below, and indicate the type of evidence that my interviews offer for each criterion:

*Criterion 1: The normative criterion:* First, partisans should account for the ends that justify their party's exercise of political power, and for the principles that underlie such an exercise. Parties should stand for a distinct vision of the common good, rooted in rival interpretations of the meaning of fundamental principals, such as equality or freedom. By weaving individual concerns together in an overarching narrative, parties contribute to citizens making sense of their own grievances as issues of political relevance. The normative commitments of political parties thus contribute to locate particularistic appeals in a broader understanding of the political world.

The interviews provide empirical evidence for this criterion. When accounting for partisan disagreements on the twelve cards under discussion, partisans were also implicitly invited to justify their assessment and offer examples of what sets parties apart. One could expect from cohesive partisans that they emphasise on this occasion the ideas that their own party puts forward, and especially the value-systems on which its program is based. I thus coded for instances where partisans talked about their ideas, and further refined this coding category to take into account levels of abstraction of the ideas that participants evoked. In this chapter, I will discuss the patterns of speech that



relate specifically to these instances among different groups of partisans. I will also compare the relative emphasis that partisans place on ideas as compared to practices and policies.

*Criterion 2: The executive criterion:* The second requirement for political parties is that they provide citizens with the sense that normative goals can effectively be realised through the use of state power. This entails that political parties campaign not only on the basis of conflicting interpretations of the common good, but that they set forth policy proposals that make for a coherent political program. Visions of the 'good society', even utopian ones, are relevant precisely because they can provide guidance and a rationale for action.

When it comes to analysing the interview transcripts, we could expect a cohesive partisan to link his party's normative goals to its practices and policies. I draw on instances where partisans do so in this chapter, and conversely on cases where partisans fail to do so - for instance, talking about policy differences without providing a normative rationale for them.

I also draw on instances where participants make a distinction between partisan disagreements on ideas and values, and partisan disagreements on practices and policies. For instance, there were cases where partisans emphasised similarities with their opponents on given ideas, but dissimilarities in their practices. In other cases, participants emphasised similarities on the practices of partisans, but dissimilarities in their ideas. In using such arguments, participants also demonstrate their ability to view the ideas and practice-related dimensions of party platforms as distinct, and to establish connections between them.

*Criterion 3: The criterion of differentiation:* Finally, parties need to be able to differentiate their platforms from that of their opponents, to offer citizens distinct normative goals and policy proposals. This is necessary for parties to make clear their own commitments, mobilise citizens on their basis, and publicly justify their claim to exercise political power *vis-à-vis* their political opponents. Even more fundamentally, it is this form of partisan differentiation that offers citizens a meaningful choice between political alternatives.

The extent to which partisans adopt a comparative perspective when talking about the twelve topics under discussion - rather than focus mostly on their own platform or those of their opponents - is the most straight-forward indicator for this criterion. Indeed, when participants compared party platforms, they were also more likely to make explicit

points of convergence or divergence between political parties, and thus to detail what exactly differentiates or draws together political parties on a given topic.

Participants admitting that they do not know the position of their own party, or of their opponents, on a given question is an indicator for lack of partisan differentiation. This also means that participants cannot say in what ways their own platform differs from that of their opponents. A related indicator is the extent to which partisans refer to their personal expertise on a given subject to legitimate their discourse. This indicates that knowing about partisan differences in a certain policy area is not seen to belong to the 'common knowledge' of partisans.

\* \* \*

The first section below sets the scene for the rest of the analysis. It aims to give the reader an overview of the extent to which partisans identify agreements, or disagreements between political parties on the twelve cards they were asked to discuss. This is an important starting point, because the justifications given by partisans for these classifications constitute most of the empirical evidence for programmatic cohesiveness presented subsequently. Following this overview, I present both the qualitative and quantitative evidence for both cases in turn, first the discourse of French partisans from the UMP and PS, and then the discourse of Hungarian partisans from the MSzP-Együtt and Fidesz-KDNP. In the final section, I discuss both country-cases in a comparative fashion and provide tentative explanations for the variations in patterns of partisan discourse that I uncover.

## **I. PERCEPTIONS OF POLITICAL DISAGREEMENT AMONG FRENCH AND HUNGARIAN PARTISANS**

One of the most striking differences between French and Hungarian groups is that Hungarian participants have a far more conflictual view of their political system than their French counterparts. This was first apparent in the reactions of French and Hungarian participants to my instructions concerning how to classify the cards.

French participants often appeared amused or interested by the cards, making remarks comparing the discussion to a game, such as 'Are we going to play poker?' or 'Are you going to give us good and bad points?' (instances coded POSITIVE REACTIONS, see Table 3). They did not question the relevance of establishing a hierarchy between topics of 'conflict' and 'consensus' among political opponents. A number of PS

participants did ask questions concerning the instructions, but these were mostly directed at the *criteria* according to which cards should be classified (instances coded QUESTIONING CRITERIA, see Table 3). They generally suggested two different logics of classification: one according to the ideals of political parties, the other according to what they do in practice. For now it is sufficient to note that the main problem for French participants, if any, was not *whether* they could classify cards at all, but *how* they were supposed to do so.

	NO CONSENSUAL CARDS	POSITIVE REACTION	QUESTIONING CRITERIA
<b>FRANCE</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>16</b>
PS	1	4	14
UMP	0	6	2
<b>HUNGARY</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>4</b>
MSzP-Együtt	11	0	2
Fidesz-KDNP	10	1	2

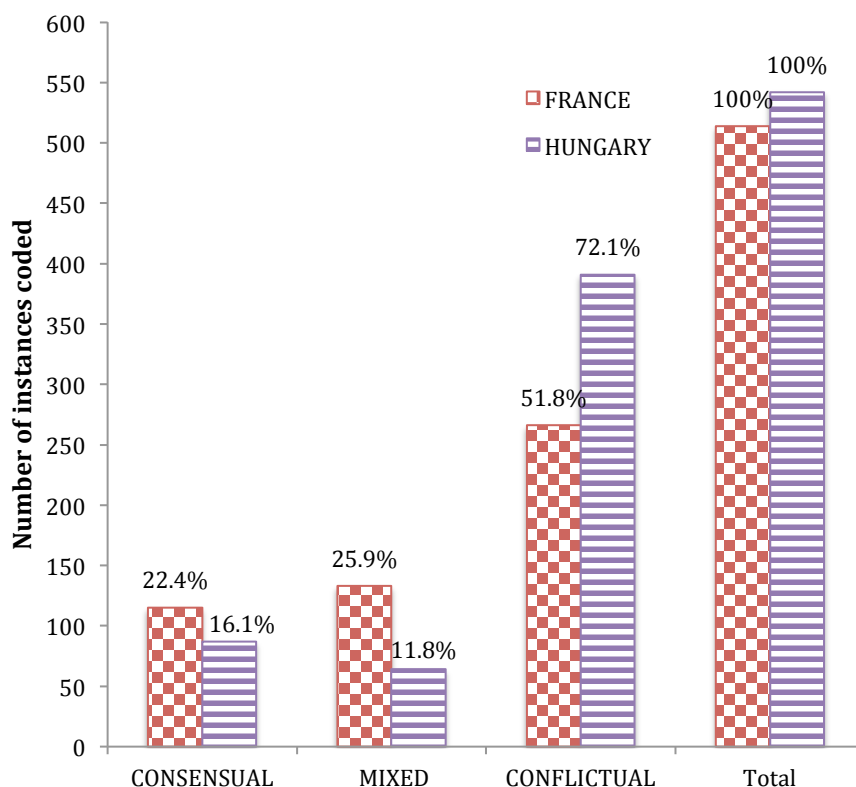
*Table 3: Types of questions raised by French and Hungarian participants following the specification of discussion rules*

The Hungarian groups offered a clear contrast in this regard. In almost all of the Hungarian groups, at least one participant was puzzled by the very idea of establishing such a classification and emphasised that they could barely identify topics of agreement between mainstream parties (instances coded NO CONSENSUAL CARDS)<sup>45</sup>. Levente, a young Hungarian socialist, thus sighed after considering the cards for a few minutes: "In fact I cannot find anything on which we would even remotely agree (with the Fidesz)!" Another MSzP member, Dávid, similarly expressed his confusion: "In truth there is no topic for which I could say that we have a complete agreement". The exercise in itself, the very idea that parties could agree on some issues, seemed unsettling to Hungarian participants - as if what I was asking from them was somewhat provocative and made them feel uncomfortable.

These differences are also apparent if we compare patterns of card classifications between French and Hungarian groups (see Figure 5). I associated the code CONFLICTUAL when one or several participants considered a given topic as one

<sup>45</sup> Appendix 5 contains my codebook, which constitutes a detailed description of all of the codes referred to in the next three empirical chapters, and the types of arguments and discursive content they refer to.

breeding disagreement between political parties and the code **CONSENSUAL** when one or several participants argued that a given topic garnered agreement between political parties. Finally, I coded as **MIXED** instances where partisans issued a qualified judgement on the consensual or conflictual nature of a given topic, emphasising both similarities and differences in the positions of political parties on a given topic.



**Figure 5: Assessments by French and Hungarian participants of the degree of partisan disagreement on the topics discussed**

*N.B: Given that most of my Figures follow the model of Figure 5, I will explain how to read this figure in more detail here and refer back to this explanation under subsequent figures. The vertical axis always represents the number of individual instances of partisan discourse with which I associated given codes, those codes named under the horizontal axis. In this case, the vertical axis represents the numbers of assessments by French and Hungarian participants coded either 'CONSENSUAL', 'MIXED' or 'CONFLICTUAL'.*

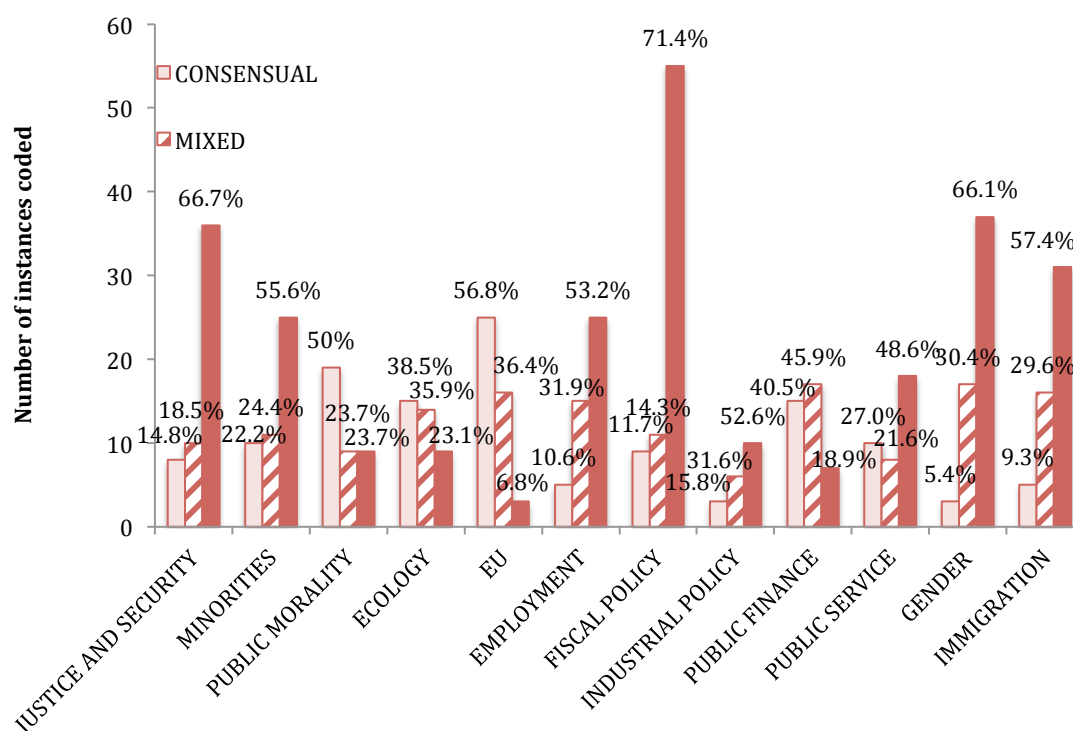
*A code is applied to a portion of text (and therefore becomes an 'instance coded') when at least one participant put forward a substantiated argument that supports the definition of the code (see Appendix 5 for a more detailed discussion of this point). For instance, if a participant were to mention in passing that a given topic generates disagreement, without justifying his claim, this portion of discourse would not be associated with an independent code 'CONFLICTUAL'. If, however, a second participant developed this argument and justified why the topic could be considered as one of disagreement, then the code 'CONFLICTUAL' would be attributed to both of their claims. This portion of the transcript would then be counted as an 'instance coded' in Figure 5 above.*

*In all figures, the 'Total' bar adds up all of the instances of discourse associated with either one of the codes under consideration in a given figure. Here, for instance, the Total bar includes all types of assessments made by participants, and therefore all instances coded either 'CONSENSUAL', 'CONFLICTUAL' or 'MIXED'.*

*The percentage indicated at the top of each bar represents the share of instances associated with a specific code within the Total number of instances coded considered in the same figure. In this case, each*

percentage indicates the share of any specific type of assessment by participants on the degree of disagreement between political parties within the total number of assessments that they issue. For instance, in 391 of their 542 total assessments, or in 72.1% of all cases, Hungarian participants argued that the topics at hand generated disagreement between political parties.

French participants were equally prone to consider the topics under discussions as garnering agreement or partial agreement between political parties, as they were to consider them to fundamentally divide political parties (see Figure 5). French participants could easily establish a hierarchy between the different cards. They could clearly distinguish between the topics that they considered to be conflictual, and those they considered to be consensual (see Figure 6). The larger share of 'Mixed' assessments within French groups - where participants produce a qualified assessment of either the consensual or conflictual nature of a given topic - also reflects a more consensual view of the political world.



**Figure 6: Classifications by French participants of the different topics under discussion**

*N.B: See the note under Figure 5 for an explanation of how to read this figure.*

As for Hungarian participants, only in 27.9% of the cases did they judge the issues under discussion to be ones of agreement or partial agreement (see Figure 5). In a majority of groups, only one or two themes were classified as unquestionably consensual, the card 'Ecology' generally figuring among them (see Figure 7). From here, participants most often declared that they could not find any more consensual themes and that all other cards were topics of dispute between the main political parties. Most of the times, I had to ask repeatedly whether there were 'any more consensual topics'

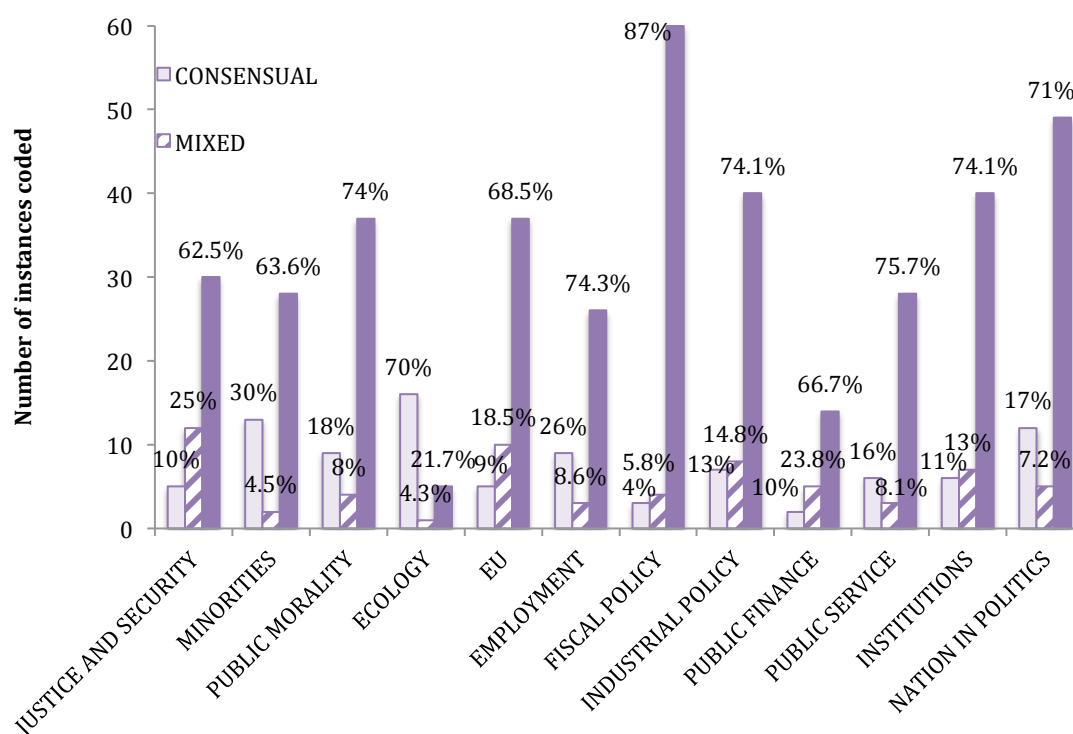
to be discussed, as they jumped very quickly to what they saw as more controversial issues. This is an illustrative example, taken from a Fidesz group:

Author: And there are no more consensual themes?

Olivia: In Hungary? Not really, this is not that kind of a country..

Tamás: Not really, unfortunately..

Hungarian participants then displayed several strategies to classify the cards. In some cases, participants did distinguish between moderately and highly conflictual topics, but this distinction was not coded for specifically. In many other cases, they did not even establish a hierarchy among the cards, and proceeded to explain why they considered each topic to be one of major partisan disagreement. If we break down these assessments topic by topic, the result is that it is more difficult than in the French case to identify those cleavages that Hungarian participants considered as most salient (see Figure 7). Indeed, 7 out of 12 topics were classified as 'conflictual' over 70% of the time, and 11 out of 12 over 60% of the time.



**Figure 7: Classifications by Hungarian participants of the different topics under discussion**

*N.B: See the note under Figure 5 for an explanation of how to read this figure*

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As emphasised above, cohesiveness entails that partisans are able to convincingly *account for* the disagreements that structure the party system. In the

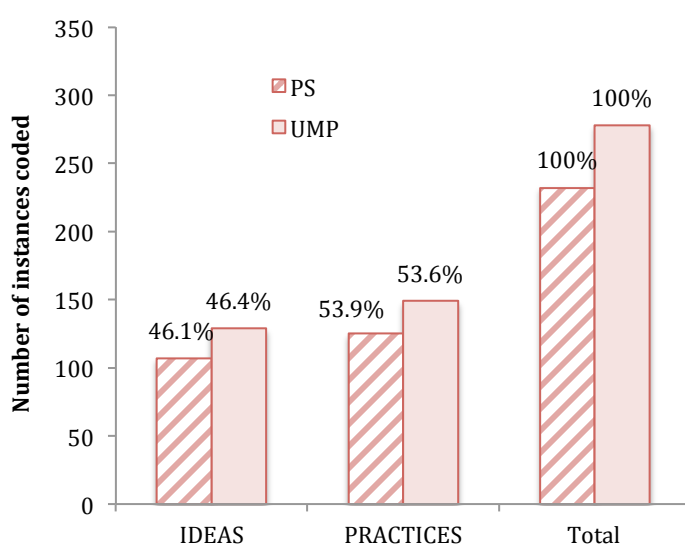
following sections, I analyse in turn the capacity of French and Hungarian participants to do so.

## II. THE FRENCH CASE

Here I examine the extent to which the discourse of French participants complies with the three criteria of partisan cohesiveness: the normative criterion, the executive criterion and the criterion of differentiation.

### 1. The normative criterion

French participants frequently referred to principles and values as structural features of their partisan identity. They often recognised explicitly the importance of ideas and intellectual traditions for their movements. This is apparent from the coding-based evidence. When discussing their classification of each of the twelve cards, participants offered an account of the elements of their party's platform that they considered either similar, or dissimilar to those of their opponents. I coded specifically for instances where partisans insisted on either the different or similar ideas that underlie parties' positions on a given issue (instances coded IDEAS). I also coded for instances where participants insisted on the different or similar types of political practices that parties defend or undertake (instances coded PRACTICES). As is apparent from Figure 8, French partisans rely on ideals and practices in a rather balanced way to justify their agreements or disagreements with political opponents.



**Figure 8: Dimensions of partisan platforms emphasised by French participants to justify their card classification**

*N.B: See the note under Figure 5 for an explanation of how to read this figure*

In PS groups especially, it was not uncommon for participants to discuss the meaning and relevance of socialism as an intellectual tradition. The following dialogue is a good example of this. René is answering Didier, who just emphasised that he would welcome institutional reforms that would allow citizens to take part more directly in political decision-making:

René: Well what you are saying, I agree with you, but what is easy to see is that you are quickly going to confront economic problems. Because at the level of... all right, a worker, you can.. lets imagine, we establish the 30 hour week, I push all economic questions aside. The worker will work 5 hours less every week, does that necessarily mean that he will become involved in local councils, etc? So you get to a bunch of questions that have to do with culture, schooling, etc, with the democratisation of knowledge. You also get to economic questions, what will be the relation of the worker to the factory, to his work tool, of the cashier in the supermarket, etc. And what you end up saying is that you want a more democratic society, and to reach this in fact you get to socialism, so in the end... honestly, these are the roots of (our) engagement.

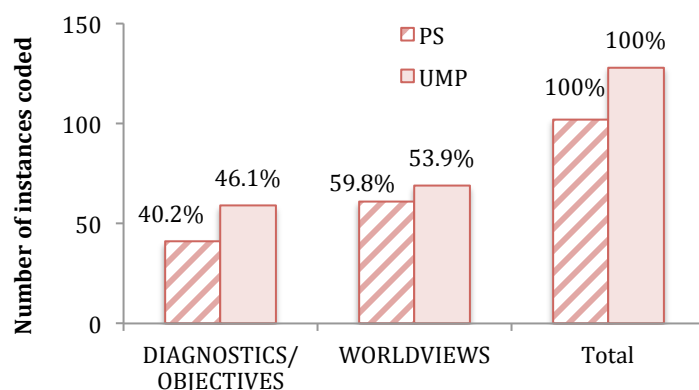
Didier: Fundamentally that is it, we agree. We completely agree. For me socialism is a project of the deepening of the democratic project, what Jaurès used to say, democracy until the end, that is to say the capacity to deepen democracy until... its most extreme point. Insofar as possible in the sense that we live in a society of 60 million inhabitants, we cant do direct democracy. But there are other forms of participation to the public debate, and not simply of participating in the debate, but in the decision-making process (...)

Such examples, where participants refer explicitly to the worldviews or ideologies that underlie their engagement, were slightly more frequent among PS groups as compared to UMP groups. This is also verified in the coding data. I further refined the coding categories for the references participants make to ideas, identifying the levels of abstraction at which these were evoked. I associated the code **WORLDVIEWS** to examples where participants insisted on the more abstract principles, values and normative commitments that structure their commitment. On the other hand, I associated the code **DIAGNOSTICS/OBJECTIVES** when participants referred to the types of problems their party were likely to identify as needing remedy through policy, or the types of objectives that their party wished to achieve through policy<sup>46</sup>.

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<sup>46</sup> This distinction echoes the one established by Schmidt in her own definition of political ideas. She separates the level of 'public philosophies' and that of 'programmatic beliefs' (Schmidt, 2008). "Public philosophies" according to Schmidt are the "ideas, values, and principles of knowledge and society" that undergird "policies and programs" (*ibid*, p. 306); this is the more abstract core of parties' normative ideas. As for 'programmatic beliefs' they "operate in the space between worldviews and specific policy ideas" and include "the problems to be solved by such policies; the issues to be considered; the goals to be achieved" (*ibid*, p. 306).





**Figure 9: Ideational dimensions of partisan platforms emphasised by French participants to justify their card classification**

*N.B: See the note under Figure 5 for an explanation of how to read this figure*

As shown in Figure 9, French participants evoke more often the abstract principles and values that underlie policy proposals than they do assessments of problems to be solved by government or the general objectives of public policies (on average, 56.5% and 43.5% of total assessments respectively). PS participants, however, emphasise abstract principles slightly more often than their UMP counterparts (59.8% and 53.9% of total assessments respectively).

This fits with the characteristics generally associated with traditional Left-Right registers: the Left is more idealistic and the Right more pragmatic in its approach to social reality. Both PS and UMP participants saw the Left as more ideologically inclined than the Right. This opposition comes out in the following discussion from an UMP group, where Gilles sees his own party as held together by charismatic personalities, rather than ideas. The rest of the group contrasts this tendency with the PS's attachment to socialist ideology:

Gilles: We tend to gather more around someone that we consider to be the most pragmatic at a given moment, but we do not have an ideology. Well actually this is a great problem at the moment, that we are incapable of redefining ourselves as the UMP. Sarkozy<sup>47</sup> is gone, *what else*<sup>48</sup>?

Agnès: But this is the great question, because in fact what is the UMP? With the UMP, the problem is that it is a blend that does not hold together, well there are people that are too different within it...

Nelson: Well you know, the PS also have very different people...

<sup>47</sup> Nicolas Sarkozy was Minister of the Interior under Jacques Chirac's presidency (2002-2004 and 2005-2007) and then as President of the Republic (2007-2012). At the time of my interviews, he had retreated from party politics, but came back at the end of 2014 as President of the UMP.

<sup>48</sup> English as in the original interview.

Agnès: Yes, I don't know... I think it is worse in our camp...

Gilles: Yes but in the PS you tie yourself to great ideologies, well.. you can also, you have certain authors..

Nelson: Karl Marx... (laughter)

Gilles: But yes, exactly! Marx, Mitterand, Rocard... These are people that have... who are practically all dead, except for Rocard, who wrote one last book, but well... (laughter) Well they are, it's... From that point when the person is not there with you physically, it becomes ideology. They all have this ideological worldview... they do their pilgrimage..

PS participants were also aware of the common opposition between left-wing idealism and right-wing pragmatism. In the following discussion, a PS group discusses the respective weight of principled conviction in Left and Right partisan identities. They however go beyond the classic description of the idealist Left and the pragmatic Right to emphasise that parties attribute more or less importance to ideas depending on the issues concerned:

Léonard: Well I consider... I think the Right gives precedence to efficiency.. we sometimes hang on to principles, sometimes a bit foolishly...

Jean: Well no, see the Burqua, the legalisation of cannabis...

Léonard: Well I mean on economic questions..

Madeline: Yes, I also agree

Léonard: ... I think we are ready to cut back on economic growth in order to redistribute, to ensure principles of equality.

Sonia: Yes, and this is what we were saying.. we were discussing this the other day with Justin, we thought that this is why... we also think that... people that are left-wing are more conscious of being of the Left than people who are Right-wing. Because the Left insists more on values, on the fact that, at the end of the day, everything can be political... and that we have certain values on the left, something which is less emphasised on the right...

This is not to say, however, that UMP participants did not consider ideas to matter for their own political identity. As is apparent from the example from an UMP group cited above, these participants oscillate between shunning the PS for holding on to what they perceive to be outdated ideas, and regretting the looseness of their own ideology. In the following example, the same group discusses the ideational foundations of their own party.

Nelson: Well yes, I don't know... when you look at the different right-wing traditions, we basically have three of them. We have the Bonapartist right, the

Legitimist right, and the Orléanist right<sup>49</sup>. Bonapartism is a bit like Gaullism, it is in the same spirit. Legitimism is more the Right in the style of De Villiers and the Orleanists are the liberals. So I think that we got... but yes, I don't know, we've tried so hard to signify that... for me on the right it is Gaullism that has won, completely.

Jeanne: No, no! Not in practice..

Agnès : I don't think either...

(...)

Jeanne : But no, it is the liberals that have won! Are you kidding me or what?

Bastien: Well no!

Nelson : Ah he is real liberal, beware! (speaking of Bastien to Jeanne)

Jeanne: I know but...

Agnès : (agreeing with Jeanne) When you see what we are doing on the economic level...

Jeanne : Well then we don't have the same definition of... for me, liberalism has triumphed nevertheless!

Gilles : I think this illustrates it well, we don't know where we stand anymore...

The discussion reveals a strong disagreement between participants concerning which main intellectual tradition structures the contemporary UMP. By the same occasion, it also shows that the question of the UMP's value system matters to participants. In other words, while the ideational basis of right-wing partisanship may be looser than the ideational basis of left-wing partisanship, UMP participants can still recognise the importance of having such an ideational basis.

## 2. The executive criterion and partisan differentiation

I move to consider the executive criterion and criterion of differentiation. The group discussions offer much evidence to suggest that partisans are both capable of establishing clear links between their party's ideas and practices, and can explain how these characteristics are particular to their own party. There are nevertheless limits to partisan cohesiveness on these criteria, especially among PS groups. Indeed, while PS participants have a clear idea of what *should* distinguish their party's ideas and practices from those of their opponents, they are also keenly aware that reality often diverges from this norm.

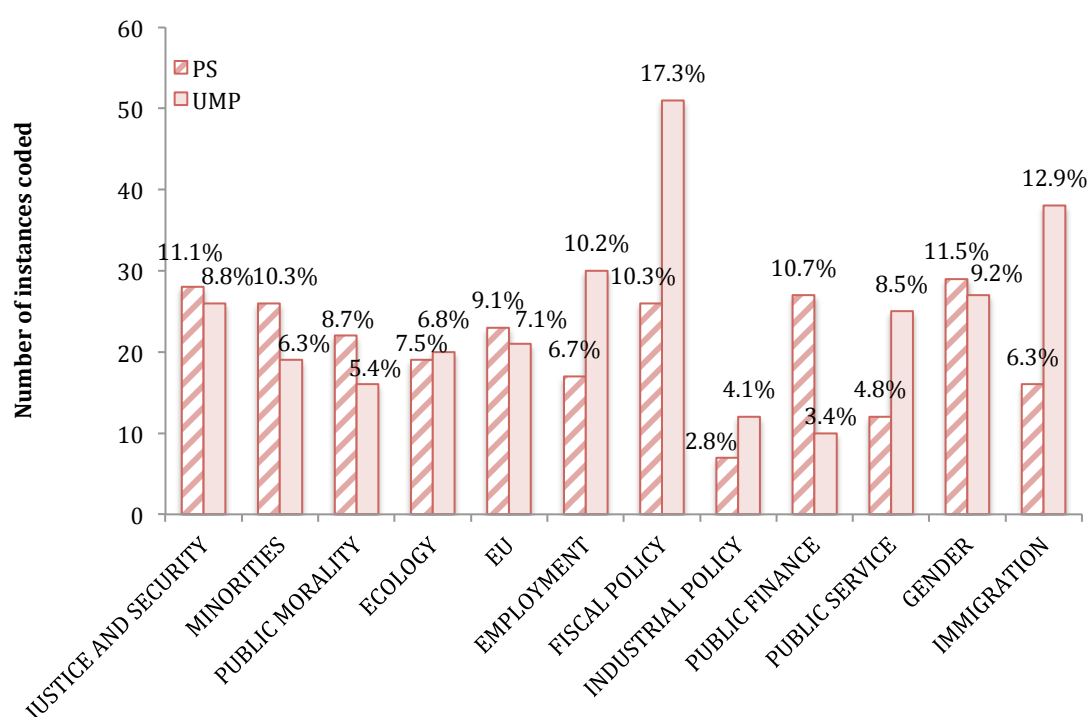
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<sup>49</sup> Nelson refers here to the typology established by René Rémond in *Les droites en France*, one of the seminal works on the intellectual traditions that have structured right-wing partisan thought since the French Revolution (Rémond, 1982)

**a. Evidence for partisan cohesiveness on the executive and differentiation criteria**

*Linking partisan practices to normative goals*

Generally speaking, French participants demonstrate coherence and systematicity in linking political ideas to governmental practices. Importantly, the topics on which they were most likely to emphasise such connections were also those which they considered to be most conflictual between political parties (see Figure 6 above): Fiscal Policy, Justice and Security, and Gender. These topics are also among those which French participants spent more time discussing than others (see Figure 10 below).



**Figure 10: References to the topics under discussion by French participants**

*N.B: See the note under Figure 5 for an explanation of how to read this figure*

The frequent association of ideas to practices on the question of Fiscal Policy can be associated with the existence of strong, pre-established Left-Right oppositions on this question. Indeed, PS participants generally linked the principle of equality and the weight of structural factors in impeding the realisation of this principle with the responsibility of the state in allieviating role of these factors through heavier taxation and redistribution. On the question of fiscal policy, UMP participants were more likely to emphasise the centrality of economic freedoms and the role of personal

responsibility in accounting for social success or failure with the necessity for the state to minimise fiscal interference for each to realise their full potential.

I offer some examples below which illustrate the role of these traditional Left-Right registers in allowing participants to connect partisan ideas and practices. In this first example from an UMP group, Pascal talks about party differences in the role they assign to taxation. He links differences in the way parties identify problems and set objectives on the one hand with differences in the types of policies parties set forth on the other hand:

Pascal: I think that here again, it is strongly a matter of perception on the part of activists and sympathisers. For example on taxation, I take the most cleaving existing example, the least consensual according to me. There is a profoundly diverging conception of what taxation is, what is its role. For the Right, historically, it is about contributing to the functioning of the state. There needs to be a State, it needs to function, that involves (having) means (to do so), so we pay taxes. On the Left there is a punitive, restrictive dimension to taxation. We see this with the 75% tax<sup>50</sup>, taxes have the vocation to rectify unfair inequalities. This dimension is basically non-existent, or barely present on the right. Yes, we agree that each should contribute according to what they earn, but there are limits. The Left gives the impression that they wouldn't mind taxing 99% of earnings over 10 million euros. At the end of the day, they can pay, so they should (...) Concerning taxation, we really don't have the same ends, the same objective.

In the following example from another UMP group, participants talk not only about taxation, but also about the question of education and labour market regulation. Crucially, the traditional registers of Left and Right allow these participants to tie partisan oppositions together on these different topics, and make sense of them within a broader ideational divide. Gilles and Nelson discuss the more foundational values that divide political parties on the question of equality and freedom, and how these affect partisan practices in three different fields of public policy:

Gilles : Well yes, if we consider methods, fundamentally and ideologically there is a huge difference in terms of methods. The Left has a tendency to want equality, which concretely means that any head above another gets cut off, and this (logic is applied) until the level of the lowest head. Then we redistribute and... well in general it is more of a system of redistribution. Instead of equality, the Right is more likely to want real equity, which is the idea that everyone, individually, can realise her full potential. We see this clearly when it comes to education. When it comes to school, it's really simple, the discourse is that we

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<sup>50</sup> During the Presidential campaign of 2012, François Hollande promised to introduce a 75% taxation on revenues superior to a million euros per year. While this tax was introduced in 2012, the French Constitutional Council declared it unconstitutional in December 2012. A revised version of this tax was then introduced in October 2013, but by October 2014 Prime Minister Manuel Valls announced that it would be suspended from early 2015 onwards.

need to help the weakest, when in reality the discourse should be about allowing each and everyone to go as far as possible. Some are really really gifted, but are held back by the relatively slow general movement...

Nelson: I totally agree with you, but you said... you opposed equality and equity, and I would rather have opposed equality and freedom. I find that the Left constrains and prevents people from moving forward, I think there is a will to constrain. To forbid (people from) working more than 35 hours (a week), it is necessary to put economic barriers to prevent (them) from doing it. On the other hand, I would rather be like, well honestly, if you want to work 45 hours (a week) that's your problem, not mine. So I think it's more... well I would rather oppose equality and freedom, like, be free, do what you want, while the Left always tries to... set limits, to put a corset.

The role of Left-Right registers in providing participants with shortcuts to associate partisan ideas and practices is also particularly apparent on the question of Justice and Security. On this issue, the Left has traditionally stressed the role of structural factors in feeding criminality and thus tends to favour a public policy that addresses the social roots of public disorder. On the other hand, the Right has traditionally stressed that citizens carry an individual responsibility to respect the law and thus adopts more repressive policies to address public disorder. The following example from a PS group reflects this Left-Right division. Didier, Philippe and Samir discuss parties' different assessments of the causes of criminality and how this results in different types of policy prescriptions:

Didier: (...) For the Left, public order is not only about the police, it is also about prevention. This is because public disorder is also caused by reasons that are social and economic, and it is by addressing these social and economic reasons, it is first by addressing these social and economic questions that we can contribute to constructing a policy of public order. This is to say that public order is not only something that can be constructed through repression and with the police. This is part of it because there are thefts, there are.. etc, but it is not only through treating the consequences, it is also necessary to deal with the causes, and the causes are mostly social and economic (...) I think that this is where we find the cleavage between the Left... fundamentally, between the Left and the Right. The Right will have a vision.. I will not say simplisitc because that would be a bit...

Philippe : ...of a caricature. But yes, I would say yes, at least for Sarkozy's Right<sup>51</sup>

Samir: It's a reactionary type of politics

Didier: It's true that the Right is mostly (dealing with this) through reaction and through the repression of offences.

Last, French participants were particularly prone to connect ideas with policies

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<sup>51</sup> Philippe refers here to "la droite Sarkozyste", which finds no exact translation in English. Nicolas Sarkozy is known to have initiated a repressive turn in law enforcement matters as Minister of the Interior under Jacques Chirac's presidency (2002-2004 and 2005-2007) and then as President of the Republic (2007-2012).

when discussing the card 'Gender'. This card covered issues generally associated with the 'New Left', including questions surrounding equal pay, women's reproductive rights or the rights of homosexuals. Unlike divisions over redistributive policies, or law and order related issues, these questions have only recently been at the heart of the Left-Right partisan divide. The PS's decision to introduce same-sex marriage in the Spring of 2013, at the time when I did my interviews, spurred a lively debate in Parliament and deeply polarised French society.<sup>52</sup> In the group discussions I led, value-based arguments were often used by either side to support or question the decision. Despite this being a relatively new topic of discussion, partisans used older Left-Right registers to defend their positions. PS participants typically emphasised the necessity of equality between heterosexual and same-sex couples as justifying their party's decision. UMP participants were more likely to oppose it on the basis that it would destroy the traditional institution of marriage, and thus a pillar of French society. This divide is apparent in the following statement by a PS participant:

Justin: The difference in terms of values is that the Right is more about... tradition, nature, well (a) fantasised (vision of) nature. On the left instead it is the idea of justice that takes precedence over everything, and inevitably when there is justice, there is equality, and... well, it is unjust that one person has the right to marry and another does not, although these people are exactly the same except for those they love. And so, it is compulsory to be in favor of (allowing) marriage for all when we have this ideal of justice in us. When you have instead this ideal of tradition, of the established order, and things like that, well you see everything as a shake-up of society, when in fact we see this is not at all the case... But in the end that leads to a much more stigmatising discourse.

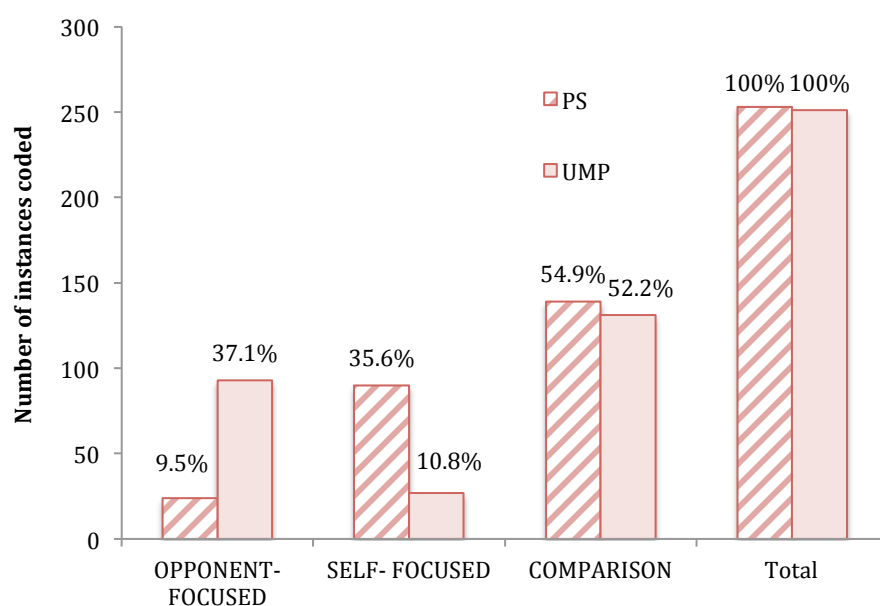
#### *Differentiating the ideas and practices of rival partisans*

Until now, I have shown that French partisanship have strong ideational foundations and that the political commitments of French participants are rooted in the traditional registers of Left and Right. Partisans easily associate these established normative commitments to certain types of policies. To this extent, mainstream partisanship in France appears to fulfil the executive criterion, or the ability to connect and relate partisan ideas and practices. But as the evidence above suggests, the Left-Right dichotomy also provides participants with an easy short-cut to differentiate the ideas and practices of their own party from those of their opponents. To some extent, the Left-Right dichotomy already presupposes an adversarial relationship.

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<sup>52</sup> A law authorizing same-sex marriage was first suggested by the French PS government on November 7th, 2012, debated in the French Parliament from November 2012 to April 2013, and adopted on April 23, 2013. It is revealing that UMP participants generally refer to 'gay marriage', while PS participants tend to refer to 'same-sex marriage'.

If one turns to the coding-based data, this intuition finds further confirmation. Many of the examples above show partisans *comparing* their own ideas and to those of their opponents and grounding their own identity in this opposition. Adopting a comparative perspective can indeed be seen as one indication of the ability of partisans to position their own identity with regard to the identity of their opponents. In the process, they are likely to highlight what sets party platforms apart and what brings them closer. In my coding, I considered the extent to which partisans adopt a comparative perspective when accounting for partisan agreements or disagreements. When discussing a particular topic and its classification, partisans could draw on elements of both their own platform, and that of their opponents, in order to highlight points of convergence or divergence (instances coded COMPARISON). They could also focus on their own party's position (instances coded SELF-FOCUSED) or on the positions of their opponents' (instances coded OPPONENT FOCUSED) without highlighting the alternative offered by the opposite party.



**Figure 11: Actors emphasised by French participants in the course of justifying their card classification**

*N.B: See the note under Figure 5 for an explanation of how to read this figure*

As shown in Figure 11, French participants adopted a comparative perspective in over half of their attempts to account for partisan agreements and disagreements. This evidence thus seems to confirm that the established nature of the Left-Right dichotomy gives participants a frame within which their own partisan identity is *de facto* defined in relation to a partisan other.

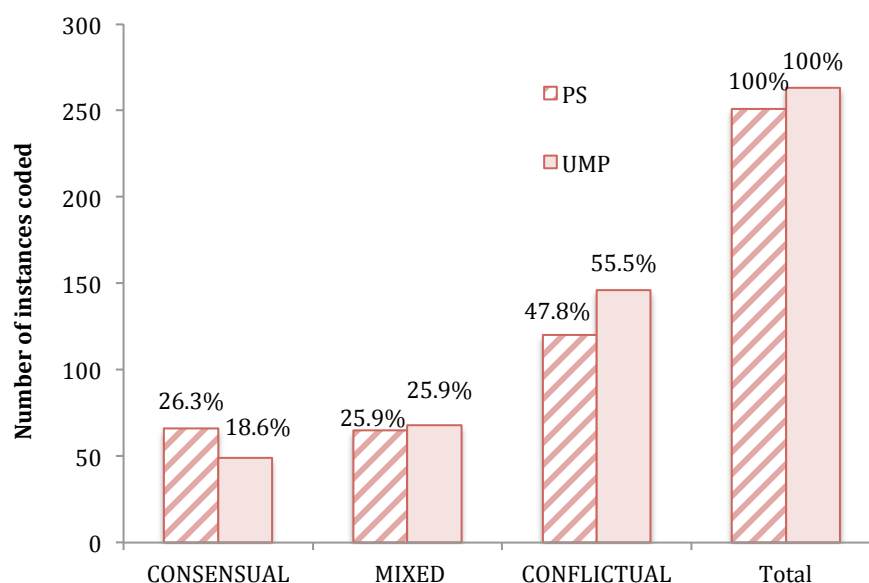


### ***b. The limits of cohesiveness among PS partisans***

The evidence presented above indicates that the political identities of young French partisans are indeed cohesive. Both groups of partisans identify clear-cut differences in the ideational basis of political parties. They are also able to describe the types of practices that flow from these diverging ideas. A closer analysis of the interviews, however, reveals differences in the discourse of both groups of participants, and more specifically, the greater fragility of left-wing partisan identities in France. While PS participants are able to link their ideals to specific types of policies in the abstract, they do not see these distinctions as characterizing real-world politics. PS participants often emphasise their party's tendency to enact policies that do not follow what 'left-wing ideals' would dictate and their party's weak capacity to distinguish itself from its main opponent. In other words, while their personal partisan identity meets the executive and differentiation criteria, they judge and criticise their own political party for not upholding these standards. This disjuncture - between partisanship as they have appropriated it, and partisanship as they witness it - creates a form of disillusionment which, at the extreme, leads them to question the relevance of their own beliefs. In the sections below, I first emphasise the perception by PS partisans of a convergence of party policy. I then use the coding evidence to show the specificity of this discourse among PS participants.

#### *A perception of policy convergence*

PS participants perceive a growing convergence in the practices of mainstream political parties in government. This is also why they are more likely than UMP participants to see agreement or partial agreement between political parties on the topics under discussion (see Figure 12).



**Figure 12: Assessments by French participants of the degree of partisan disagreement on the topics discussed**

*N.B: See the note under Figure 5 for an explanation of how to read this figure*

PS participants generally attribute policy convergence to external pressures that constrain the actions of national governments. The process of European integration and the internationalisation of local economies especially are seen to limit the policy space within which mainstream parties can distinguish themselves. In the following example, a young PS member talks about the reasons that underlie mainstream policy convergence:

Laure: I have the impression that this concerns all those issues that have an international dimension, be it the question of European integration, or the question of addressing public deficits. It's not just about addressing French deficits, because it is part of a more global economic policy. If we can't change things at the EU level, it's impossible to do anything differently on the question of public deficits, so these questions are linked. The question of ecology is also linked (...) Maybe that everything that takes place a bit outside of France, I think that it ends up being consensual. There is this feeling that things are beyond our control, we are overwhelmed by events that we cannot deal with ourselves. The French State is not that powerful. And we get sent back to the Bourget speech, where François Hollande said that his first enemy was the world of Finance<sup>53</sup>. Now we see that it's not that... it doesn't work like that.

Clotilde: It's quite a disappointment too...

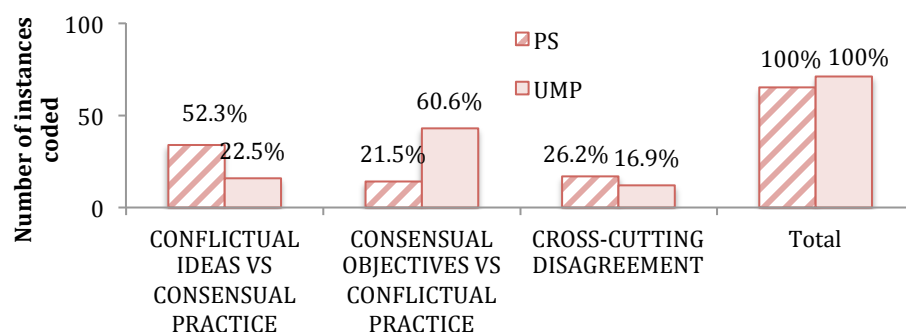
According to PS participants, these constraints result in a situation where parties end up enacting very similar policies *despite* having divergent ideational

<sup>53</sup> This speech was given by François Hollande during the 2012 Presidential campaign, in the town of Bourget on January 22, 2012. Here he said "In this battle that has just started, I will tell you who is my adversary (...) This adversary is the world of finance" (Hollande, 2012).

foundations. When talking about a given topic, young socialists would therefore often make a qualified assessment (instances coded MIXED), stressing differences in the ideas of political parties despite similarities in their practices. The following statement by Benjamin is a good example of this type of argument:

Benjamin: What I think is that, if you take the official positions of the PS and the UMP, then there is a cleavage. But then if you actually consider the facts, the cleavage isn't that strong. From what I see the UMP has a very clear policy when it comes to the question of employment. It's an intense form of flexibility, completely based on liberalism or neoliberalism. With the PS there is a greater ambiguity when you come to what is actually being done... (...) Hollande promised he would reduce the deficit, but he is also in favour of economic growth and maintaining public services. He tries to help employment, but only goes half way because of the politics of austerity that is also currently being led. So I think that ideologically, there is a real cleavage, but when you consider the facts... (...)

The differences between PS and UMP participants in this regard come through if one considers the different types of 'mixed' assessments used in French groups. I code participants' assessments of cards as MIXED where they point to both elements of convergence and divergence in the platforms of parties on a given question, rather than declaring the issue as one of straightforward partisan agreement (instances coded as CONSENSUAL, see Figure 12) or disagreement (instances coded as CONFLICTUAL). 'Mixed' assessments further covered three series of arguments, detailed in Figure 13.



**Figure 13: Arguments used by French participants in their 'Mixed' assessments of partisan disagreement**

*N.B: See the note under Figure 5 for an explanation of how to read this figure*

As shown in Figure 13, UMP participants were over three times more likely than PS participants to point to similarities in the broad objectives of political parties (for instance reducing unemployment), while emphasising that parties employ different policy means to reach these objectives (for instance state subsidies for the PS and market liberalisation measures for the UMP). These instances were coded CONSENSUAL OBJECTIVES VS CONFLICTUAL PRACTICE. This type of argument will be

discussed at more length in the following chapter. More directly relevant here, for any given topic PS participants were over twice as likely than UMP participants to emphasise a convergence in the practice of political parties *and* a divergence in their political ideas. These instances were coded CONFLICTUAL IDEAS VS CONSENSUAL PRACTICE.

The disjuncture that PS participants perceived between their party's ideas and its policies often left young socialists conflicted as to which criteria they should use to assess the conflictuality of the issues under discussion. Indeed, a classification according to the ideas of political parties would lead them to assess far more topics as 'conflictual', while considering only their practices would rather encourage them to emphasise agreements between political parties. This issue sometimes created lively debates within groups, as the following dialogue demonstrates:

Louis: In practice, the decisions that are taken and the message carried by the country are the same, whether we like it or not, whether there are debates. Anyone can say whatever they want concerning Europe, but at the point when decisions are taken at the European Council, the message that the country carries, you could take one head of state or another you would have practically the same... the same message is being communicated.

Quentin: But then the question is... is there a consensus... there is the practice, what we see from outside, but the degree of... Or is there a real consensus on the ideas? Because if that's the question...

Louis: For me the question is, if we take the facts, the decisions taken, concretely, are there different things that are done.

Edgar: But then, let's go directly to the end, the discussion is going to go real quick, because in that case we agree, there is a consensus on every questions actually, because... (...) We're not going to start a fiscal revolution! No sorry... on sexual minorities, maybe we can bring some change but... on Ecology, we're going to do the same, on Justice and security, with Valls<sup>54</sup>, he's the Secretary of State for Home Affairs? We will do exactly the same!

This same issue often puzzled participants at the very beginning of the discussion, after I distributed the cards and gave instructions as to their classification. As indicated in Table 1, there were 14 instances where PS participants asked me explicitly about the criteria they should adopt to classify the cards, and only 2 such instances in UMP groups. For instance, one young socialist, Sébastien, asked me whether the group should classify the cards "according to what the PS actually believes, or (according to) the action of the (current) government?" In a similar vein, another participant, Samir,

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<sup>54</sup> Manuel Valls was PS Secretary of State for Home Affairs between 2012 and 2014, and is known for having adopted 'tough' position on crime and immigration. Since March 31 2014 he has become Prime Minister under François Hollande's presidency.

questioned whether the classification should be "UMP and PS, or Left and Right?" This question is particularly revealing, as it strongly implies a belief that real-world party competition does not obey the logic dictated by the Left-Right dichotomy.

*The limits of hanging on to normative distinctions*

While the political commitments of young socialists are anchored in the historical distinction between Left and Right, they themselves perceive this dichotomy to have less and less real-world significance. There is then a disjuncture between the cohesive partisanship which they identify with, and the disarticulated and undifferentiated partisanship which they witness in day-to-day politics. Many of those I met accepted these hurdles and overcame their disappointment precisely because they are committed and loyal to what they believe their party has historically stood for. As Muirhead emphasises, partisans are patient in troubled times because they carry the memory of the party's past successes and failures (Muirhead, 2014, p. 17)<sup>55</sup>. They can be patient because they know the party transcends currents circumstances and leaders.

This patience was apparent in much of young socialists' discourse. For instance, some were eager to emphasise that, while their government indeed governs in a similar way to their opponents, they do so for different reasons and with other, long-term objectives. In the following discussion, PS participants are discussing mainstream parties' attempts to reduce France's public debt and deficit:

Louis : Well even on the means, even... on the reasons why we are trying to reduce our spending, (parties) don't agree at all... I think that the Right sees it as... as a way to cut down on things it couldn't cut down on otherwise... like pensions, social policies, teachers, things it couldn't get rid of otherwise. The Left sees it as a question of sovereignty and to be capable of doing investment. I think that on the objective we agree, but on the reasons why we need to reach that objective, we completely disagree.

Edgard: But take the facts, the facts.. I'll take out the card 'European Integration' ten times this evening: if we take the facts, we are doing exactly the same thing, we just use another word... we say rebalancing public spending, productive rebalancing... anything you'd like...

Quentin: But wait, it's not just policies that matter, it's also the way of presenting them, of defining their ends...

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<sup>55</sup> According to Muirhead, "(p)artisans are the custodians of a shared memory: they identify certain events of the past—public commitments, legislative enactments—as achievements, and come together, and stay together, to protect these achievements. Policies and programs unfold over years, and it is difficult to know in the short run what works and what does not. Leaders who stumble today often recover tomorrow. Partisans are patient with their own leaders and their own policies—without their patience, neither can succeed" (Muirhead, 2014, p. 17).

Edgard: Well yes, Louis is right if we consider the objective of rebalancing our public spending. For us, it is to allow, afterwards, to initiate a growth strategy and to enable new policies...

Many, however, were more conflicted over the direction taken by their party, fearing a deeper, irreversible transformation at the outset of which the PS would alienate itself from its own foundations. Overall, PS participants discussed their own party's positions far more than UMP participants, precisely because they were more concerned with the general orientation of their party's platform. This comes through in Figure 11 above: PS participants were over three times more likely than UMP participants to focus on their own party when accounting for partisan agreements or disagreements (instances coded SELF-FOCUSED), and three times less likely to focus on their opponents than UMP participants (coded OPPONENT-FOCUS).

The following example, where socialist participants discuss again the PS government's reduction of public spending, illustrates this critical stance well. Didier starts by emphasising that his party has aligned its ideology with mainstream beliefs by ceasing to consider public spending as a strategic instrument serving a political program. Samir and René insist, on the contrary, that their leaders are not to blame for these decisions, as these are dictated by external circumstances:

Didier: (...) There is also at the very heart of the PS, and even in its majority, an ideological alignment with the idea that public spending must be limited, and more than reason would dictate... When it comes to spending, there is this idea that we shouldn't spend too much, there is this tendency to think about the economy... well anyways, it is very widespread within political parties, and within the PS, to use the image of the breadwinner<sup>56</sup>, who is pragmatic... The economy is not at all thought of as an instrument that can serve a political program, it's just thought of as a something that needs to be managed in a pragmatic way (...) And we find ourselves today in this type of bookkeeping that is garnering consensus.

Samir: On this I don't agree, personally... I think Hollande is in a very difficult situation where in fact he doesn't have much of a choice. In my opinion, but well...

René : Honestly, I think it doesn't have much to do with the socialists getting converted to a policy of hard austerity, like the one they are currently leading... I'm not convinced that this is something that is ideologically deep. Look at the United States, governments like Obama's that are not necessarily more left-wing, we got an unprecedented stimulus policy in the history of economics, so stimulus packages can very well (be adopted)... I think the PS had the ideological capacity, at the level of its elites, etc, to accept a stimulus policy. I think very simply that they... They don't have the means, there is an objective constraint (...)

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<sup>56</sup> In French, "bon père de famille".

Other young socialists similarly voiced concern over the structural, long-term nature of the changes at play. In the following example, Sophie describes how the PS has failed to defend the importance of State secularism (*Laïcité*) in the last decade, and emphasises the disappointment this has been for both her and her parents:

Sophie: (...) I see people like my parents.. well they are left-wing, just like that, but it's a really important topic for them, I see that it's really... What I see is people that are disappointed, and I am too, because.. (...) Well I think that when it comes to religious minorities, the Left has involved itself in muddy debates with the far-right, or the Right, and has never really asserted its ideas. I think that in the last ten years it never knew how to deal with this, it never could decide on a strong political axis. And on the left, we've always defended this...

It was also not uncommon for UMP participants to recognise that the PS government adopts similar policies to the ones their own party advocates. In the following example, an UMP member stresses that she finds it complicated to classify the cards precisely because the PS government has adopted many of the UMP's positions:

Anaïs: I find it quite difficult to do this classification because... we had the impression that the Left really wanted to differentiate itself, at least a few months ago. Now I find that on a lot of questions the government has tried to get closer to the position that we ourselves were defending. So I find it quite complicated to do this classification because a lot of this is blurry, and a lot of policies are ambiguous (...)

In the following example, participants from another UMP group similarly emphasise the discrepancies between the PS's campaign message on immigration, and the decisions their opponents are taking in government. Thomas is talking about Manuel Valls, Minister of the Interior at the time of the interview:

Thomas: Well he's never going to say that he sent back... that he turned away more Roma people than the Right did

Alice: They won't use the same words for it..

Thomas: Even if the numbers clearly show it so... he's not going to pride himself of it.

Alice: Well it went down easier when he did it than when it was Sarkozy.

Thomas: Exactly, when... Well for me that's really French politics, we have a huge problem with... with the Left, in the end the Left knows very well that it needs part of its electorate that is very left-leaning, and so it comes up with things that are really demagogical during elections... And then it puts in place policies... I wouldn't say that suit us, but in the end...

Alice: Which in the end are not completely different from what Sarkozy had planned.

On the basis of this section, I conclude that French partisans in many regards have a cohesive political identity. French participants displayed a strong capacity to connect the ideational and practice-related dimensions of their partisan identity, and they could identify how these elements of their party platforms differ from that of their opponents. To this extent, they fulfil the executive criterion and the criterion of differentiation. This can be traced to the fact that the ideational basis of French partisanship is so well-established. Indeed, French partisans also fulfil the *normative condition*: values and principles are core to their self-definition. Policies and practices are, to this extent, secondary: they derive from pre-existing, divergent value-systems, they are transient means to reach more timeless political objectives. The primacy of value-systems, and the dependence of policy on pre-existing normative commitments comes through in the following statement by a young UMP participant:

Etienne: I think it has to do with values, it simply has to do with values. Even when it comes to questions of economics, it's either liberal values that are going to guide policies, and therefore the means put into place, etc., or more interventionist values. On (our) goals there is some consensus, we want less unemployment, we want things to go better. But *at the start our values are different and this implies that the means put into place to reach these objectives will be different* (emphasis added).

There are nevertheless key differences between PS and UMP participants. While for UMP participants, the Left-Right dichotomy still very much structures day-to-day politics, PS participants perceive a strong disjuncture between their party's practice in government and the left-wing ideals that form the basis of their own identity. They are also wary that this disjuncture is accompanied by a convergence of party platforms, and a growing inability of their party to differentiate themselves from their opponents.

Does this evidence suggest that the PS lacks programmatic cohesiveness? One could argue that these perceptions belong to young grass-root members alone and that their disappointment is only a reflection of their own radicality. This, however, is insufficient to fully explain their position. First, across both countries, they are the only group of partisans which expressed such a position—despite the fact that all participants came from similar age groups, and were in similar positions within the party. Second, the progressive conversion of European, social-democratic parties to the principles of free-market economics is a widely documented phenomenon. What this analysis teaches us specifically, is that socialist partisans do perceive the lack of programmatic cohesiveness of their own party and that this perception leads them to feel disappointed with their own party. This supports the general theoretical framework of this chapter, according to which parties' ability to engage citizens, and



citizens identification with political parties, greatly depends on their ability to communicate a form of programmatic cohesiveness.

### III. THE HUNGARIAN CASE

I now turn to the discourse of Hungarian partisans. I proceed differently as in the French case, first looking at the cohesiveness of Hungarian partisanship on socio-cultural issues, and then at the cohesiveness of Hungarian partisanship on socio-economic issues. Indeed, while in French groups there were no major differences in patterns of partisan discourse on both types of cleavages, such differences did exist in Hungarian groups. Indeed, Fidesz participants displayed a relatively strong form of cohesiveness on socio-cultural issues as compared to MSzP participants. However, both Fidesz and MSzP participants displayed low levels of cohesiveness on socio-economic issues.

#### 1. Socio-cultural issues

##### *a. The normative criterion*

##### *The nationalism/cosmopolitanism divide in Fidesz participants' discourse*

As made clear in the first section of this chapter, Hungarian participants considered most of the topics under discussion as generating partisan disagreement. The card 'Nation in Politics' nevertheless stood out as a topic crystallizing political opposition. Participants from both sides of the political spectrum pointed to this card as among the most divisive (see Figure 7 above), and also as one of the topics generating the clearest normative commitments from partisans. This idea is expressed here in a young Együtt group, concluding a discussion on the reform of public services and of the health system more specifically. According to Zsófi, when compared to the card Nation in Politics, partisan differences on these questions are 'marginal', and do not rest on principled considerations:

Zsofi: Obviously relative to the rest this is marginal. And we have here the nation in politics, compared to (this topic) the differences are marginal. The same is true for railway (reforms), or, I don't know, questions concerning the unions.

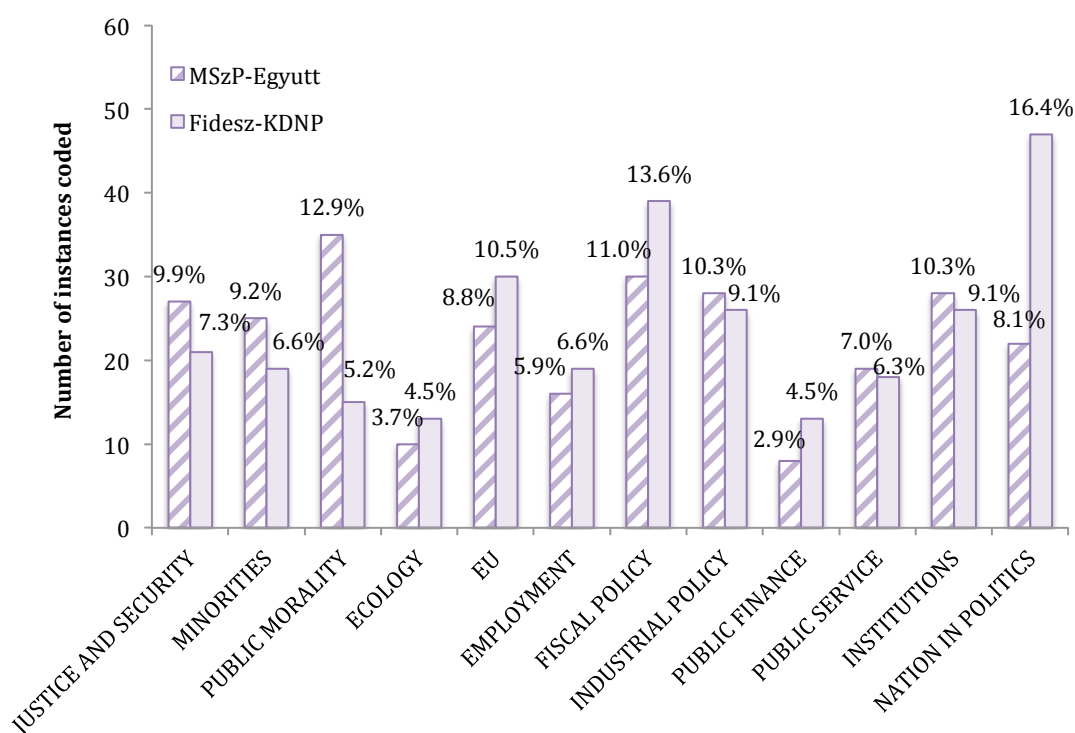
Csaba: Yes, with these topics you can't find clearcut principled differences.

Fidesz participants were however noticeably more concerned with issues of culture and identity than their opponents. As shown in Figure 14 below, Fidesz

participants discussed the card Nation in Politics over twice as often than their MSzP counterparts. Fidesz participants not only saw this topic as most divisive, but were explicit in placing this topic at the heart of their own normative commitments. In the following example, Eva links the card Nation in Politics with two other socio-cultural issues: Religious and Ethnic minorities, and EU politics. She places these three topics at the heart of her own engagement. Virág seconds her by attributing this feeling to a collective 'we', most likely Fidesz activists in general:

Eva: These are the three cards where, when I see them, I can say: yes, I am on this side, these are the reasons why I am here.

Virág: This is why we are here, because of these three topics.



**Figure 14: References to the topics under discussion by Hungarian participants**

*N.B: See the note under Figure 5 for an explanation of how to read this figure*

Fidesz participants were eager to present their own party as defending a nationalist idea of the political community, against an opponent that has less regard for the idea of nation. They most often rooted this opposition in a particular historical narrative. References to 20th century history especially formed a core pillar of their rhetoric and were twice as present in Fidesz groups as compared to MSzP ones (Table 4). More specifically, they often pictured their opponents as carrying the legacy of an internationalist and secular communist regime that repressed national sentiments and religious commitments. They also see their party as defending a unique conception of the nation that was censored before 1989. This is articulated in the following dialogue

between Fidesz members:

Olivia: Well, I am also biased when it comes to this theme. I've always felt that the Fidesz stands out. Hungarians are always... the nation always comes first. This is also because I've felt this way since my childhood. In general, this is also the way things are in my heart.

Author: But then on the other side what is there, if not the nation?

Gábor: Basically they can be traced back to another political system where people didn't really talk about the nation and religion. This was absolutely not a major theme. What was insisted upon was not the nation, but the people.

Tamás: The population<sup>57</sup>.

Gábor: The people, the population, and they based everything on this.

Tamás: I think this is a first a difference in value systems, and a historical one that pre-dates the change of regime (...) The concept of nation and the way of thinking about the nation. When after the change of system, Antall József said that he stands for 15 million Hungarians, then all of those on the left-liberal side<sup>58</sup> made a big fuss about the fact that he was speaking about 15 million Hungarians.<sup>59</sup> The argument that there will be another fascist system started appearing in the press. From this, one can see that there are different points of view. So I don't think it is possible to say this any other way, in short that is the point. On this issue there is a difference both historically, and in terms of value-systems.

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<sup>57</sup> In Hungarian, this is the distinction between *nemzet* (nation) and *nép* (people) - Tamás also stresses the term *lakosság* (population).

<sup>58</sup> In Hungarian *balliberális*. This expression is mostly used by the Hungarian Right in a pejorative sense. In their vocabulary, it implies the existence of a collusion between 'liberals' and 'left-wingers' in Hungary.

<sup>59</sup> József Antall was Prime Minister of Hungary from May 1990 to December 1993. He was member of the MDF, a conservative party that ceased to gather any substantial share of the vote from the 1998 Hungarian Parliamentary elections onwards. Following his designation, he declared that he wanted to be the Prime Minister of 15 million Hungarians - a sentence that has remained in the collective memory. This was a way of saying that the Hungarian nation does not only include the residents of Hungary, but also the Hungarian minorities that have lived in neighbouring countries since Hungary's loss of territory following the 1920 Trianon treaty. As outlined in Chapter 2 of this thesis, the authoritarian inter-war regime of Miklós Horthy was determined to gain these territories back and allied with Nazi Germany in the Second World War for this purpose. After 1898, Hungary's conservative camp took up this cause, especially by championing the rights of Hungarians minorities abroad. Nowadays however, only a limited number of far-right, paramilitary groups call for a revision of Hungarian borders.

Liste à puces

HISTORY	
<b>FRANCE</b>	<b>12</b>
PS	9
UMP	3
<b>HUNGARY</b>	<b>64</b>
MSzP-Egyutt	23
Fidesz-KDNP	41

*Table 4: References by French and Hungarian participants to their country's political history*

More generally, Fidesz participants see the ways in which Hungarians interpret and position themselves with regard to the socialist period as one of the most divisive questions in Hungarian politics. Fidesz participants pride themselves in carrying the memory of the victims of communism.<sup>60</sup> They claim to represent those who were persecuted before 1989 and see their opponents of perpetuating the legacy of communist rule. These different outlooks are seen to originate in personal history, in the stories that are passed down within family circles. This is expressed by Imre in the following statement:

Imre: There were 800 000 members of the communist party before 89 and there were about 800 000 people who were actively... who actively suffered some kind of discrimination in the socialist times. So there are 800 000 on both sides, if you multiply it by three, by making a family, of course families tend to go together, you get 2.4 million people on either side, which is basically the number of steady voters that both parties have. So it's a very... I think the most important divisive line in Hungarian society is this division, or feeling towards the last regime.

Fidesz participants also use similar narratives to justify their own political commitments. In the following example, Benkő traces his political engagement and that of his peers to the persecutions their families experienced during the socialist era:

Benkő: What neither of you underlined, but which according to me is common

<sup>60</sup> Importantly, there was not one, but two types of resistance to communism. As described by Kundera, "one based on a belief and the other on skepticism; one moralistic and the other immoralist; one puritancial and the other libertine; the one reproaching Communism for not believing in Jesus, the other accusing it of turning into a new Church; the one angry that it permitted abortion, the other accusing it of making abortion difficult" (Kundera, 2011). The resistance that Fidesz refers to is of the first type. This was a more passive, verbal form of anti-communist sentiment that was communicated within religious, traditionalist families residing outside of big cities. In Hungary, the main active resistance against Communism was of the second type: a Budapest-based network of middle-class intellectuals which championed pro-West and pro-Democracy ideals. Fidesz participants present Hungarian opposition to Communism as a homogeneous whole and do not acknowledge this second type of resistance.

to all of those youngsters who are politically involved on the conservative side, even before these events of 2002 and 2006, is a kind of a family related motivation. Our families were harshly persecuted under the previous regime, during communism. Personally also, through the confiscation of properties, the dictatorship harmed our families in all possible ways. This is how we grew up, even in our youngest childhood... from my own parents I can't really remember, it's only afterwards, but generally speaking, they told us that even under the past regime they used to talk at home against communism... And after the regime change, in the early 1990s, those people from the MSzP that Miklós already talked about, those were in fact the servants and agents of the dictatorship. From our earliest childhood it was impressed upon us, that these are actually communists, and that we can vote for anyone, but not for them.

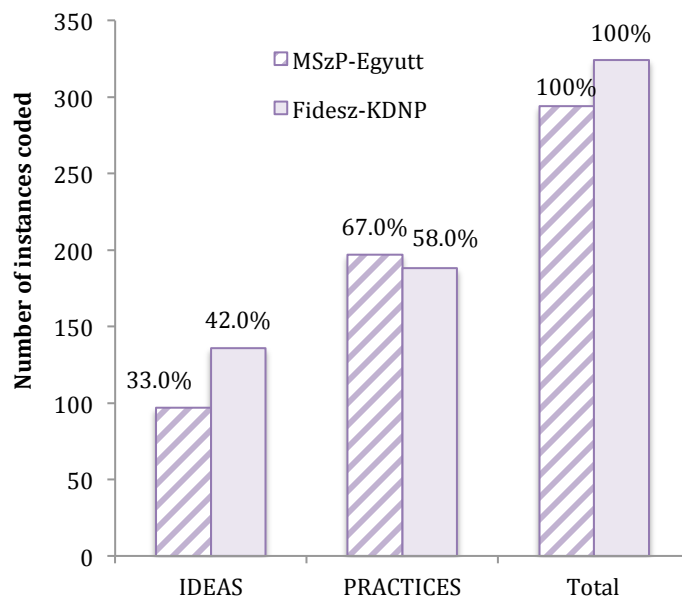
*Weak normative commitments among MSzP participants*

If we now turn to MSzP participants, it is clear that they have a less clear idea of the values and principles that structure their party(s) approach to socio-cultural issues than Fidesz participants do. Like most other Central European social-democratic parties, the MSzP built its identity on a break with the Communist past (Grzymala-Busse, 2003). As a result, they do not, and cannot, recognise themselves in the way in which Fidesz participants structure the political world. MSzP participants do not pride themselves to be the descendents of the pre-1989 ruling class, or of gathering the votes of those nostalgic of communist rule. They do not cast their own party as defending the achievements of the socialist system, and they do not defend an alternative idea of nationhood that would be based on such a narrative.

This unwanted heritage constitutes an unstable basis for defending political ideas in general and left-wing ideas in particular. The imbalance appears if we consider the coding data for both groups. Fidesz participants are more likely to talk about the ideas of political parties than MSzP participants are. As shown in Figure 15, Fidesz members drew more heavily on idea-related arguments than their MSzP counterparts (42% and 33% of total assessments respectively) and less heavily on practice-related arguments (58% and 67% of total assessments respectively).<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> In the previous section on France I gave a break-down of my coding for the code 'IDEAS' (see Figure 9), offering an overview of the cases where French participants referred to abstract worldviews and the public philosophies of political parties (coded WORLDVIEWS) and those where French participants referred to more specific, policy objectives (coded DIAGNOSTICS/OBJECTIVES). I do not offer an equivalent for the Hungarian case given that the share of both coding categories in Fidesz and MSzP transcripts was very close: 48.7% of all IDEAS codes in MSzP transcripts were also coded WORLDVIEWS, against 46.4% in Fidesz transcripts.



**Figure 15: Dimensions of partisan platforms emphasised by Hungarian participants to justify their card classification**

*N.B: See the note under Figure 5 for an explanation of how to read this figure*

On the question of the Nation in Politics, Institutional Reform, or EU Politics, the discourse of MSzP participants is therefore far less structured than the one held by Fidesz participants. In contrast to Fidesz participants, they account for their own positions on these questions in a far less assertive, cohesive and specific fashion. Concerning the topic Nation in Politics, for instance, MSzP participants were very vocal in denouncing the Fidesz's excessively nationalistic focus, but did not describe the terms of an alternative approach to the political community. The following dialogue is representative in this regard:

László: The nation in politics. I've classified that at the very fringe (of topics of disagreement). (This is) at least partly (the case), because of course for us too, the nation has an important place in politics. I mean this is why we do politics in the first place. But Fidesz's view (on this) is so, so radical, and given that they try to bring everything back to this national line, I classify (the topic) at the fringe. Because for us, this is an absolute no. I mean everything is "national", national cigarettes,<sup>62</sup> national I don't know what, everything national...

Margit: (...) But today it's true, everything is national. The very word "national" tends to provoke such an incredible revulsion from any reflective person... that I see that word and it makes me sick. This word... how to say it... it should carry value. It doesn't.

<sup>62</sup> The Fidesz majority legislated on the retail sale of tobacco in Hungary in December 2011, and introduced a state monopoly in this industry. Only government-approved National Tobacco shops are authorised to operate since July 15, 2013, those that are granted concessions via a public tender by the government.

Dávid: Anymore

László: They almost changed it into a pejorative word

Margit: Yes

These MSzP participants insist that it is only because Fidesz's stance is so aggressive on these questions that the topic breeds political conflict. In contrast to Fidesz activists, they do not view partisan disagreements on this question as resulting from the confrontation of two, alternative conceptions of the political community. In fact, when they did talk about their own approach to the nation, it was only to assure that it was also an important topic for them. László, cited above, was eager to stress this idea for instance. A participant from a different group, Kálmán, similarly emphasised "We on the left love our homeland just as much, and for us the nation and issues that have to do with the nation are just as important". This can be traced back to a more general strategy adopted by the MSzP, that has tried in recent years to prove its patriotism against the accusations issued by the Fidesz. This new strategy is described in the following terms by Dora:

Dora: I put the card Nation in Politics in the middle. Because these days the MSzP agrees more and more with Fidesz's stance that.. how should I put this.. not to be nationalist, but to take more into account these national questions. For example it apologised for... when was it? In 2008? Or 2010? The vote that dealt with the dual citizenship of Hungarian minorities abroad.<sup>63</sup> In that case the MSzP was in favour of the 'no', and now it says that it is sorry, it should have called for the 'yes' vote. And now they also support the autonomy of the Szeklers,<sup>64</sup> the Szeklers had their march last week-end. So the two positions are beginning to get closer and closer.

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<sup>63</sup> Dora is here referring to a 2004 referendum called upon by a civil society organisation, the World Association of Hungarians, on whether or not to facilitate the acquisition of Hungarian citizenship by Hungarian-speakers living outside Hungary's borders for several generations. The MSzP, then in government, argued against the motion on the basis that this would also grant social and political rights to individuals that do not effectively take part in the country's day-to-day political and social life. The Fidesz argued in favour on the basis that these populations are "ethnic" Hungarians and have been deprived of their citizenship only because of adverse historical circumstances - namely the re-drawing of the Austro-Hungarian Empire's borders under the 1920 Trianon treaty. At the time, the referendum was lost by a close margin. In May 2010, the new Fidesz government changed the Hungarian citizenship law in this direction. Following its entry into force in January 2011, the MSzP changed its position and apologised publicly to Hungarians abroad for having opposed the modification of the citizenship law in 2004.

<sup>64</sup> The Szeklers are a Hungarian sub-group living in a region of Central Romania. They make up for about half of Romania's Hungarian minority, with about 600 000 people. Since March 2006, they hold a yearly March in favour of the autonomy of the three Romanian counties - Harghita, Covasna and Mureş - in which Hungarians make for over half of the local population. While the Fidesz has long supported their cause, the MSzP has only recently rallied it.

### ***b. The executive criterion and partisan differentiation***

#### *Evidence for cohesiveness among Fidesz partisans*

On socio-cultural issues, Fidesz participants demonstrate their capacity to link specific political practices and policies to their party's normative commitments. More specifically, they see the idea of nation as a guideline of their party's political decisions in government. The main task of the Fidesz, according to them, is to rid Hungary of the traces of the communist past and to ensure the triumph of the Hungarian national interest in the same process. Indeed, the main fault that Fidesz participants associate with the socialist period is that it was anti-national. By giving priority to the national interest in its policies, Fidesz is thus simultaneously depicted as completing the post-communist transition. In the following example, Olga, a young Fidesz member, sets as her party's main political objective the creation of a new political culture in Hungary:

Olga: We still have this political culture in Hungary where communism is still very alive. And in this regard the Fidesz... it is like it wants to create a different political culture. We've already started the transition towards this other (culture). But this transition is still difficult. Because all you see is that there are big changes, and in general people don't really like changes. Even though the regime change has been done 20 years ago, we still live in it. Because there have been no miracles in these 20 years. This upward progression is difficult. Getting out from that world...

Káldor: I agree with what you are saying.

Olga: This does not happen from one day to another. It's a whole society that we would need to replace, which... well...

Káldor: This process only really started in 2010..

Later in the discussion, Káldor ties this reasoning more explicitly to Fidesz's actions during the 2010-2014 legislature. He also establishes an equivalence between Fidesz putting an end to 'post-communism' and the party's promotion of the national interest:

Káldor: (...) After the regime change and until 2010, this 2/3 majority (for the Fidesz), this did not exist because communists always had some hand in the whole thing, in the exercise of power. They always had some influence. They had economic power, the media, their people everywhere. The national bank. Everywhere there was someone. In 2010 for the first time since the regime change, this was not the case anymore. Now that there is a 2/3 majority, the Fidesz can place whoever (it wants) anywhere, it can change whatever it wants. There are some things, small mistakes, yes. But we have never had such a thing. Now that... how can I say, that there is right-wing... not right wing, that would not be the appropriate term.. simply, how can I say, (the promotion of) the interest of Hungary (...) This never happened before 2010. Because there was



always a left wing government. In 1998 there was a Fidesz government, but even then (the left-wing) was present in the person of the President.<sup>65</sup> There has never been anything like now. And because of that now everything is changing. There are a lot of reforms, new constitution, local administrative system, new taxes. Now a lot of things can change. Until now there were not enough of us...

This line of argument was also used by participants to account for partisan disagreements in a number of more specific policy areas. Hungary's relations with the EU was a topic of choice in this regard. Participants often established a parallel between the socialist regime attitude towards the Soviet Union and their opponents' current position towards the EU. The group was just talking about Fidesz's EU policy:

Mihály: This is the defence of the national interest within the EU, in contrast to the socialists position of opportunism and subservience.

Iván: Servility, yes.

Mihály: What they learned with Moscow for over 40 years, they applied it to Brussels, it is the same servility, begging for charity... This is not the nation in politics, this is not the defence of the national interest...

Eva: But this we don't need to say to a French person.

Iván: We have this saying in Hungary, that Brussels is not Moscow.<sup>66</sup> We invented it.

This narrative thus serves to position the Fidesz as sole defender of Hungary's true interests at the EU level. This is made even more explicit in the following example. Olivia speaks of the Fidesz's position as primarily motivated by a desire to further Hungary's interests:

Olivia: Fidesz gets attacked a lot because it pursues a political trajectory that is very much centred on the nation. So it is very much the Hungarians that they... so whatever rule they create, they take into account the interests of the Hungarians, and the nation's interests. Until now this wasn't really typical. It was there, but never in a clear-cut manner. For this the Fidesz gets a lot of attacks at the EU level. Because they don't feel that this supports the EU's rules and its expectations.

Tamás: This is what they call a position of autonomy.

Olivia: Yes. Because Viktor, I mean the Prime Minister, he defends us a lot, he

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<sup>65</sup> From 1990 to 2000, Hungary's President was Árpád Göncz. He was a member of the liberal party SzDSz, the coalition partner of the MSZP between 1994 and 1998. Between 2000 and 2005 Ferenc Mádi was President and between 2005 and 2010 László Sólyom was President. Both were independent, non-party members. Note that the Presidential function in Hungary was not endowed with formal political powers under the previous Constitution, nor is it now.

<sup>66</sup> This is a catch-phrase regularly used by Viktor Orbán in his speeches. For instance on July 5, 2013, following the discussion of the Tavares Report concerning Hungarian breaches of democratic principles, the Prime Minister declared on Hungarian Public Radio that "Brussels is not Moscow and therefore it has no right to meddle in the lives of the member states. Hungary is a free country."

doesn't really let us down. He's not the type to say, "all right, then we'll modify (the rule)". But then again he wasn't just confrontational with the EU, he explains why things are the way they are. Because of this many attack him. And what I think is very bad, and very apparent, is that Hungarian MEPs from the opposition also attack the country when Hungary is being discussed in the European Parliament. It is quite weird, the idea that you would not protect your own country in front of other countries, and this also has a very bad echo in Hungary.

Crucially, this is also the narrative that serves Fidesz participants to justify the controversial 2011 Constitution brought in by their party's majority (Hungarian Parliament, 2011). A number of participants argued that the one previously in place was a 'communist' constitution and that it therefore needed to be changed. One participant, Sándor, stressed: "It was a communist constitution from 1949. That came through (in 89) with one or two minimal changes". Káldor, from another group, also insisted: "Yes, this was the 1936 Soviet Constitution, we took it over in 1949... (...) and then in 1989 they added one sentence to the beginning".<sup>67</sup>

#### *Lack of cohesiveness among MSzP partisans*

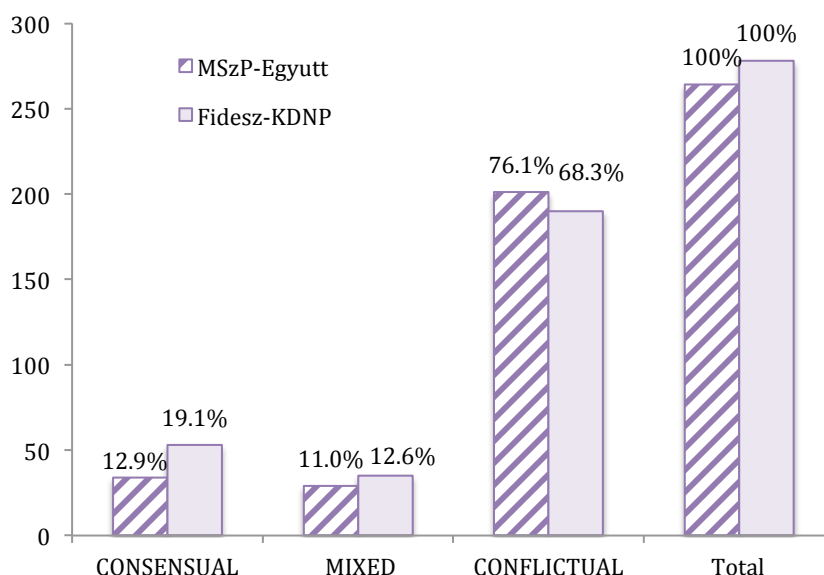
MSzP participants were far less capable of linking their party's practices and policies on socio-cultural issues to a coherent set of normative goals. They generally denounce Fidesz's rhetoric and decisions as excessive and harmful, yet do not oppose it through an alternative discourse. Neither do they point to fundamental disagreements with the actual steps that the Fidesz government takes, or ways in which their own party could do things differently.

As shown in Figure 16, MSzP participants had an even stronger tendency than Fidesz participants to make sweeping judgements on the conflictual nature of the topics discussed. Conversely, they were less likely to make more nuanced assessments

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<sup>67</sup> It is the case that in October 1989, the Parliament approved amendments to the 1949 Constitution, and did not adopt a new constitution (Hungarian Parliament, 1989). These amendments, however, did not involve 'one or two minimal changes'. Radical modifications were necessary to bring the 1949 Constitution to the standards of a modern, democratic Fundamental Law (Dani, 2013; Szikinger, 2001). The process by which the text was amended has nevertheless suffered from a lack of political legitimacy. The changes were decided in the absence of public deliberation by an unelected body: a roundtable grouping representatives of the communist Regime and its opposition. On October 18, 1989, the modifications were approved not by Referendum, but by a Parliament that had been elected during the communist regime. For all of these reasons, this was supposed to be a transitory document. The preamble of the revised 1949 Constitution itself stated "the Parliament of the Republic of Hungary hereby establishes the following text as the Constitution of the Republic of Hungary, *until the country's new constitution is adopted*." This new constitution, however, was never adopted. After 2010, the Fidesz referred to all of these points to argue that the text should be abolished, and a new constitution be drafted.

of the issues considered, and thus to emphasise topics of political agreement, or partial political agreement, between political parties.<sup>68</sup>

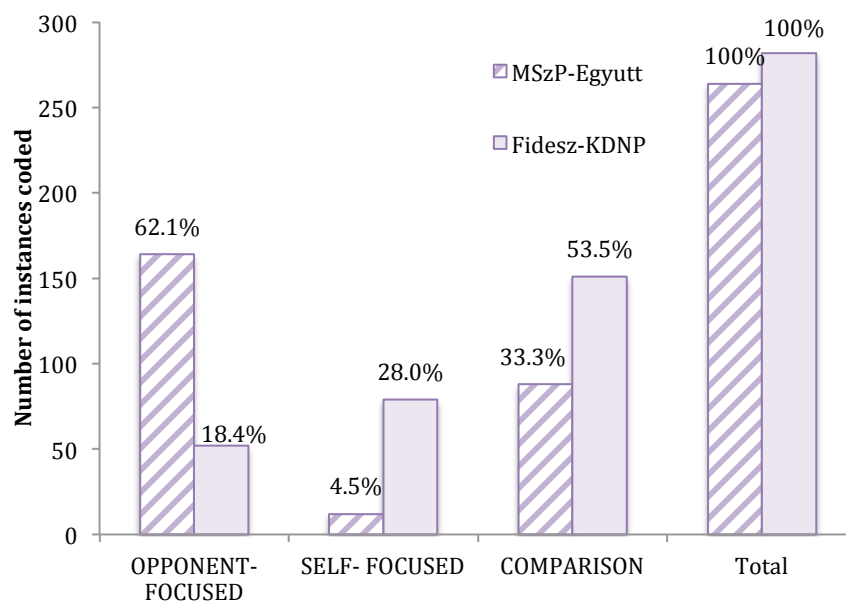


**Figure 16: Assessments by Hungarian participants of the degree of partisan disagreement on the topics discussed**

*N.B: See the note under Figure 5 for an explanation of how to read this figure*

Fidesz participants were also more likely to *compare* the platforms of political parties: to offer an account of what drew parties together and what set them apart. On the other hand, MSzP participants had a tendency to focus exclusively on their opponents and to remain vague about their own party's platforms. As shown in Figure 17, 62.1% of MSzP participants' assessments were focused on their opponents, 33.3% of these were comparative, and only 4.5% focused exclusively on their own party. On the other hand, the larger share of Fidesz participants' assessments, 53.5%, were comparative. They dedicated less than a third of their assessments to their own party, and only 18.4% of these assessments focused exclusively on their opponents.

<sup>68</sup> In the previous section on France I gave a break-down of my coding for the code 'MIXED' (see Figure 13), offering an overview of the cases where French participants referred to similarities between partisan ideas but differences in their practices (CONSENSUAL IDEAS vs CONFLICTUAL PRACTICE) or differences between partisan ideas but similarities in their practices (CONFLICTUAL IDEAS vs CONSENSUAL PRACTICE). I do not offer an equivalent for the Hungarian case given that the total number of instances coded MIXED in Hungarian transcripts was so low, and that the differences between Fidesz and MSzP patterns of speech in this regard are not significant.



**Figure 17: Actors emphasised by Hungarian participants in the course of justifying their card classification**

*N.B: See the note under Figure 5 for an explanation of how to read this figure*

The following dialogue illustrates well the weaknesses of MSzP participants' discourse on socio-cultural issues especially. While László points to excesses of Fidesz's communication on EU matters, he does not seem to fundamentally disagree on his opponent's EU policy. He also does not explain how his own party would do things differently:

László: (...) It's a fact that they make huge mistakes, especially in their communication. Orbán as well as the Fidesz know that we need the EU. Because we need the money and all. They all use those communication tricks for the Hungarian public, such as 'bad EU', 'thieves and robbers', 'oppressors', 'Brussels = Moscow'. But then, when they have to go to Brussels to negotiate about real things, they won't do that. They will downplay all this. That's why I've put it into this category (of consensus). It's more in the communication and the basic attitude that there is a difference. But when it comes to taking action, they also do what is expected... by us, and by me.

Ábel, from an Együtt group, defends a very similar line of argument:

Ábel: (The Fidesz) would only accept the criticisms when the whole of Europe gathers at the Austrian border with a huge gun, not before. For me that's the most brutal thing, because if we take this theme or this card, (...) it's clear that basically Orbán doesn't think that there can be a life for Hungary outside of the EU. So at the end of this part of the discussion, where we were talking about the themes in which there are the most marked differences between the two camps, we find this share of consensus. This is really strange. It's in fact difficult to identify differences (on this theme).

MSzP participants' discussion of Institutional Reforms present a slight variation on this general pattern. First, their opposition to Fidesz's reform is radical and

unconditional. There is no sense that their party would agree to some of the Fidesz's measures or even some of its basic premises. Second, they are more aware of the fact that their party has no real alternative to offer. As Dávid, a young MSzP member explicitly recognises: "In this matter, we still haven't figured out what we want. If we win the elections, then what do we want. Sure, Bajnai did mention that a referendum would be needed to decide on a new constitution".

MSzP groups are able to give reasons for why putting forth such an alternative is particularly difficult. Indeed, Fidesz's 2011 Constitution locked in most institutional reforms, requiring from the opposition that they gain a two-third majority to change them. Given their own party's low level of popularity, their discussion of this question was tainted with fatalism and feelings of powerlessness.

Adri: (...) So, if there is anything that they do not like, then it's added to the Constitution, and thereafter there is nothing that can be done. In fact, we are discussing what can happen if, let's say, it's not them who are winning, what the other parties would do. In the end who wins has no importance, because to have a modification of the Constitution a two third majority is required, for these bad things to be... so it may be better (to have a situation) now where the Fidesz wins, and in which the Fidesz eventually pays for these things. The only case in which that would not happen is if somebody would win a two third majority or succeeds in forming a coalition that would have (such a majority), then they could change these things. But personally I don't see much chance for that presently. So whatever happens in 2014, it won't be easy, this system is so secured by now. Just with the fact that everything is in the hands of the State, controlled by people close to the Fidesz. So even if the Fidesz loses the elections, they can do anything, even just stop the electric power from working in Hungary. Because they control everything, it's a totally absurd situation. They can do anything because in the last 3 years they have taken over the control of just everything, so what happens next year is just irrelevant.

(...)

Eszter: And just everything! The distribution of land,<sup>69</sup> of tobacco shops...<sup>70</sup> land has been rented out for 20-30 years, tobacco shops for 20. If the two-third (majority) is not reached, and it won't be, (...) then they are secure for the next 20-30 years and what can be done about it?

Réka: Nothing.

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<sup>69</sup> The Fidesz majority passed a land reform in June 2013 which planned to auction out approximately 20% of Hungarian state land to owners of small or medium sized farms. The government defended the law by saying that it would encourage family-run, Hungarian agriculture. The opposition argued that it would offer Fidesz a way of distributing benefits in kind to their supporters.

<sup>70</sup> The Fidesz majority legislated on the retail sale of tobacco in Hungary in December 2011, and introduced a state monopoly in this industry. Only government-approved National Tobacco shops are authorised to operate since July 15, 2013, those that are granted concessions via a public tender by the government. The opposition has accused the Fidesz of distributing these concessions on the basis of political loyalty rather than business considerations.

\* \* \*

To summarize the results of this first section, Fidesz participants have a more cohesive discourse on socio-cultural issues than MSzP participants. The commitments of Fidesz participants have a stronger normative basis in a form of nationalism and social-conservatism. This also provides them with guidelines for action in certain policy areas, such as their relations with the EU and institutional reforms. The normative commitments of MSzP participants are, in turn, far less clearly defined. This also deprives them of clear guidelines for action: they can express their disapproval of Fidesz policies, but have no clear alternative to suggest in their place.

## 2. On socio-economic issues

I now assess the extent to which the discourse of Hungarian participants on socio-economic issues complies with the different criteria for partisan cohesiveness.

### *a. The normative criterion*

Socio-economic issues were less likely to generate coherent normative stances among Hungarian partisans and this holds even among Fidesz participants. Hungarian groups were prone to emphasise a *reversal* of the traditional Left-Right value-system on economic questions (see Table 5). This will come as no surprise to students of European party politics and scholars of post-communist politics especially. The thesis of an 'inversion' of the Left-Right economic cleavage in Central Europe is well established in the literature (Evans & Whitefield, 1993, 1995; Grzymala-Busse, 2003; Kitschelt, 1995; Kitschelt et al., 1999; Tavits & Letki, 2009).

Fidesz participants for instance often prided themselves of being more statist and socially minded and associated their opponents to pro-market positions. This comes through in the following statement by a young Fidesz member:

Kapolcs: (...) I think the Left... has been very... too eager to accept those kind of liberal ideas.. that are at the moment not in the best interest of Hungary. Uncontrolled privatisation, which went on after the regime change, these kind of ideas... uncontrolled free market ideas, with the Western multinationals investing and of course making money and taking it out of the country, I think these are challenges that must be fought in Hungary. (...) This is the most interesting thing in Hungary. It seems that in Hungary Left and Right on economic issues have reversed. Left-wing parties are capitalist and liberal, whereas right-wing parties are conservative and more socially.. conscious or more statist anyways.

INVERSION	
<b>HUNGARY</b>	19
<b>MSzP-Együtt</b>	6
<b>Fidesz-KDNP</b>	13

*Table 5: References by Hungarian participants to the inversion of left-right economic platforms*

MSzP participants also emphasised the reversal of Left-Right platforms, albeit in less explicit terms. In the following example for instance, a young MSzP member talks about the types of policies adopted by both parties:

Zsuzsa: In reality, what happens in Hungary is that when the right-wing is in power, then there are nationalisations, when it is the left-wing, then there are privatisations. So if there is a change of government every four years, this can generate problematic situations. So now we have nationalisations in various areas...

At closer look however, the claims of Hungarian partisans on socio-economic issues do not reflect a *strict* reversal of Left and Right value-systems. More specifically, it is not the case that Fidesz participants display commitment to the traditional *ideas* associated with left-wing economic platforms. These ideas would include an emphasis on the structural factors that condition individual trajectories; on the pivotal role of the state in rectifying structural inequalities; and more generally, on an idea of the common good that puts civil, political and social equality centre-stage (Bobbio, 1995; Lukes, 2003). Fidesz's statism is rather based in social conservatism, nationalism and a form of economic populism. Its interventionism, for instance, favors 'hard-working' Hungarians over benefit recipients and is coupled with a strong emphasis on individual responsibility and merit. In the following example, a young conservative activist associates his opponents to a policy of benefit distribution towards the unemployed. He then defends Fidesz's alternative, a program that conditions benefits on accomplishing public work:<sup>71</sup>

Márton: (The MSzP) primarily takes interest in those kinds of people who were

<sup>71</sup> The Fidesz government started its public labour program on August 1, 2011. As of then, public work has become compulsory for the unemployed. The program has sparked controversy for several reasons. First, workers are paid less than the minimum wage and do not generally work full weeks. Second, public workers can be made to move to live near the work site, in special live-in facilities, if their residence is more than 3 hours of a daily commute from it. Finally, while work projects can only be set up by the Hungarian state and municipal councils, these projects are de facto being carried-out by private companies which therefore benefit from under-paid labour. The state can also 'loan out' public workers to private companies.

inactive but who, as Lázár mentioned, would be able to work (...) (These people) will be exposed to the manipulation of a government which, prior to elections, will raise family or other types of benefits, for example, invalidity allowances. It's clear that for families with low incomes, even a one time additional income of 10-15 000 Ft can mean a lot. At the opposite of this.. so for example with socialist governments, there was an statist way of thinking, say the A version of statism, which involved the state giving benefits. From this point of view, the strange thing in Hungary is that the right-wing party is also state. But it says that the State should not distribute aids, but rather it should distribute work. Or that it should interfere with the market through, for example, buying companies that were previously private, or through cooperating with actors on the market, companies, to increase the employment rate. This is clearly not a classic capitalist method, but in the midst of the present global crisis, one cannot expect to use methods that were previously in use. So in this there is no agreement (between political parties) (...)

Another dimension of Fidesz statism is its pledge to actively support Hungarian industry and agriculture - and especially small and medium-sized owners - over foreign capital and multinationals. This aspect of Fidesz's platform comes through in the following statement. Lázár, a young KDNP member, is talking about differences between MSzP and Fidesz governments' agricultural policies:

Lázár: Perhaps it is also important to mention that what Márton said concerning industrial policy also applies to the question of agricultural policy. Here again there is no agreement (between political parties). The current government supports small and medium-sized land owners. As roughly half of Hungary's land is state-owned, the land is leased out to individuals for them to manage it. Before 2010, the socialists made these very long, 20-year contracts, and very large pieces of land, like hundreds of thousands of hectares, and they gave them out to large landowners. Now that these contracts are coming to an end, the new government, the right-wing government, gives (contracts) to small and medium-sized land owners<sup>72</sup>. In this regard too, (the parties) are completely different. The left-wing stands for the big landowners, Fidesz says that those who live in the countryside, and possibly more people, should be able to live from the land.

On the other hand, the MSzP does not champion economic ideas traditionally associated with the Right, such as the responsibility of individuals for their social trajectory, or an ideal of the common good akin to meritocracy. Before 2004 especially, its free-market policies were rather framed as a condition for re-integrating with the West, a gateway towards joining the community of liberal democracies (Palonen, 2006). In the following dialogue, Együtt participants agree that Fidesz's stance is contradicting free-market ideals, with its championing of state-subsidised agriculture and industry especially. They nevertheless have difficulties describing the MSzP as 'pro-market':

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<sup>72</sup> On Fidesz's land reform, see footnote 71.



Csaba: No, because according to me there is a difference in values. The general direction taken by the current government is to have strong Hungarian companies, with strong Hungarian entrepreneurs, and behind that a large strong national industry. And this is not based on free market values, but on the need for state subsidies.

Miklós: Well yes. The other thing is that we are going back to the Rákosi regime. Because Orbán is gradually coming to the conclusion that (...) we should be the country of iron and steel.<sup>73</sup>

Zsófi: All right, but to what extent is the Socialist party a free-market party? Aside from the rhetoric (...) In truth, from what I know, very few people, I mean very few politicians, are favourable to the market in Hungary. All right in our party there are a few of them, but even we have inveterate communists, like Scheiring Gábor.

In parallel, the Socialist party has not fully relinquished its social discourse either and does pledge to protect the more vulnerable portions of Hungarian society. MSzP's ageing electorate - a large part of which has remained faithful to the organisation after its reform in 1990 - also pushes the party to retain a socially-minded discourse. In the following dialogue, the description that MSzP participants give of their party's response to crime is in line with traditional left-wing ideas: an emphasis on the structural role of social factors, and the necessity for the state to address the economic roots of criminality:

Kálmán: But lets talk about what the position of the Left is... This is just my own opinion, you should add to it if you feel like it. The Left thinks that.. of course everyone's possessions should be secured, one's weekend plots of land, because property rights are sacred and inviolable.

Nándor: But we think in a more social manner.

Kálmán: What we think...

Levente: ... is that those in need should be helped.

Kálmán: But however, it is necessary to examine why somebody would go steal in the countryside. Does he steal because this is the way he wants to earn money (...) or is it because his four children are famished. If he steals because his four children are famished, than he needs to be given work. Benefits programs need to be set up. If despite all of this he still goes out and steals, then we can bring in the harsher laws (...)

In some, albeit rare cases, MSzP participants would also cast the period of economic transition as a parenthesis, a period during which the party renounced its left-wing ideals, and hoped that their party would start defending socialist principles

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<sup>73</sup> Mátyás Rákosi was the leader of Hungary's Communist Party from 1945 to 1956. He was determined to speed-up Hungarian industrialisation, and especially to make of Hungary a "land of iron and steel" (cited in Flett, 2007, p. 35). This was a particularly laborious process as Hungary had neither coal nor minerals. Rakosi's expression is today referenced in Hungary to summarize the absurdity of economic planning under communism, or of misplaced state voluntarism more generally.

more openly. Dávid, a young MSzP member, speaks of his party's evolution since the early 1990s in the following terms:

Dávid: (...) For example, we had this MSzP gathering, and as the younger generations we sang partisan hymnes<sup>74</sup>. And the elder ones just looked at us like this (*starring with wide eyes*). Of course I know, that during their childhood this is what they grew up with, and that they were part of all of this. But in 1989 they gave up on this sytem. Not only on the system, but on the whole concept. True, they are starting to say that the MSzP is turning left again. Because this whole bourgeois, fake Left was in place these last 10 years. Which of course, has a lot to do with Gyurcsány Ferenc , and which has a lot to do with the SzDSz, the regular coalition partner (...) But nevertheless we need to differentiate ourselves from liberalism, and from the bourgeois way of thinking. Let's be social democrats, let's be left-wing. We need to differentiate ourself from the Right, the Fidesz, and from the liberals too.

What emerges is therefore a far more complex picture than a simple reversal of the traditional Left and Right political registers. While Fidesz participants do emphasise a strong role for the state in the economy, this is nevertheless coupled with stressing individual responsibility rather than social factors. On the other end, the pro-market decisions of MSzP governments have not necessarily been justified in the name of neoliberal principles. In parallel, the party did not entirely cut itself off from socialist rhetoric.

### ***b. The executive criterion and partisan differentiation***

#### *Weak links between normative goals and socio-economic policies*

Overall, Hungarian participants also had great difficulties in linking their party's normative commitments with specific socio-economic policies. In the following statement, a young Fidesz participant admits that he does not know what the advantages are of the different types of fiscal policies suggested by political parties:

Tamás: In reality we only hear about the difference between a progressive imposition rate and a flat tax through the media. In reality we are not aware of which advantages (the flat tax) presents exactly. I think that many people don't know. But in these types of matters it is hard to give an opinion if you are not an expert.

Characteristically, this activist justifies his relative ignorance with the fact that one needs to be an 'expert' to understand such specialised debates. In other words, this participant does not seem to consider awareness of the ideas that justify economic

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<sup>74</sup> In Hungarian *mozgalmi dalokat*. Dávid is referring to songs that are part of the left-wing tradition, such as the International or the Partisans' song. These take on a particular connotation in the post-1989 Hungarian context, given that they were an integral part of the Communist Regime, and sung especially during official public mass gatherings.

policies as part of the 'common knowledge' that members of a party could be expected to share. This seem to be a recurrent pattern: not only did activists regularly admit that they did not know why their party or their opponents put forward a specific policy, they also often apologised for not being 'experts' on the topics I was inviting them to talk about. The following dialogue between young socialists took place at the very beginning of the discussion, after I distributed the cards and gave them instructions as to how to classify them. Participants seem overwhelmed at the idea of having to discuss each theme in details:

István: Well, we have here these twelve themes, I'm not the kind to give short answers but these are very large themes, very large questions.. I'm not sure that I can answer your question just like that.

Pál: Yes, I mean for each of these themes you would need a different expert.

In reverse, it was not uncommon for partisans to emphasise their own expertise, for instance, the fact they were completing, or had completed a degree in a specific area, in order to give legitimacy to their opinions. In the following example, a young MSzP member, Barnabas, stresses that he has written his Masters thesis on fiscal regimes in Hungary:

Barnabas: Yes, taxation is a crucial point, it's quite obvious. And for me it is linked to my studies, I've written my Masters thesis about it, so this is why...

Csilla: All right, no need to show off

Barnabas: So this is why I don't really want to go into it, because I would probably monopolise the discussion, and the point is not for me to start talking about this for a whole hour... (...)

After this, Barnabas nevertheless talks at great length about his degree while the other participants remain silent. It seems that they do not consider that they know enough about the topic to voice their opinion. The part of the discussion on Fiscal Policy thus finishes with the end of Barnabas' monologue, and Lukács, another participant concludes: "This is very clear, I can't really add anything... Moreover you're the one who wrote your thesis on this, so you understand (these things)".

This weak capacity of Hungarian participants to justify parties' economic platforms in terms of ideas also expressed itself in other ways. They often described partisan policies or practices without identifying the objectives or values that underlie them. The following dialogue between Fidesz participants illustrates this quite well. While Káldor lists the social policies defended by one or the other side of the political spectrum, and does assert that the Fidesz's proposals are 'better' than the ones of his opponents, he does not give detailed reasons for this assessment. When I asked in what

way the MSzP's social policies are distinct from the Fidesz's, Olga's response remains vague and unspecific:

Káldor: Concerning (the card) social policy there is the issue of social policy support<sup>75</sup>. That could be requested back then. I believe the Fidesz created this policy in 1998<sup>76</sup>. One could request benefits for housing, and... young people especially could ask for help to acquire housing. The MSzP has abolished it, it probably gave different sorts of benefits. But now, thank God, the government has brought this measure back. Now you can request this to acquire a car, too. Social policy support. This is a good thing. Or, for example, take the question of benefits. The left-wing government gave benefits to the Gypsies for example. The current government doesn't do that, it created instead the public labour program<sup>77</sup>.

Nándor: Benefit distributions have also been maintained.

Káldor: All right, but for example invalidity retirements have been taken away.

Nándor: And that was a good thing, because a lot of people just bought their way to invalidity retirements<sup>78</sup>.

Káldor: So this means that now performance is taken into account, you need to work and then you get some salary. This is better than benefits, unemployment benefits. These are all questions of social policy.

(...)

Author: So, what's the difference here? What's the difference between the Left and the Right?

Olga: In my opinion, the difference is rather the basis, the criteria according to which these benefits are distributed. According to what criteria somebody got them. And what kind of benefits. And also that, let's say, the "socialists"<sup>79</sup> have a social sensitivity in different domains than for example a right-wing government.

Crucially, it was not uncommon for participants to recognise that the public discourse of political parties is also characterised by this poor justification for policy proposals, and that partisan debates seldom involve *giving reasons* for particular

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<sup>75</sup> *Szoc.pol. támogatás* in Hungarian. This refers to a one-time financial contribution by the state to help couples with children, or couples planning to start a family, to acquire their first home. This measure is essentially designed to sustain birth rates.

<sup>76</sup> This policy was in fact already in place during the Communist Kádár era, and remained in place until 2009. Gordon Bajnai then suspended it as part of the austerity measures following the 2007-2008 financial crisis. Fidesz reestablished this measure during its 2010-2014 mandate.

<sup>77</sup> Fidesz's public work program is not officially targeted at the Roma people. Given the significantly higher unemployment rates among this minority in Hungary, Fidesz's opponents have nevertheless often accused the party of catering to anti-Roma sentiment with this measure.

<sup>78</sup> Nándor is referring to the fact that he believes people used to obtain invalidity retirement unjustifiably through bribing officials. It is a known fact that the number of invalidity retirements has been disproportionately high in Hungary, and that many of these pensions were allocated to people that were not, in fact, invalid.

<sup>79</sup> Olga uses the diminutive "szocik" which is a slightly denigrating term to designate her opponents.

political choices. In the following example, the same Fidesz group as above recognises that this lack of political justification is a trait of their political system as a whole. In the first statement, Olga describes what she would expect a high quality political debate to be like, and how it is missing in Hungary:

Olga: That you would be able to give an answer that you actually believe in, without involving feelings, without (saying something like) "well, if they said so, then I will oppose it". Something that goes beyond giving arguments like "they were crap, and I'll do better". But that you say concretely, professionally, what steps are to be taken, in what order.

Káldor: Fidesz doesn't do that either

Olga: So it would involve that they wouldn't answer "you are bad, I'm better than you". It wouldn't be about that. It's that they would show what makes another (solution) better. And it's not that (we say that) the MSzP was wrong for decreasing that or that, and therefore we will raise this and this. It's more or less that (parties) will do the opposite of whatever has been done before. And they say "before there were less job opportunities. With us there are more". And that's what the discussions are made of (...)

### *Limited partisan differentiation*

On socio-economic issues, Hungarian participants also displayed a weak ability to point to the characteristics that set their ideas and policies apart from those of their opponents. In the following example, a young Fidesz participant points to the fact that Hungarian political competition is not structured around clearly defined and separated value-systems. In his own words, at best they are 'confused', at worst, 'there aren't any':

Krisztoff: How can I... How can I say this, so in Hungary there is some ideological... *ideological confusion*<sup>80</sup>. With this I'm trying to say that it is not that we have a conservative party, a liberal party, a social-democratic party, a green party that are in competition with each other. In important ways, the lines of division are different, this turned out differently... I think there aren't any ideologies, I think we can forget about this. (...)

This 'confusion' over partisan differences on socio-economic values was also coupled with uncertainty concerning differences in the types of policies that parties enact in government. Hungarian participants often emphasised that while the rhetoric of parties was strongly adversarial, their actions in government were far more difficult to distinguish. The same young Fidesz participant emphasises this idea in the following statement:

Krisztoff: And I think it's important to make the distinction between the level of words and that of deeds, because I know, that for a foreigner Hungarian politics seem... because the language is very different.. how can I say... at a certain level

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<sup>80</sup> English as in original interview.

more aggressive. This can suggest something quite different than what the actions show. So if we consider the level of words, there is some kind of cold civil war. But, thank God, in practice it's not that serious. If one listens only to the political discussions, then one can get a much worse, war-like, picture. It may seem like there is a much deeper conflict than what there is in reality.

When I asked another Fidesz group more specifically about whether partisan debates are centred around policy alternatives in the field of economics, they gave me a very similar answer:

Káldor: No, that is not what the debate is about. The debate is not about something like, now let's sit down and look at the economy, and what solutions we have. What solutions have been applied abroad, etc. There are ideological debates on a number of issues... But there are no policy debates in my opinion. No?

Nándor: And emotional debates, yes.

Káldor: Yes, emotional debates. Unfortunately, there is nothing like...

Olga: Insults, acts of revenge, and the like.

This 'empty' form of animosity between political parties, in which debates about economic policy have limited space, was also noticed by participants on the other side of the political spectrum. In the following statement, a young Együtt member similarly emphasises the absence of 'professional discussions' in the Hungarian public space:

Csaba: The most important problem is the question of morality, that the whole communication is aimed at implying that the other is a criminal, and the response to any political move (from the opposition) is a denunciation or a trial. So there isn't really a political discourse, no professional discussion in any field, the only goal is to make the other a criminal. And that has consequences on all the rest, because it strengthens the stereotype that politics equals crime, and that politicians are bad. That they steal and lie.

The weakness of policy-based differentiation was also noticeable in accounts of partisans themselves, albeit taking a distinct form in MSzP and Fidesz groups. MSzP participants barely talked about their own party's policies and did not seem to clearly know how their platforms diverged from the Fidesz's. They, for instance, spoke very little about their party's past achievements, despite the MSzP having been in government twelve full years since the country's transition to democracy. They were also very silent about the party's campaign proposals, despite the fact the interviews took place six months before the next parliamentary election. Instead, MSzP participant spent most of the discussions criticising the Fidesz's decisions in government, without emphasising the alternative that their own party puts forward in response. The

following dialogue is a good example of this. MSzP participants are discussing the Fidesz's labour policy,<sup>81</sup> and at no point do they stress how their own party would do things differently in government:

Adri: Well, so public work is designed to bring the unemployed back into the labour market, except that there is no labour market which they could be brought back to.

Eszter: Yes, there is nowhere to bring them back to. That is why in my opinion, when those poor devils are given the possibility to go clean up snow from the streets for 20 000 Ft<sup>82</sup>, I wouldn't call that fix, secure work.

Adri: People don't have any financial security.

Réka: And they stress this explicitly, that 49 000Ft<sup>83</sup> is enough to ensure financial security. They should just try to live with 49 000 Ft. And in most cases, people do not live alone either.

Eszter: Of course, they need to support a family.

Réka: So this is the second most divisive topic....

As this happened regularly in MSzP groups, I often prompted participants to talk about their party's own positions on the issues under discussion. Here they were most often puzzled and regularly emphasised either that their party had no alternative, or that they did not know what their party's alternative is. The following discussion between MSzP participants, for instance, follows a long monologue describing the pitfalls of Fidesz's land reform:

Eszter: (...) I don't really know either what we would do... for now it's enough, but I'm not even convinced that it is up to us to resolve these agricultural issues. But somehow this (the way Fidesz is doing things) is not right.

While Fidesz participants are more comparative in their assessments, they were not necessarily better informed on the specific policies that their own party had enacted in government. Participants were often unaware of key aspects of their party's policies. Take the discussion between Káldor, Nándor and Olga on page 144. Káldor, head of one of Fidesz's district youth sections in Budapest, starts by asserting that "social policy support"—a special state contribution going towards young couples and families looking to become house owners—was first put in place by the Fidesz in 1998. This policy was in fact already in place during the Kadar era.<sup>84</sup> He then makes a sweeping generalisation, asserting that "the left-wing government gave benefits to the

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<sup>81</sup> On Fidesz's public labour program, see footnote 71.

<sup>82</sup> Approximately £48.

<sup>83</sup> Approximately £119.

<sup>84</sup> On the question of social policy support, see footnote 75 and 76

Gypsies for example. The current government doesn't do that". On this point, he is rightfully corrected by another participant, who stresses that not all benefits have been taken away by Fidesz. He also seems to believe that both the MSzP's benefits and his own party's public labour are designed specifically for the Hungarian Roma population, which they are not.<sup>85</sup> Finally, later in the discussion he seems surprised when Nándor mentions the educational dimension of the Fidesz's public labour program. This also suggests that he is unaware of this aspect of the policy.

Innaccuracies of this kind were quite common in Fidesz groups. One striking tendency came with Fidesz participants speaking of certain policies as their own, when in fact these either have existed since the socialist era, or were in fact adopted by previous MSzP governments. For instance, in the following dialogue Eva associates a policy tying land ownership to the condition of being a resident in Hungary to the first Fidesz government (1998-2002). She is corrected by Sándor, who specifies that this measure was in fact brought in by an MSzP government in 1994:

Virág: And the last thing concerns land acquisitions. It's not as simple for foreigners to buy land Hungary as compared to before. It's now subject to the condition of how long one has lived here. I think.

Eva: But that always was a condition.

Virág: Well, but not in the same way

Sándor: Not always. Before the land reform of 1994, mainly Austrians and Germans bought land and they could keep that land in a totally legal fashion. After that, yes.

Eva: Then I would say, I think... this was decided under the first Fidesz government

Sándor: No, however unbelievable it seems, it was done by Horn's MSzP government.

Eva: All I'm saying is that I always thought that we didn't figure this out just now.

\* \* \*

The most cohesive discourse among Hungarian participants is therefore Fidesz's account of partisan differences on *socio-cultural* issues, such as the role of the nation in politics, the relation of Hungary to the EU, and institutional reforms. Fidesz participants use historical narratives as guidelines for making sense of their party's chosen course of political action in these areas. They are also capable of differentiating

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<sup>85</sup> On Fidesz public labour reform, see footnote 71.



their own platform from that of their opponents. On the other hand, MSzP participants do not rely on a similarly structured worldview. While Fidesz participants have appropriated a narrative that gives coherence to their political discourse, MSzP participants do not, and cannot, participate in this narrative. As a result, they barely discuss their own policy choices, and these appear disconnected from a normative rationale. They also do not systematically demonstrate how their platform differs from the Fidesz's.

On the other hand, both groups of partisans display a limited ability to account for partisan disagreements on *socio-economic* questions. They cannot connect parties' economic and social policies with a coherent set of political ideas. Their ability to differentiate their own ideas and policies from those of their opponents is also quite weak. To this extent, the Left-Right economic dichotomy is shallow, more than it is reversed for these participants. If partisans do 'reverse' the traditional registers of Left and Right, they also, sporadically, adopt these traditional registers. If none of this is seen as a contradiction with what a given party is supposed to stand for, it is also because these ideas and policies do not clearly define parties, single them out, set them apart from other parties. It is therefore not that Left and Right simply take on a different significance in the Hungarian context as compared to a Western European one. It is that these roles are floating, vaguely defined, not profoundly characteristic of one or the other party's platform.

#### IV. DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

##### 1. Variations in patterns of partisan discourse

At the end of this chapter, I draw some conclusions on variations in programmatic cohesiveness in both countries under study and thus provide a first answer to the question: *to what extent does real-world partisanship meet the standards of democratic partisanship?* Overall, French partisans are more cohesive in their discourse than Hungarian partisans. Ideas and normative commitments are central to the identity of French partisans. French participants are capable of linking these ideas systematically to a set of policies; and they know what differentiates their ideas and practices from those of their opponents.

In Hungary, on the other hand, partisans are often unclear as to which ideas ground their commitments. They have difficulties linking such ideas to a coherent set of

policies and they are not always capable of pointing to what differentiates their platforms from those of their opponents. In Appendix 6, I systematically compare the coding-based evidence for French and Hungarian partisans, and this comparison also confirms these general tendencies. While differences between French and Hungarian partisans are more or less striking, depending on the criterion considered, French partisans are ahead of both Hungarian parties on almost all coding measures presented in this chapter.

There are also differences between parties in each country. PS partisans are to some extent less cohesive than their UMP counterparts. Although they have a strong notion of the ideas that ground their own commitments, they are less capable than UMP participants to point to the policies and practices that derive from these ideas. This also results in a weaker capacity to clearly distinguish their own platforms from those of their opponents.

In Hungary, although both groups of partisans lack cohesiveness on socio-economic issues, Fidesz partisans displays greater cohesiveness on socio-cultural issues. They have a clearer set of ideas and values to refer to, can point to the types of policies that put these ideas into practice, and know what sets apart these ideas and practices from those of their opponents.

## **2. Explaining variations in patterns of partisan discourse**

The second task of this conclusion is to formulate potential explanations for the above-mentioned variations, and thus provide an answer to my second research question: *how can we explain variations in the extent to which partisans uphold the standards of democratic partisanship?* As explained in Chapter 2, I take as a given that variations in patterns of partisan discourse do not simply result from differences in the personality of partisans, but that these are partly dependent on the specific constraints and opportunities that partisans have for political discourse in their own political environment. In this regard, I define two broad categories of factors that influence partisan discourse. First, the category of cultural resources, broadly defined as the array of signs, symbols, ideas, memories that the history of a given polity provides to partisans. Second, the category of external events, broadly defined as political, economic or social phenomena that parties do not fully control, yet need to take a position on. In the following sections, I formulate possible explanations for the variations I describe above, focusing on the more specific cultural resources or events that different groups of partisans draw on to make their claims.

### ***a. Cultural resources***

#### *A history of open competition and the Left-Right dichotomy*

Some of the cultural resources that French history provides to partisans appear as particularly conducive to the development of a cohesive discourse among their ranks. I speak more specifically here about the general categories of 'Left' and 'Right' and their role as resources in partisan discourse (White, 2011a). Born in revolutionary France, their significance has since retained a strong, albeit changing, significance in the country's tumultuous political history (Gauchet, 1996).

These categories are omnipresent in the discourse of the young French partisans I interviewed, and we can link the ways in which they use these categories to the cohesiveness of their claims. Left and Right first provide a basis for partisans fulfilling the normative condition, as both political traditions are firmly grounded in a corpus of established ideas, values and traditions. The resources of Left and Right are also useful to fulfil the condition of articulation, as these two ideational bases have been over time associated with certain types of policy solutions (Bobbio, 1995; Lukes, 2003). Finally, Left and Right do not exist as autonomous political registers: they only exist as a dichotomy, each grounding their own meaning in opposition to the other (Dyrberg, 2005; Mouffe, 2000). To this extent, they also explain why French partisans can easily differentiate their platforms from those of their opponents.

These resources serve as opportunities for a cohesive political discourse because they are grounded in a long political history. Since French parties have been free to compete for the votes of citizens, a period which started with the birth of the Third Republic in 1870, Left and Right have served as key resources for partisans' positioning. Over time, specific traditions, symbols, personalities, policies, and values were progressively attached to both registers. French partisans are today the carriers of this extended memory of free democratic competition.

Hungary also has a conflictual political history between two distinct political camps. On the one hand, the current centre-right finds its political roots in a Hungarian tradition of nationalism and conservatism, most clearly embodied by the authoritarian regency of Miklos Horthy between 1920 and 1944 and gone underground following the communist take-over of 1945. On the other hand, the current centre-left finds its political roots in a Hungarian tradition of socialism on the one hand, and of liberal-cosmopolitanism on the other. While both of these strands of thought were repressed until 1945, socialism was imposed as Hungary's official ideology from 1945 to 1989.

There is, then, a great difference between the political resources that French and Hungarian partisans dispose of. In France, the meaning of Left and Right was built in great part over the last 150 years, in a historical context of open political competition. Both camps had to learn to compete in open elections, and therefore to be in power, cede power, and be in opposition. In Hungary, partisans carry the legacy of an authoritarian history. Their memories are either of their own camp being repressed, or of their own camp dominating others. In the absence of a history of free competition, neither political tradition has learned what it means to make partial claims about the common good. There is also no well-defined set of policies that have been habitually put-forth by one camp in response to another.

This may help to explain why the cohesiveness of Hungarian partisans' discourse on socio-economic issues is especially so weak. With no history of open debate on these questions, the policies and ideas generally associated with the left-wing and right-wing traditions of thought are up for grabs. The cultural resources Hungarian participants dispose of do not define Left and Right as being associated with a clear set of ideas and practices. They do not prescribe well-defined roles for political parties in a context of open competition, precisely because neither the nationalist nor the socialist tradition had a chance to play such roles in the past.

*Political legacies in a post-authoritarian context*

Different sets of cultural resources may also help to explain in part the greater cohesiveness of Fidesz partisans as compared to MSzP ones. To put it simply, the MSzP appears to be more constrained by the cultural resources offered by Hungary's recent history of socialism than the Fidesz. Given that the socialist tradition is strongly associated with Hungary's most recent non-democratic regime, those who are *not* associated with this tradition today—the Fidesz—are also in a better position to form a cohesive political discourse.

Fidesz participants anchor their identity in an established political tradition of social conservatism and nationalism. They are most eager to refer to the repression of this tradition under the Soviet regime. They speak of a time when, in the name of the abstract and foreign principles of socialism, nationalist feelings and religious sentiment were suppressed. This not only comforts Fidesz participants in their party's current defence of these ideas, thus allowing them to fulfil the normative condition. It also provides their party with clear guidelines for action: to restore the triumph of the national interest. Fidesz participants can thus link their nationalistic ideas to their

party's policies, and thus fulfil the executive criterion. Finally, these cultural resources also give Fidesz participants a clear sense of how their party's program differs from that of their opponents. When they link their own party to a tradition of resistance against the communist regime, they also establish a continuity between this communist regime and their current opponents. As a result, Fidesz participants see their own policies as grounded in the defence of the national interest and their opponents' position as embodying foreign, abstract principles that are adverse to the Hungarian nation.

MSzP participants are more constrained by the cultural resources they have at their disposal. With the profound discredit of Hungary's communist period after the regime change of 1989, a longer and broader tradition of socialist thought was tainted. The cultural resources that come with this tradition are soiled in the collective memory. For the MSzP, committing to democracy and market liberalism in the 1990s meant distancing themselves from the socialist tradition. This has left them, however, with few cultural resources at their disposal. With no past to pride themselves on, socialists also have no clear ideas to promote, no policies to link to these ideas, no clear notion of what sets them apart from their opponents. This could partly explain why, the discourse of MSzP partisans is less cohesive than the discourse of Fidesz participants on socio-cultural issues.

### ***b. External events***

#### *The weight of external economic constraints on French partisan discourse*

One recurrent topic of discussion in French groups was the weight of external economic constraints on the policy practices of political parties, especially those induced by financial globalisation and European integration. What is particularly interesting here is that references to these constraints play a very different role for UMP and PS participants: while these references serve the cohesiveness of UMP claims, PS participants seem less able to integrate these factors into a cohesive discourse. To this extent, these external events may partly serve to explain differences in the cohesiveness of UMP and PS identities.

UMP partisans frame the necessity for governments to take into account the current laws of the market in a positive light. They can read the context of increasing economic interdependence among European nations in light of their foundational values and suggest a line of political practice on the basis of this reading. According to them, the role of governments is to adopt a pragmatic approach towards economic

policy-making, and accompany rather than resist the global trend toward market liberalisation and state disengagement from the economy. In this discourse, they make good use of their 'right-wing' cultural tool-kit. According to Lukes, the main characteristic of the Right as cultural resource is to defend the social necessity of respecting timeless laws (Lukes, 2003). The laws to be defended change according to the historical context : in Revolutionary France the Right defended the King's divine right against the partisans of Republican rule, today they will champion a traditional conception of marriage against the partisans of same-sex unions. UMP participants are able to use this worldview to make sense of financial globalisation or European economic integration. For them, the role of the state is to respect the laws of the market rather than attempt to meddle with them, and thus encourage individuals to take responsibility for their own social trajectories.

PS participants referred more frequently and more directly than UMP participants to the impact of financial globalisation and European integration on the economic policy of national governments. They however seemed less able than UMP participants to read these events in light of their political worldview and thus integrate these events into a cohesive political discourse. PS participants defended a traditional reading of left-wing ideals, according to which 'timeless laws' serve those in power and contribute to increasing inequalities. They were not able, however, to make sense of the contemporary economic context through the lense of these ideas, and suggest ways in which governments could respond to it. Instead, PS partisans use this economic context as an explanation for the discrepancies they witness between their own ideas and the PS's economic policies. According to most PS partisans, if their party does not align its practices with left-wing ideals it is because it is not able to. Even when they did not resign to this, PS participants could not suggest an alternative set of practices to the ones that their party enact in government, policies that would both address this economic context and be in line with their ideals. While this may be a tall-order for young, grass-root activists, this is also what one could expect from exceptional partisanship: to provide a narrative on current events that help citizens make sense of them, and which points to ways in which a new context can be managed and addressed by the state. To this extent, while UMP partisans were able to use the current economic context as an opportunity for cohesive discourse, for PS partisans this was an obstacle, a constraint that they were not able to overcome.

*The context of Hungarian economic transition and Fidesz's current institutional reforms*

The ways in which Hungarian partisans react to contemporary economic circumstances may also help explain that the discourse of Fidesz participants is more cohesive than the discourse of MSzP participants. As shown in this chapter, the discourse of Fidesz participants on socio-economic issues displays many weaknesses. They are able, however, to develop a narrative tying their party's economic policies to their ideas. Fidesz participants put a form of nationalism at the heart of their approach to European economic integration and to the negative consequences of financial globalisation. In this light, they see the role of their party as to defend the national economy against these threats and promote Hungarian industry. On this basis, they can position their opponents as those who defend a cosmopolitan vision of the world and favour foreign, multinational corporations.

MSzP participants, on the other hand, do not dispose of such a narrative. They do not take pride in their party's economic reforms during the twelve years they were in power. In fact, they barely talk about these at all. It is true that the specific context of economic transition, the EU accession process, and finally, the 2007 financial crisis imposed heavy constraints on successive MSzP governments and limited their ability to adopt a strong social policy. In addition to the discredit that the socialist legacy has experienced in post-communist Hungary, this may make it more difficult for MSzP participants to make use of left-wing cultural resources, and promote a credible, socially-oriented discourse.

Finally, MSzP participants made frequent references to the institutional reforms of Fidesz as a constraining factor on their party's ability to come up with an alternative plan of government. This factor therefore also deserves to be discussed. It is true that some of Fidesz's institutional reforms, the Media Law and new Electoral Law especially, do favour the expression of pro-Fidesz views in the mainstream media and increase the party's chances to gain a strong majority in future elections (European Parliament, 2011; OSCE, 2011; Political Capital, 2013). It is also true that if the MSzP were to gain power in the next election with a simple majority, their hands would be tied on a number of topics. Since 2010, the Fidesz adopted a series of Cardinal Acts that can only be amended or abrogated in the future with a two-third majority (Hungarian Parliament, 2011). These have included acts on the protection of families, on religion and church-state relations, on the media, on the rights of nationalities, on the judiciary, on the constitutional court, as well as a new election law (Bánkuti et al., 2012).

All of these factors certainly make the task of the MSzP to come up with a cohesive alternative of government particularly challenging. In some ways, however, it makes it all the more urgent that they do so. And even though the MSzP faces a number of constraining factors, those do not explain why it is impossible for MSzP partisans to devise a strategy to address this situation. As made clear in this chapter however, while MSzP participants are strongly critical of the Fidesz governments' institutional reforms, they do not talk about how their own party could counter them. While Fidesz's institutional reforms may objectively complicate the MSzP's task, partisans nevertheless retain agency in the discourse they develop. To this extent, MSzP partisans also carry a share of responsibility for the lack of cohesiveness of their claims.



## CHAPTER 4: Pluralism in partisan attitudes towards opponents

In the second empirical chapter, I examine the extent to which French and Hungarian partisans meet the standard of commitment to political pluralism in their attitudes towards political opponents. As outlined in chapter 1, one challenge for partisans is to contest partisan opposition *while* asserting the legitimacy of opponents to formulate dissenting claims. Respect for political opponents thus requires from participants that they exercise self-restraint and place their opponents' right to disagree above conviction in the superiority of their own claims. In this sense, respect is not simply toleration that stems from grudgingly resigning to co-existence. Instead, it is a more voluntarily "reciprocal positive regard" between opponents that consider each other as "moral and political equals" in an inclusive and pluralist political community (Gutmann & Thompson, 1996, p. 17; 2010, pp. 1129-1130).

In chapter 1, I offered three criteria to evaluate the attitudes of partisans towards political opponents. I summarize these below and indicate the type of evidence that my interviews offer for each criterion:

*Criterion 1: Criticising opponents on practices, not intentions:* A first sign of respect for political opponents can be found in the types of criticisms that partisans address to their opposition. Respectful opposition involves criticising the practices of opponents rather than their intentions. In other words, partisans should not engage in 'motive cynicism': raising doubts on the integrity of the reasons opponents have to say or do something. (Gutmann & Thompson, 2010, p. 1133).

The focus groups offer ample material for assessing partisans' endorsement of this first norm. When discussing similarities and differences between their own party's programs and those of their opponents, partisans often had to explain why they consider their own ideas and practices as superior to those of their opponents. In these instances, I attributed specific codes to those criticisms targeted at the intentions of opponents and those criticisms targeted at the practices of opponents.

*Criterion 2: Considering opponents as principled:* The second criteria for partisans to develop a pluralist political discourse towards their opposition is that they acknowledge the principled nature of opponents' positions. Partisans should assume that, even if they disagree with their rivals' stances, their opponents "act not only for their own political gain but also out of a desire to do what they think is right" (Gutmann & Thompson, 2010, p. 1135). To say that a politician has principles and stands by them is in itself a recognition of political merit to the extent that principled political commitment carries intrinsically positive connotations.

To operationalise this particular criterion, I coded for instances where partisans talked about the values and principles of their political opponents.

*Criterion 3: Viewing opponents as oriented towards the common good:* Finally, partisans respect political opponents when they consider these as moral agents that are oriented towards the *common good*. This amounts to a belief that adversaries are committed to addressing widely accepted societal problems (sickness, poverty, crime), and that their actions are guided by a concern for fundamental principles such as freedom, equality and the rule of law (Galston, 2013).

Here I coded for instances in which participants did not respect this particular criteria. First, cases when they directly questioned the morality of political opponents. Second, cases when they accused their opponents of being a direct threat to fundamental common principles, or to the common good more generally. I also use examples from the transcripts where partisans explicitly recognise the dedication of their opponents to the common good.

\* \* \*

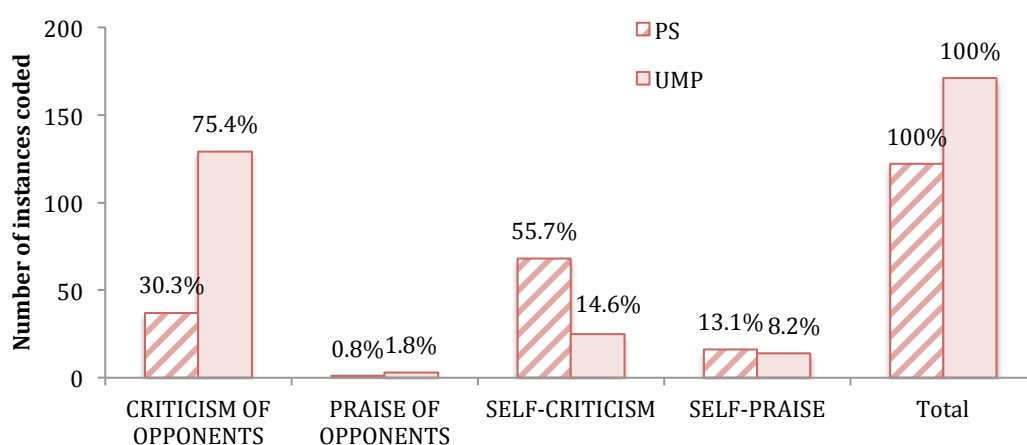
As for the previous chapter, I will present the qualitative and quantitative evidence for both cases in turn, starting with France and then moving to Hungary. In the final section I will discuss both cases in a comparative fashion and provide tentative explanations for the variations in patterns of partisan discourse that I uncover.

## I. THE FRENCH CASE

I first consider the arguments French participants use to criticise opponents, then the extent to which they see their opponents as principled, and finally whether they perceive their opponents as oriented towards the common good.

### 1. Types of criticisms: intentions and practices

As is apparent from Figure 18, UMP participants were over three times more likely to criticise their opponents than PS activists, while PS activists were close to three times more likely to be self-critical as compared to UMP participants. These results can be read in line with my earlier discussion on programmatic cohesiveness in France. As already emphasised in Chapter 3, PS participants also regret that their own party's practices are not sufficiently in line with traditional left-wing ideals. This line of argument goes far to explain the more critical attitude of PS participants towards their own party as compared to their UMP counterparts.



**Figure 18: Praise and criticism by French participants of their own party and their opponents**

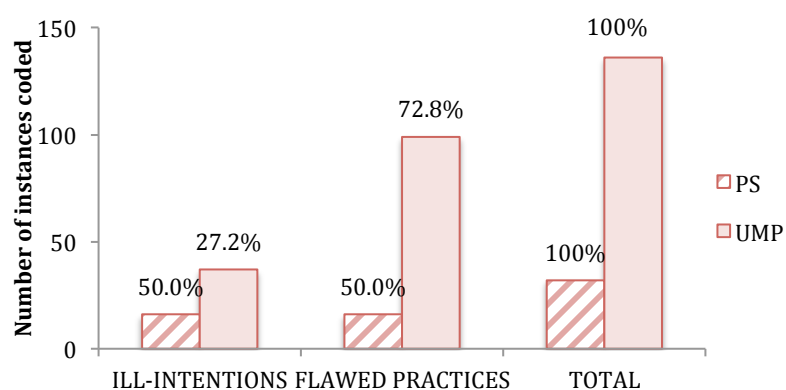
*N.B: See the note under Figure 5 for an explanation of how to read this figure*

It is not surprising that UMP participants are more critical of their opponents than PS participants, because the UMP was the opposition party at the time of my interviews. It is also understandable that PS participants have less arguments against their opponents in a time when the UMP has little policy-making power. In fact, partisans of opposition parties in both my French and Hungarian cases were far more focused on their opponents than those that supported a party government. PS and Fidesz participants also had far more to say about themselves, than partisans of the opposition parties (see Figure 11 for France and Figure 17 for Hungary in Chapter 3).

The extent to which partisans are critical of their opponents, or self-critical, does not in itself offer evidence on their level of commitment to political pluralism. As emphasised in Chapter 1, it is the task of partisans to offer citizens alternatives of government, to differentiate themselves from their opponents and therefore to be critical of them. Similarly, partisans may be critical of the government not because they

exercise self-restraint, but because they believe their party's actions in government is not in line with these convictions - which is exactly the case for PS participants. The information presented above is nevertheless a starting point for examining the *types* of criticisms that partisans address to their opponents, which in turn do provide evidence about the pluralist commitments of partisans.

A specific code was attributed to instances where partisans criticised the intentions of their political opponents (coded ILL INTENTIONS) and another to instances where they focused on their practices (FLAWED PRACTICES). As shown in Figure 19, PS participants focus equally on opponents' intentions and practices (50% respectively of all instances of criticisms coded), while UMP participants tend to criticise their opponents on their intentions far less than they do on their practices (27.2% and 72.8% of total criticisms respectively). It is noteworthy, however, that UMP participants criticise the intentions of their opponents over twice as often than their PS counterparts (37 and 16 instances coded respectively).



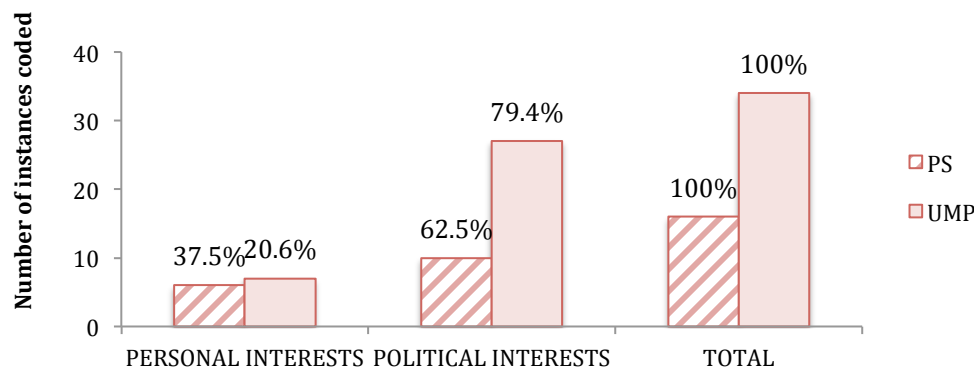
**Figure 19: Criticisms by French participants of their opponents' intentions and practices**

*N.B: See the note under Figure 5 for an explanation of how to read this figure*

### **a. Criticisms of intentions**

I further divided instances in which participants criticised their opponents' intentions into two categories. First, cases where participants criticised their opponents for looking out for the political interest of their party - and especially their re-election - rather than the public interest more broadly (coded POLITICAL INTERESTS). Second, I considered cases where participants accused their opponents of acting out of concern for more personal interests, such as material gain, securing the personal power of their members or supporters, or of being under the influence of certain sectorial interests (PERSONAL INTERESTS). While accusations of demagoguery, populism, or vote-seeking behaviours more generally would fall under the first

category, accusations of corruption, clientelism and nepotism would fall under the second.



**Figure 20: Types of criticisms by French participants of their opponents' intentions**

*N.B: See the note under Figure 5 for an explanation of how to read this figure*

As is apparent from Figure 20, the majority of intentions-related criticisms among French participants were targeted at the political, rather than personal, motives of opponents. In these cases, French participants accused their opponents of defending certain policies solely in order to cater to their electorate, or more generally, of being involved in politics out of a desire to be elected or re-elected. UMP activists would for instance regularly accuse the PS of adopting pro-immigration or more multiculturalist positions to maintain their popularity among French Muslims. In the following example, a young UMP activist is making such an argument:

Adrien: Yes, I think there is a very electioneering way of dealing with this, and actually it works! During the 2012 elections I think something like 93% of Muslims voted for François Hollande in the second round<sup>86</sup>. This is regrettable, because it means that religion has become a political force, and secularism should be about leaving religion to the private sphere (...) The Left says for instance that it is all in favour of secularism, etc., but then has doubts about voting the law on the Burqa, law that was defended by Jean-François Copé...<sup>87</sup> We can see that the Left has the objective of seducing, of continuing to seduce the Muslim electorate in its entirety (...)

The PS's social and economic policies were also regularly cast as way of gaining

<sup>86</sup> Adrien refers here to an opinion poll conducted by the polling institute OpinionWay-Fiducial for the conservative daily *Le Figaro* on May 6, 2012, the day of the second round of the French Presidential elections (OpinionWay-Fiducial, 2012). This statistic, however, applies to those French Muslims who effectively cast a ballot in 2012, not to all French Muslims.

<sup>87</sup> Adrien refers to a law banning citizens from dissimulating their faces in the public space. It was voted by an UMP majority on 11 Octobre, 2010 and first proposed by Jean-François Copé, President of the UMP group in the French National Assembly at the time. This legislation has come to be known as the 'Burqa law'. The law was adopted with 335 votes in favour, 1 against, and 241 abstentions. Only 20 PS MPs voted in favour of the law, against all UMP MPs.

votes rather than as stemming from a particular set of normative assumptions. In the following example, a young UMP activist frames her own party as one making necessary, yet unpopular decisions, while the PS is described as mostly concerned with being re-elected:

Marie: I absolutely agree with what has been said on the economic system and social benefits... When we compare the UMP and the PS, the UMP wants to take risks, even if that means part of the French population will be against them. Instead, the PS only acts out of its own interest, to get re-elected, there is no vision... on the long term, for France. It is for their own personal interest, to get re-elected (...)

Some activists went as far as to attribute all of their opponents' positions to a vote seeking strategy, a line of argument developed by Edouard below. As in the previous example, it is also clear here that questioning the intentions of opponents amounts to implicitly denying their principled nature - a point I will come back to later in this chapter:

Edouard: Here we mainly see that on societal issues... because societal issues don't just include gay marriage...<sup>88</sup> there is also the example of public drug consumption rooms<sup>89</sup>, the right to vote for foreigners,<sup>90</sup> all of these questions... It's a form of demagoguery because in the end... they operate, we see that the PS operates community by community. So when they suggest public drug consumption rooms it's for left-wing 'bobos'<sup>91</sup>, when they suggest gay marriage it is for the gay community, when they suggest the right to vote for foreigners it's the same... So in the end, it's only for electoral ends, they don't necessarily think about changes in society, about the consequences it can have for society...

When PS participants cast similar arguments, it was in most cases to accuse their opponents of catering to the far-right, Front National electorate. They especially targeted the hardening of the UMP's position in the last decade over issues related to France's immigration policy and its treatment of cultural minorities more generally. René and Didier are making such a point in the following dialogue:

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<sup>88</sup> On the PS law authorizing same-sex marriage, see footnote 52.

<sup>89</sup> Since the Spring of 2013, the PS government has authorised the opening of a limited number of public drug consumption rooms, places where addicts can have access to clean utensils to inject drugs, as well as medical help and information. This initiative, however, did not legalise these structures on the entire French territory instead. A limited number of them were opened on an experimental basis.

<sup>90</sup> The PS has been advocating that non-EU foreigners be granted the right to vote in local elections since 1981, but in practice this right has never been granted. This was one of François Hollande's promises in the Spring of 2012, but the chances of this being voted into law before the end of François Hollande's mandate are rather slim.

<sup>91</sup> 'Bobo' in French is the contraction of the expression 'Bourgeois-Bohème'. It designates a type of individual who is left-leaning, artsy, and part of the middle-class or upper-middle class. The term is essentially pejorative, it implies that the targeted individual adopts left-leaning political positions as a life-style, rather than out of genuine conviction or because of real-life experience.

René: The position of the Left is compromised because... because the question of secularism has essentially been raised around Islam these last years, and this creates a double problem on the left... So we have a problem of manipulation by the Right, because beneath the secularism of Sarkozy there was hostility to Islam itself. (This is hostility is) more or less deep, more or less used as a political instrument. They played on the fear of Muslims, they played on the idea of getting back a share of the Front National's votes on these cultural themes, etc.

Didier: While jumbling up Muslims, foreigners, immigrants... well, there was a whole package.<sup>92</sup>

More serious accusations of opponents being motivated by the desire to further personal, rather than political, interests were rare in French groups (see Figure 20 above). In this second category fall examples of French participants accusing opponents of being under the influence of private, financial interests. A young PS activist speaks of the UMP's employment policies in this manner in the following statement:

Lucien: (...) Then there is the question of fighting against unemployment, and employment policies. These are consensual (questions) in some sense, because we can assume that both (parties)... well, at least publicly, from what is said in the media, they are all in favour of a return to full employment. But then we can ask ourselves whether in the end, this is not a way to... a convoluted way for the Right in the end to favour certain lobbies, to grant them more flexibility, for them to adjust their costs more straightforwardly, to allow them to maximise their profits more easily (...)

While above, PS partisans do suggest the existence of an unhealthy connection between private financial interests and the UMP, there were no *direct* accusations among French participants of opponents being motivated by a desire to increase their personal wealth through their political career. Criticisms that came the closest to these types of accusations focused on specific instances of corruption affecting the opposition party, or on specific material favours that opposition politicians received from powerful economic interests. Within PS groups for instance, only one participant referred to the 'Bettencourt scandal' that affected the financing of Nicolas Sarkozy's campaign in 2012. As for UMP participants, four out of the five instances classified under the category PERSONAL INTERESTS are related to accusations of nepotism, namely the illegitimate or unlawful use of state resource in order to further members or sympathisers of one's own party. Adrien for instance was particularly concerned with what he saw as the PS's nepotistic use of public funds in supporting left-wing civil society organisations:

Adrien: (...) In parallel, the Left uses very powerful means... we talked about the

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<sup>92</sup> See Chapter 2, III, 1, a, for an account of the UMP's evolution since 2007 in this regard.

power of François Hollande, I would like to recall the fact that François Hollande created *SOS racisme* under Mitterrand, with Mr Harlem Désir, and Mr Dray... So *SOS racisme* is absolutely not an organisation of nice guys who are trying to fight against racism, no, it was created politically, for a political use, to influence the media, public opinion, with public funds, and today they only live from public funds (...) Not to speak of the trials of Harlem Désir. Harlem Désir is today the President of the Socialist Party, and an investigation procedure was started against him last week with a number of others from the executive head of *SOS Racisme*.<sup>93</sup> But this is all to say that the Left lives from public funds, it lives from politics. In its great majority, the Left does not do politics to solve problems.

In a comparable example, Nathan accuses the PS of being mostly concerned with placing its own people in key positions:

Nathan: (...) What I'm really disappointed with is what I call the 'PS State'. Today, nothing is based on competence, it is rather based on favouritism... François Hollande used to speak of an irreproachable Republic<sup>94</sup>, but what we have is rather a Republic of Buddies<sup>95</sup> (...) Today the socialists make more efforts in putting their friends in different positions, to set up a PS State, and to try to keep France until 2017 if not longer, than to fight in favour of French people.

### ***b. Criticisms of practices***

On average, the majority of French participants' criticisms of opponents remains dedicated to their practices, not their intentions (see Figure 19 above). These types of criticisms especially characterize the discourse of UMP participants, who are over six times more likely than PS participants to use these types of criticism (99 total instances coded against 16). As is apparent from Figure 21 below, UMP participants most frequently criticise the practices of the PS either for their inefficiency or for their irresponsible character (coded *INNEFFICIENCY* and *IRRESPONSABILITY* respectively).

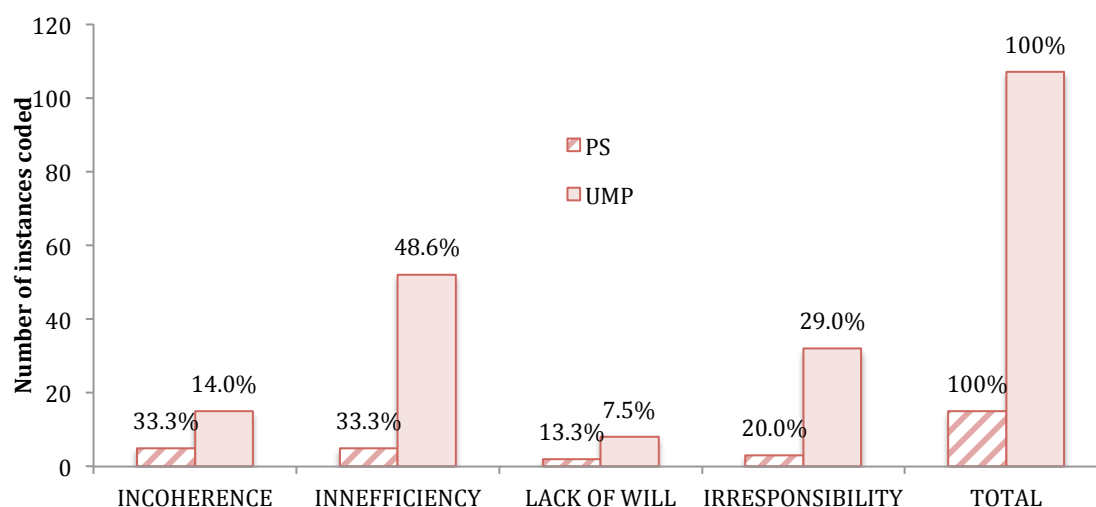
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<sup>93</sup> *SOS racisme* - an NGO raising awareness on racial and religious discriminations in France - was founded in 1984, under the PS Presidency of François Mitterrand, by personalities on the left-wing fringe of the PS such as Harlem Désir and Julien Dray. In December 1998 Harlem Désir was sentenced to a 30 000 franc fine for having benefited from a fictitious state salary between November 1986 and October 1987. No particular procedure was started against him in early 2013 however.

<sup>94</sup> The catch-phrase "Je veux une République irréprochable" (I want an irreproachable republic) was in fact coined by UMP candidate Nicolas Sarkozy in the 2007 Presidential elections (Bonduelle, 2012).

<sup>95</sup> In French, "République des copains".





**Figure 21: Types of criticisms by French participants of their opponents' practices**

*N.B: See the note under Figure 5 for an explanation of how to read this figure*

The main argument of UMP participants is that the PS is adopting counter-productive measures to reach widely accepted societal objectives. They criticise their opposition especially for their idealism. According to UMP participants, the PS's lack of realism results in the mismanagement of crucial issues. This type of argument is especially widespread on economic issues, where UMP participants criticise their opponents for adopting practices that are ultimately harmful to France's economic health. This is clear in the following example. Here a young UMP activist emphasises that, while both parties aim towards more social justice, the solutions suggested by the PS to fulfil this objective are essentially flawed:

Charles: There is an objective, which is more social justice. The Right would also like more social justice! But it is not by taking from the rich and giving to the poor that we will succeed. Nothing is created in this way. The only way for the poor to have a better living standard is to create wealth, that is the only way.

In the following dialogue, another group of UMP participants discusses the counter-productive role of socialist taxation in this regard:

Edouard: (...) The fight against unemployment and employment policies, and (the question of) taxation, these two topics are linked. The more you impose taxation, the less you encourage investment. The less investment, the less you have firms, the less firms the less you have employment, the less employment the less taxes (you can collect), the less taxes...

Loïs: The less people will consume too...

Edouard: Exactly, the less people consume...

This type of argument is often associated with the idea that the PS is out of touch with reality: they are accused of having unrealistic expectations and to misunderstand the basic mechanisms of both micro and macro-economics. In the following example, a young UMP activist is explaining how business owners perceive the PS governments' measures:

Laura: (...) What the Left fails to understand is that it is not in sync with how firms function. What I mean is that when firms read the report issued in September, on business taxes, they really felt like politics, and the government, where completely out of touch with what they were experiencing. We are in a crisis situation, and they increased taxes, they created new taxes, they modified previous taxes... And (businesses) had the impression that the rug was being pulled from under their feet (...)

Right-wing participants often associate this lack of realism to the PS's tendency of being primarily guided by ideological considerations. Instead of doing what it should be doing, the PS is doing what its left-wing identity commands - leading it to adopt fundamentally inappropriate measures. This is quite clear in the following dialogue, where two UMP activists are talking about the PS's attitude towards France's budgetary deficits:

Eloïse: I think this is a typical example of demagoguery, it's really a typical example of... a topic where we all know that we need to address the deficit, and we all know what reforms are necessary for that to happen...

Claire: Then the means are not the same on the left and on the right...

Eloïse: It's not even that, I think at some point they will have to adopt the same means that we put into place, it's simply because it's not... Well, it's not the history of the Left to adopt austerity measures and be more rigorous. It's a painful nod, that is why they can't admit what really needs to be done.

But these types of arguments were also adopted on more societal topics. Here the PS was similarly criticised for having a skewed vision of reality and for making flawed decisions on the basis of their outdated ideas. In the following dialogue, UMP activists are talking about Christiane Taubira, the PS government Minister of Justice at the time:<sup>96</sup>

Pierre: The question of Justice and Security. I think we will all agree... how can I explain this, how can I explain when we have our dear Minister, Christiane Taubira... I'm having difficulties describing this person, she seems to me so bizarre and out of touch with the reality on the ground. I wonder when it is that she last set foot in a working-class neighbourhood...<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>96</sup> Christiane Taubira resigned from her functions as Minister of Justice in January 2016.

<sup>97</sup> Pierre uses here the expression "quartiers populaires" which literally means "neighbourhood of the people".

Charles: Well you know, she comes from far away... (Laughs)

Pierre: Yes, she comes from very far away... She doesn't know the country.<sup>98</sup> When she speaks of setting free prisoners that were sentenced to less than two years in prison, it encourages the permanent repetition of offence.<sup>99</sup> We see it clearly in this neighbourhood, with small dealers that got caught several times, who were sentenced, and then were set free again regardless of what they were guilty of.

Finally, these criticisms concerning the lack of realism and inefficiency of the PS are often closely tied to an accusation of being irresponsible. Indeed, if the means employed by the PS are essentially inefficient or counter-productive, they are also fundamentally detrimental to France's economy and society. This already comes through in the previous example, where the PS's loss of touch with reality ends up encouraging the development of criminality. This argument is made even more clearly in the following dialogue:

Thomas: (...) On the Left, a lot of people, and even elected representatives unfortunately, they sometimes don't... They want to show themselves as open to the world, (open) to everything, so on topics like for example... we'll come back to it, but on the topic of gay marriage, they are in favour (of it) without really seeing the consequences it can have. So they want to show that they are open, show themselves as...

Eloïse: Progressives

Thomas: Progressives, so all is well... And so opening the borders is also a good thing, we tell all of those who leave their country "you can come to France", they can come in without having to prove anything...<sup>100</sup> and they don't see the consequences, they don't realise that at some point we can't follow, at some point, France can't...

Crucially, this type of argument was very particular to UMP activists. While there were instances of PS participants accusing their opponents of being inefficient, unrealistic, blinded by ideological considerations, or irresponsible, these were extremely rare (see Figure 21 above). The specificity of UMP participants' line of argument can partly be linked to their position on the right side of the political spectrum. Traditionally, the Right has stood for a form of 'status quo': the role of the

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<sup>98</sup> Christiane Taubira has been French Minister of Justice since May 2012. She was born in French Guyana and did most of her political career there until she was nominated for this ministerial position under François Hollande's presidency.

<sup>99</sup> Christiane Taubira's major reform, promulgated on August 15, 2014, encourages judges to privilege alternative forms of punishment to prison in the case of petty crimes - for instance contributing to public work, reporting to the police regularly, having an obligation to be medically assisted, etc. The law also encourages judges to review sentences when two-thirds of it are completed, and to commute prison sentences into such alternative sentences when and where appropriate.

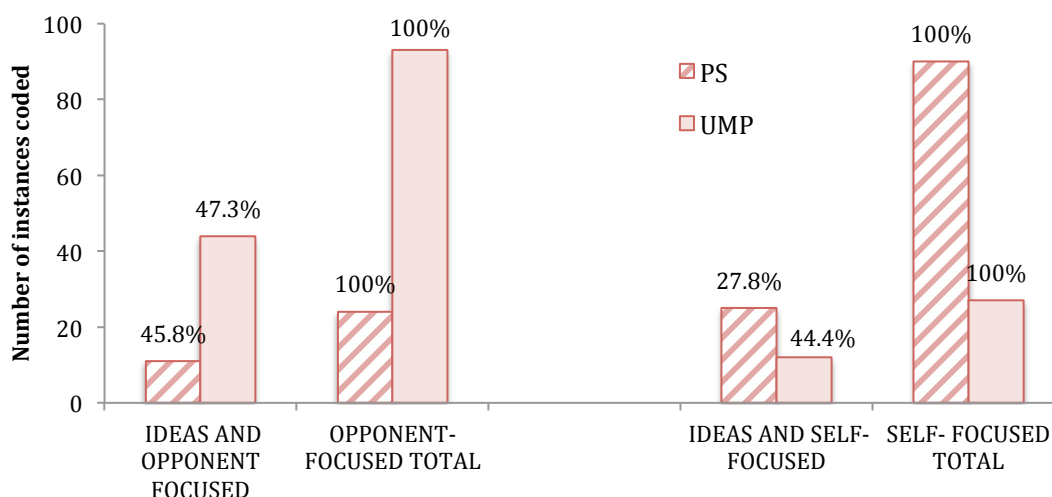
<sup>100</sup> The PS is trying to facilitate immigration on French soil with a new law on the rights of foreigners, first examined by the French National Assembly in 2015 (Gouvernement Français, 2015). The text, however, does not relax the conditions of stay to the extent described by Thomas.

state is to guarantee the triumph of a self-evident and pre-existing order, be it the law of nature or the law of the market (Lukes, 2003). The Left, on the other hand, has traditionally championed the belief that justice can only be produced through challenging this order, the role of the state being to 'rectify' the inequalities and injustices that it produces. From this perspective, the rhetoric of UMP participants is easily understandable. By intervening in the functioning of the market, encouraging immigration or releasing prisoners, the Left is interfering with the order that a free market, a homogeneous community and a strong legal system. In the eyes of UMP participants these moves necessarily stem from an unrealistic diagnosis, and their outcome are therefore inefficient at best, irresponsible at worst.

This would still leave PS participants room to develop an alternative criticism, one that would be focused, for instance, on the injustices that the Right perpetuates by aiming to preserve such an order. As the evidence so far has shown, PS participants are mostly focused on their own actions in government, not on their opposition. It is perhaps because they are so critical of their own party that their opposition to the UMP is less effective. From Chapter 3, we know that PS participants raise doubts as to whether their own party is still committed to challenging the established order. This may also put PS participants in a weaker position to criticise their opposition on a similar basis.

## **2. The principled nature of opponents**

I now consider the extent to which French participants recognise the principled nature of their opponents' positions. Overall, French participants frequently alluded to the ideas that motivate the practices of their opposition. This is apparent in Figure 22: in close to half of the instances where both PS and UMP participants spoke solely about their opponents, they also alluded to the ideas that motivate their positions (45.8% and 47.3% of cases respectively). In fact, French participants tend to speak more frequently of their opponents' ideas than of their own: PS activists only evoke their own ideas in 27.8% of the cases where they speak about their party, and UMP activists in 44.4% of these cases.



**Figure 22: References by French participants to the ideas of their opponents and of their own party**

*N.B: See the note under Figure 5 for an explanation of how to read this figure*

A large share of these instances reflect an implicit form of respect for political opponents. By recognising that their opponents are principled, participants also recognise that there exists a plurality of legitimate values. They may well disagree with their opponents' positions, but they do not dismiss them as illegitimate for this sole reason. This comes through in the following dialogue, in which PS participants are talking about the ideas that structure Left and Right economic policies:

Louis: This is what I was saying in the beginning, that is... for me this is one of the fundamental cleavages between the Right and the Left. People on the right will tell you "this is a great example of individual success, and it will give others the desire to succeed in the same way, therefore it is better that he keeps his money". This is a bit the American dream, where each and everyone one can succeed and everything... And in return you want to say, yes, he gained a lot (of money), but it is also because society gave him a chance, it is because he was lucky, so it is normal that he contributes, that he helps others to get... to enjoy...

Quentin: Well and (that person) also determined his own salary so that helps... but yes, the justification... There are a lot of questions like this one, when you listen to the Right and the Left, the arguments are not so bad, I mean when you listen... I'm left-wing, and listening to the arguments of people on the right I tell myself, "yes, that is an interesting argument". But there is a basic idea, at the very foundation of the conception they have that is completely... *We cannot say it is wrong, because that would be to say that what we think is completely true, but there are still things...*

This last sentence is a particularly good example of a partisan exercising his negative capacity: while fundamentally disagreeing with his opponents, this participant is aware that he nevertheless cannot conclude that he is fundamentally right and that his opponents are fundamentally wrong as a result. By recognising the principles of opponents, he is also recognising the pluralist nature of the political realm, and the

illegitimacy therefore of claiming that his own party holds the whole truth on what constitutes the common good. To recognise that opponents have values is the essence of recognising the ineliminability of political disagreement in a democratic society. This comes through in the following statement by a young PS member:

Marcel: (...) If you followed recently the debates on same-sex marriage<sup>101</sup>, I often say that this debate did not get the opposition it deserved. It means that... I mean that there are people who were deeply opposed (to the law), it's not my position, but I can understand where things get stuck. I'm not saying that I am supportive of this, I'm saying that I can understand, because there is a point where we are touching upon intimacy, upon people's deep convictions. And so, if you want, there are two visions of society, and if they are opposed, it is called a healthy opposition. This means that on certain topics we can say that we don't see things politically in the same way, very plainly because we don't see life in the same way. Because for me, the objective of life is not the same as for a guy who would be a member of the UMP, rather on the right of the UMP, with a much more economical vision of society. I'm in a management school, in my cohort I speak with people who tell me that human relations are organised according to the laws of the market, supply and demand. You say "hi" in the morning, and they sincerely think that it responds to the logic of the market. So here, with these guys, the gap is deep, it's really that we don't have at all the same vision, not only of society, but of life in general. And so there is an opposition, and the fact that there is no consensus on some topics, I would say this is not a problem (...)

Importantly, recognising the principles of opponents is also a form of resistance to the 'motive cynicism' that would lead partisans to question the intentions of opponents. In other words, to believe that opponents act out of principle is also to recognise that they are well-intentioned, that they take part in politics out of a belief that they are doing what is right, and thus out of dedication to the common good. If having conviction is a fundamentally positive trait, then pointing towards the conviction of opponents also amounts to ascribing a positive value to their political actions. This is apparent in the following dialogue between UMP activists, which is focused on the PS's project to grant foreigners the right to vote in local elections. While Pascal argues that his opponents are only motivated by a desire to expand their own electorate, Félix - who still disapproves of this measure - disagrees, and emphasises the 'noble' principles that motivate the PS's proposal:

Pascal: I've thought about (why they intend to grant foreigners the right to vote), I have a bit of an answer, my impression is that it is out of pure electoral cynicism...

Félix: No, it is out of (a commitment to) universalism, a universalism that is in my opinion distorted.

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<sup>101</sup> On the PS law authorizing same-sex marriage, see footnote 52.

Pascal: Universalism is a convenient justification...<sup>102</sup>

Félix: Universalism has always been a convenient justification (...) but there is a difference. In this case it is the return of... and if we can say that the Left is noble for something, it is because of this, it is because of this internationalism. It's a position that can be defended, that I do not share, but that can be quite noble. It also highlights the cleavage between those that defend the undividable character of the nation, and the others (...)

The emphasis of UMP participants on their opponents' ideas is nevertheless often part of a critical argument. They regularly present the PS's ideas as both outdated and leading to counterproductive policies. In contrast, they cast their own party as essentially pragmatic, devoid of ideology and oriented towards problem solving. This comes through in the following UMP dialogue on the PS's immigration policy. While Thomas still recognises the necessity to accept his opponents' perspective as genuine, he fundamentally disagrees with the very idea of making policy on the basis of what he labels 'utopian' thinking:

Thomas: Everything that has to do with immigration, even if you... I think that on the left, and I hear a lot of people on the left who say things like... and especially young people, (who argue that) it is necessary to give papers to everyone... It's very nice and all, it's... but there is no meaning behind it... I mean from my perspective, from their point of view there is meaning, it's... Freedom for all, it's...

Eloïse: It's again a lack of pragmatism.

Thomas: Exactly, we consider on the right that we need to be pragmatic, they consider that it is necessary to be... That it is always necessary to be, even worse: utopian, in my understanding. And on this point, we can't change people, if they want to be utopian, I find it very nice and all but... I try to do politics by being pragmatic, exactly because I consider that (satisfying) the needs of my country requires a form of pragmatism, or else... Or else we end up doing nonsense.

As I stress later in this chapter, this line of argument can border on negating the legitimacy of opponents to act out of conviction, and lead UMP participants to deny the necessity of alternative value-systems more generally. This namely happens when UMP participants associate their opponents' 'utopian thinking' with cynical political intentions rather than genuine conviction. In this scenario, their own party is oriented towards the common good because they are doing what the country needs. The PS instead harms the interests of the country in order to get re-elected while pretending to act out of principle. This comes through in the following example, where Thomas is talking about PS measures to subsidize employment:

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<sup>102</sup> Pascal uses a French expression "ça a bon teint l'universalisme", which literally means "universalism has a good complexion".

Thomas: Well yes, if we talk about state subsidised jobs for instance, on the right as on the left... We are against it because we see that it does not work, but it's not a question of ideology, that is what I mean, it's just that... they do that out of demagoguery, it is just to show that they have found something when (in fact) they have found nothing at all. It's just to try to fake a direction. But it's not at all ideological, it's not. (...)

### 3. Opponents and the common good

The third criterion is tied to partisans' belief in the morality of their opposition. Partisans may disagree as to the exact definition of the common good, or the means to reach it, but if they respect their opponents, they should also believe that these are motivated by a desire to further the common good. At the very minimum, this entails that rival partisans refrain from picturing their opponents as immoral. At best, it entails to recognise some of their achievements as a contribution to the common good.

#### *a. Associating opponents with a threat to the common good*

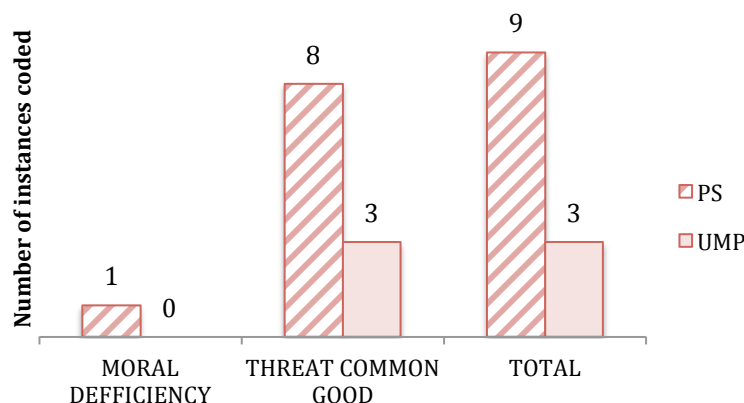
Figure 23 below summarizes cases where French participants directly represent their opponents as a threat to the common good. The code MORAL DEFFICIENCY was associated with cases where partisans *directly* questioned the moral integrity of their opponents. The only such case I found in French transcripts was the following short exchange between two PS participants, talking about then UMP President Jean-François Copé:

Samantha: Copé would sell his father and mother if that would allow him to win, so...

Quentin: Copé would do anything in order to win.

Samantha and Quentin are directly putting into question the personal moral integrity of Jean-François Copé as a person. This is, however, a single and exceptional case. We should therefore be careful to conclude that it is revealing of a wider pattern. Moreover, the participants are targeting a specific opponent and not making a general judgement on the members, supporters, or elites of the UMP.





**Figure 23: Criticisms by French participants of their opponents' ability to further the common good**

*NB: Because the number of instances coded here is so low, I have not indicated the percentages for this figure.*

Another, more indirect way of challenging the general orientation of opponents towards the common good is to accuse them of knowingly threatening some of its main components: the broad objectives understood to form part of the general interest, the fundamental principles at the basis of the political community, or the functioning of the democratic regime itself (coded THREAT COMMON GOOD). This would include accusing one's opponents of not being committed to defending the country's fundamental interests, or knowingly endangering national interests. Accusations of opponents being racist, intolerant, homophobic, segregationists, totalitarian, dictatorial, etc., would also fall under this category. This last style of rhetoric is often used against far-right parties for instance, in an attempt to exclude them from the sphere of common political morality.

As indicated in Figure 23, PS participants were more likely to use these types of arguments against their opponents than UMP participants were. In the following statement for example, a young PS member establishes a schematic opposition between his own party - that stands for tolerance and the inclusion of minorities - and the UMP - that stands for intolerance and the exclusion of minorities:

Bertrand: Concerning taxation, it's either the poor who pay, or it's the rich, to caricature. For religious minorities, it's either we are all equal and we live together, or we reject others, same for immigration. For sexual minorities, it's the same, it's either we accept that others are different, or we refuse it. So it's all that concerns... this way of approaching difference.

Later in the same discussion, he spells this out even more clearly while talking about same-sex marriage.<sup>103</sup> In the first part of his statement, he represents the PS as the sole carrier of key Republican values, and the UMP as standing in opposition to them:

Bertrand: We said it with same-sex marriage, that the main value of the Republic, equality, stands for everyone, and we think that the Right does not respect the values of the Republic. Liberty, Equality, Fraternity. Here we have concrete proof with same-sex marriage, the Right is against equality, and we are in favour. Well, there are different approaches with regard to the Republic, but we will never manage to make them change their mind.

Among UMP participants, criticism against the PS was in rare cases also pushed to an extreme point where opponents were accused not only of enacting measures detrimental to the common good, but of being unwilling to defend it. This comes through in the following example:

Adrien: (...) On the Right, we believe that we have the right to have a French identity, that we have the right to have a history, a culture, arts, etc., and we have a huge problem with the Left (on this question). It's true that if you look at the American elections, be it the conservatives, I mean the Republicans or the Democrats, on the night of the election they all had the American flag. In France, on the night of the Bastille<sup>104</sup>, there were very few French flags, there were a lot of foreign flags, but on the right, there were (...) Exactly as Nathan described, Nicolas Sarkozy said, "I am not on the right anymore, I am the President of all French people",<sup>105</sup> because France goes beyond us all as individuals. It's collective, the adventure is a collective one, and that is what politics is about. And in fact, he defended a policy of opening<sup>106</sup> towards the Left, and Jean-François Copé asked François Hollande to do the same, but he answered: "no" (...) François Hollande in his discourse, and even Secretaries of State like Benoît Hamont or others, they say clearly that they are here... they have been elected by and for the People of the Left<sup>107</sup>. It's a shame because they should rather remind themselves that they have been elected by the whole of France. And I think that this is a sectarianism that we do not have on the right.

It is clear from this example that Adrien has a particular interpretation of the common good, one that gives priority to the idea of nation, that includes pride in one's history and cultural identity, and the broader use of the French flag on election day. While the ethical position would consist in seeing this position as a particular one, and

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<sup>103</sup> On the PS law authorizing same-sex marriage, see footnote 52.

<sup>104</sup> Celebration of the election of Hollande, organised at the Place de la Bastille on the 6th of May 2012.

<sup>105</sup> After having won the Presidential election of May 2007, Nicolas Sarkozy declared in his victory speech "Je suis le Président de tous les Français."

<sup>106</sup> 'Politique d'ouverture' in French. This refers to the practice by Nicolas Sarkozy of appointing left-wing personalities in visible political positions at the beginning of his 2007-2012 mandate.

<sup>107</sup> In French, the expression "Peuple de Gauche".

understanding that opponents' may not share it, Adrien interprets the PS's position instead as a challenge to the common good itself. This is what leads him to imply, in the end, that the PS does not stand for the community as a whole, but for partial interests - that of the left-wing electorate.

***b. A widespread belief in the morality of opposition***

Overall, however, these examples are rather exceptional and may be considered as isolated instances within French groups. Generally speaking, the association of principles to the positions of opponents already signifies a recognition that opponents are trying to do what they think is right. Another indication can be found in French participants reluctance to politicize the card PUBLIC MORALITY, one of which they were asked to discuss. Indeed, participants would seldom use this card in order to present their own party as virtuous and their opponents as fundamentally flawed. They would often, on the contrary, downplay the political reach of this particular question. The following statement, in which a PS participant discusses the card PUBLIC MORALITY, illustrates this quite well:

Louis: Lets say that this is not a topic that causes debate, each will fight over... Each party has its rotten apples<sup>108</sup> that are thrown back at them, everyone tries more or less to get rid of them... And we see actually that on questions like... the ban on holding concurrently several mandates, or on... transparency concerning (public officials') wages, the cleavage is not between the Right and the Left, it's rather between those who want to be clean... Well, those who want to make an effort on these questions and the others that feel like... without (necessarily) scheming<sup>109</sup>, but (that feel like) taking liberties, doing more or less want what they want without being held to account.

Another piece of evidence can be found in references to 'cross-cutting cleavages'. These are instances where, in the course of the general discussion, partisans emphasise differences in positions that cut-across each party, rather than characterize the Left-Right divide. Within French transcripts, I identified 29 such instances in total, which is an average of above two such references per group. These examples are important to the extent that partisans do not divide the political debate between their own camp, which would hold the truth, and their opposition, which would be in the wrong. It is a sign that they recognise instead a plurality of legitimate positions on a given question, and that their own party does not univocally and necessarily have the best answers to a given problem. This comes through in the following example, where a

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<sup>108</sup> In French, the expression "canard boiteux".

<sup>109</sup> In French, the argotic expression "magouiller".

young PS activist admits not only that there are people on both sides of the political spectrum arguing for Green politics, but that some of the stronger Green advocates can be found among right-wing ranks. Importantly, he himself emphasises at other points in the group discussion his own commitment to environmental issues:

Patrick: When it comes to environmental issues, this is a card I set apart because (...) it's a transcendent theme, that does not divide between the Left and the Right, but divides the Left and Right internally. There are right-wing people against nuclear power as there are left-wing people. There are right-wing people that are very concerned with everything that has to do with the renovation of buildings, social housing access (...) And on the right and on the centre-right there are some (people) - I'm thinking namely about Jean-Louis Borloo - that will be much more concerned with these questions than a lot of people on the left (...)

Other, more isolated instances testify of French participants refusal of using morality as a political argument. The following dialogue between PS participants is perhaps one of the clearest examples of this, in which René regrets what he sees as the tendency of his own camp to moralise its opposition:

René: Because there is a bad tendency on the left, and I think that on this the Right... if there is one thing that I hate on the left, it is that tendency of always moralizing politics. There are a lot of people on the left, and namely when they are young, who think that, basically, left(-wingers) are in the camp of the Good, that (the Left) is the Good, (in the camp) of progress, that they hold each others' hand and march, etc. And if you are on the right, in the end, you're not allowed, or you are very very stupid, or you are an arse hole. So I think you can be right-wing for good reasons. I'm not at all a right-winger, I have no doubts about my convictions, but I think that political debates are very complicated, that these things are not clear-cut. And I think you can be from the right and be at the same time an intelligent person, a good person. I think it does not affect one's personal morality.

Didier: Oh yes totally, I also completely recognise myself in this. Obviously there is no...The question of morality for me... it should not be taken into account in the political debate.

Other forms of evidence can be found among UMP groups. For instance, these regularly emphasised that by the end of François Hollande's mandate, they would be ready to recognise their opponents' achievements, if shared societal objectives, and the common good more generally, had been furthered by their actions. This comes through in the following example:

Nathan: (...) I've always said this. Sincerely, if François Hollande did the necessary reforms for progress in this country, I would be happy. If someone tells me: François Hollande('s mandate) worked, we are back to full employment, I would say yes, that is great. If everything is going well, the crisis is over, the president is great and everything is functioning... Because we are first and foremost French. All of this is to say that even if we are separated

between Left and Right, there is something... Nicolas Sarkozy said that there is something bigger than us, and that is France. Whatever the cleavages, we are first and foremost fighting for the interests of France. And if (François Hollande) made the right decisions for France, we would support him (...)

A similar idea is expressed in the following statement by another UMP activist:

Martine: I think that... if the Right and the Left find common ground on certain topics it is better, because what is the objective? It is for the country to do better, for France to stand up. So be it the Left or the Right who puts it forwards, if it's a good reform, the right way for things to improve, then all the better (...) So if in five years the mandate of François Hollande yields positive and beneficial results for France, it will hurt but I will be the first to recognise that, yes, there are things that worked. I don't think so, I don't think it will be the case (...) but I would recognise it.

UMP participants do doubt that the actions of their opponents will have these fruitful results. What matters here is that in their discourse, even if only for the sake of rhetoric, they recognise this possibility and, to this extent, both the PS's intention and capacity of furthering the common good.

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Many of the French participants I interviewed displayed signs of a commitment to value-pluralism in their attitudes towards political opponents. They refrained, in most cases, from targeting the intentions of their opponents when they criticise them. Many participants recognised that the decisions of their opponents are motivated by a set of principles that they do not share, but that they nevertheless consider as legitimate. Finally, partisans seldom questioned the general orientation of their opponents towards the common good, and they did express, in various forms, a belief in the morality of their opponents. Importantly, each dimension of this respectful political discourse holds together. Withholding from 'motive-cynicism' requires to assume the principled nature of opponents. To recognise that opponents act out of principle is also to see that they act according to what they think is best, and therefore with concern towards the common good.

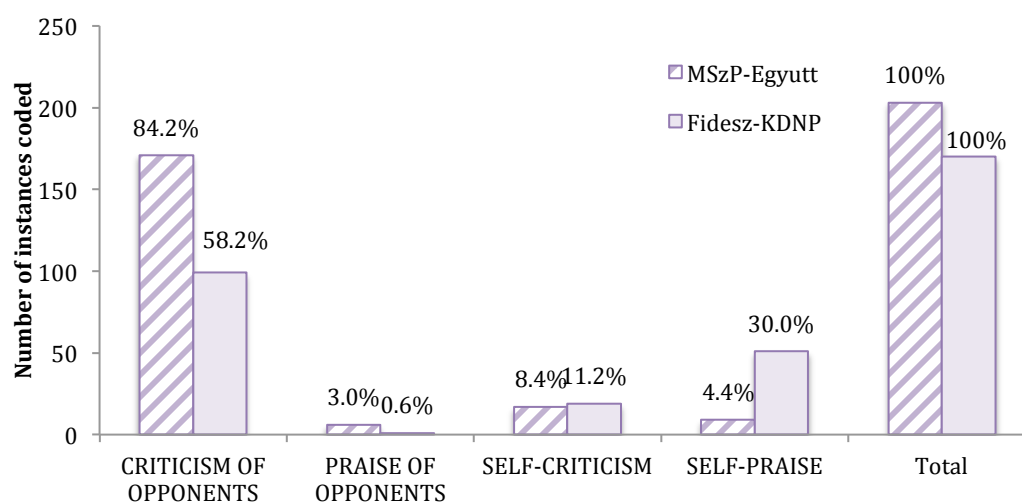
Notwithstanding this general conclusion, there are key differences between PS and UMP groups. UMP participants are, overall, more critical of their opponents than their PS counterparts. UMP participants question the intentions of their opponents more frequently than PS participants. They also often picture their opponents' principles themselves as a form of delusion leading to inefficient policy-making, or as a convenient rhetoric designed to gain votes. When they defend such arguments, UMP participants display a weak commitment to political pluralism.

## II. THE HUNGARIAN CASE

The second case study proceeds in line with the theoretical framework summarised in the introduction to this chapter. I first consider the arguments that Hungarian participants use to criticise opponents, then the extent to which they see their opponents as principled, and finally whether they perceive their opponents as oriented towards the common good.

### 1. Types of criticism: intentions and practices

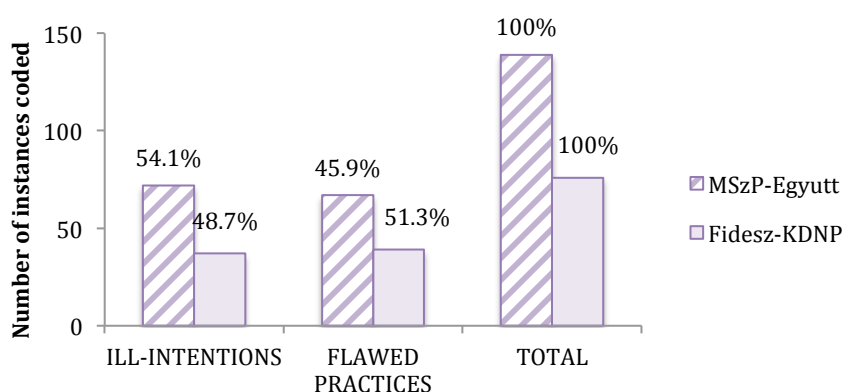
This first section is dedicated to the arguments Hungarian partisans use to criticise their political opponents. As is apparent for Figure 24, MSzP-Együtt activists are more likely to criticise their opponents than Fidesz-KDNP activists, while Fidesz-KDNP activists are far more likely to engage in self-praise as compared to their MSzP-Együtt counterparts. As emphasised above, opposition parties in both France and Hungary were far more focused on their opponents than those in governments, who in turn had far more to say about their own party (see Figure 11 for France and Figure 17 for Hungary in Chapter 3). MSzP-Együtt participants in their role as main opposition are therefore unsurprisingly critical of the actions of the Fidesz-KDNP in government. It also follows that Fidesz-KDNP participants have less to say about their opponents in a time when their party is in government, and that they engage instead in a more thorough defence of their own achievements.



**Figure 24: Praise and criticism by Hungarian participants of their own party and their opponents**

*N.B: See the note under Figure 5 for an explanation of how to read this figure*

The extent to which partisans are critical of their opponents - or self-critical - does not in itself offer evidence on their level of commitment to political pluralism. I thus turn to the *types* of criticisms that Hungarian partisans level against their opponents. As shown in Figure 25 below, the share of criticism that Hungarian participants dedicate to the intentions of their opponents is comparable to the share of criticism they dedicate to opponents' practices - with MSzP-Együtt participants being nevertheless slightly more focused on Fidesz's intentions (54.1% of total criticism) as compared to their practices (45.9% of total criticisms).

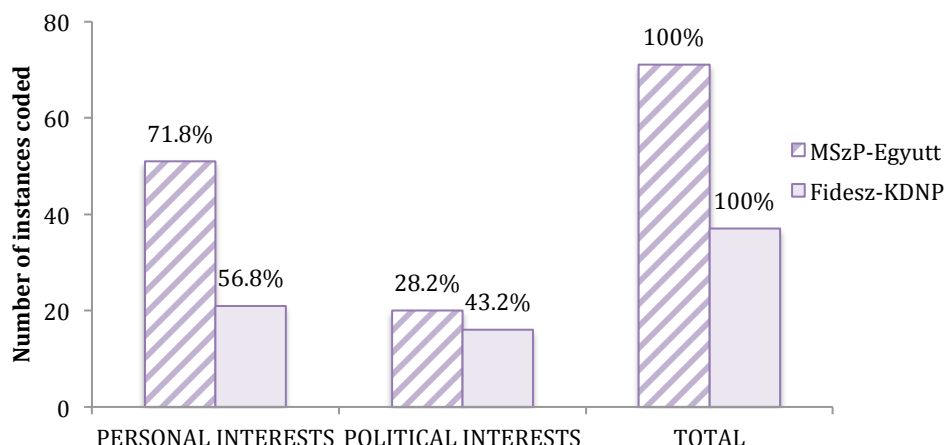


**Figure 25: Criticisms by Hungarian participants of their opponents' intentions and practices**

*N.B: See the note under Figure 5 for an explanation of how to read this figure*

### ***a. Criticisms of intentions***

If we consider more closely the instances where partisans target their opponents' intentions, it is noteworthy that both groups of partisans tend to focus more on the personal motivations of their opponents than on their political motivations (see Figure 26 below). This is even more clearly the case for MSzP-Együtt participants as compared to Fidesz-KDNP ones: 71.8% of all MSzP-Együtt criticism targeted at Fidesz's intentions concerns their opponents' personal interests, compared to 56.8% of all corresponding Fidesz-KDNP criticism.



**Figure 26: Types of criticisms by Hungarian participants of their opponents' intentions**

*N.B: See the note under Figure 5 for an explanation of how to read this figure*

When Hungarian participants questioned the intentions of their opponents, it therefore most often took the form of framing their practices as motivated solely by a desire for material gain, or for the personal exercise of political power. Accusations of nepotism, clientelism and corruption were especially rife in Hungarian groups. Importantly, participants did not only refer to specific and recent scandals, or make loose allusions to isolated practices, they regularly attributed corruption as a constitutive trait of their opposition. Crucially, such accusations are also omnipresent in the media and in politicians' public speeches. For instance, Fidesz politicians often speak of their opposition as the 'mafia baloldal' (mafia left), and the MSzP regularly accuse the Fidesz of building a 'mafia state'. In contrast, they often position their own party as examples of virtue.

MSzP-Együtt participants, for instance, interpret the policies and institutional reforms of their opponents as a way of gaining more power for themselves rather than as stemming from any principled conviction, or reflecting a certain interpretation of the common good. To give some illustrations, MSzP-Együtt participants insist a lot on the recent land reforms,<sup>110</sup> as well as on the new regulations on Tobacco shops,<sup>111</sup> as examples of the way in which Fidesz redistributes assets to its own network of politicians and supporters. In the following passage, a young MSzP activist is talking about Fidesz's agricultural policy and more specifically about the criteria according to which public land is being redistributed by the current government:

<sup>110</sup> On Fidesz's land reform, see footnote 69.

<sup>111</sup> On Fidesz's Tobacco shop reform, see footnote 70.



Eszter: It is completely unfair, similarly to the tobacco shop business, how it is that only (those close to the Fidesz) get (parcels of land), only they manage to compete successfully... they decide on the terms of competition in a way that only those who sympathise with them, those who are with them, who are family, relatives, cousins, friends, will be able to reach these conditions (...)

MSzP participants also tend to describe the institutional reforms introduced by Fidesz as a way for their opponents to colonize the state by placing their own men in positions of power. In the following example, a young MSzP member speaks about Fidesz's decision to reduce the number of seats in parliament<sup>112</sup> and local governments:

Miklós: In the new institutional system the only important thing is that their people fill all positions. If for a given institution they do not find the right person, then they rather abolish the institution itself. Now they have changed the... we'll have less MP's, right? Also, there will be fewer seats in the local governments. They don't have enough people to fill all these institutions, so they have simplified (them), so that they can have a friend everywhere. And not to risk having somebody there who wouldn't be on their side. When we were governing, it wasn't such a problem if we did not have a person from our side to send in an institution, we were willing to accept somebody from the Fidesz or the Jobbik to lead the institution. We could work with them. We were aware that they were not on our side, but we could work with them.

It was also common for MSzP-Együtt participants to focus on specific scandals involving their opposition in order to make a more general claim on the corrupt nature of their opponents. In the following example, an Együtt activist contrasts the general attitude of the MSzP in power when faced with corruption scandals, as compared to the Fidesz's practices in this domain:

Tamás: And yes, if we take these corruption affairs... I mean, the question of public morality is not only, not only... according to me it has a lot to do with... (One's) relation to power. The question of what those in power (allow themselves to) do. So for example it's true that the socialists were also stealing when they were in government. But if it was uncovered and the person was really indefensible, then they would exclude him from the party, marginalise him, and they tried... they were sorry, and tried to hide the whole thing... Now the situation is that when someone is implicated let's say in a moral scandal, like Papcsák today...<sup>113</sup>

Zoltán: Yes

Tamás: So now this recording was just made public, according to which he was given back 20 % of the price of a contract for the renovation of public buildings.

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<sup>112</sup> A new Elections Act was passed as a cardinal law on December 23, 2011 and came into force on January 1, 2012. The number of Hungarian members of parliament diminished from 386 to 199 (Venice Commission & OSCE/ODIHR, 2012, p. 7)

<sup>113</sup> Tamás is here referring to a scandal involving Papcsák Ferenc, Fidesz mayor of Zuglo, a local district of Budapest. A recording made public in the fall of 2013 revealed that the company HBF Építőipari Kft. was granted a contract for the renovation of public infrastructure in Zuglo under the condition that 20% of the tender be given back under the table to the Zuglo municipality.

But he (Papcsák) is not going to disappear from politics... Then you have this MP, who... Or take this (MSzP MP) Zuschlag, consider not even his stealing affair, because after that he did come back, but before then... he made jokes about the Holocaust and he was dismissed from his responsibilities in the youth affairs of the socialists.<sup>114</sup> And then you have that Fidesz representative who is found to have beaten his wife, and he nevertheless remains an MP.<sup>115</sup>

Fidesz-KDNP participants would also frequently talk of corruption as a defining feature of their opposition, and present their own party as fundamentally less corrupt than the MSzP. A young Fidesz member expresses this idea in the following statement:

Tamás: In my opinion corruption scandals played a significant part in the fall of the previous government... It's true, there were so many of them. So many... Now, such things do not happen anymore.

Or, further in the same group:

Olivia: (...) Look for example at the speech in Öszöd,<sup>116</sup> it was completely the case, that the whole government was in it together, until the end they... fooled the population. And I think that was more generally true then, than it is now.

In some cases, like the following, Fidesz-KDNP participants would also more explicitly assert that their opponents are solely concerned with their own, material interests:

Virág: That's how I feel about them. That for them nothing counts, except to have money. Really, their interest is to get rich, if I get rich, that's good for me. I'm not interested in what will become of all these poor people in five years. That I've sold buildings under their real value. I made a good business for myself, the rest is none of my concern. The socialists are totally egoistic, focusing only on their own interests.

Criticisms of intentions that were focused more explicitly on the *political* rather than personal interests of political opponents also took more extreme forms than in France. Opponents were accused not only of making demagogical promises in order to win over or keep the support of certain voters, but of directly or indirectly bribing citizens for their votes. One Fidesz participant, Márk, told me for instance "there are

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<sup>114</sup> János Zuschlag was a Hungarian MSzP member of Parliament between 2002 and 2004. In 2004 he told jokes about Holocaust victims at the Terror House museum's inauguration in Budapest, and was caught on film by the television channel Hir.tv. He was forced to resign from his parliamentary position on October 18, 2004.

<sup>115</sup> Tamás here refers to József Balogh, a Fidesz MP and mayor of a small village who was found guilty by a court in October 2013 of beating his wife. Balogh lost neither his parliamentary seat, nor his position as mayor, but he was expelled from the Fidesz.

<sup>116</sup> Olivia refers here to a speech made by ex-Prime Minister Ferenc Gyurcsány in May 2006 during the MSzP's party congress. The sound bites that were leaked by Magyar Rádió on September 17, 2006 (especially "*We lied morning, day and night*", "*We have obviously lied throughout the past one and a half-two years*") sparked mass protests in Hungary and riots in Budapest.

clear-cut cases where the Roma are taken by buses (to the voting booths), or are fed with potatoes, or paid”.

### ***b. Criticisms of practices***

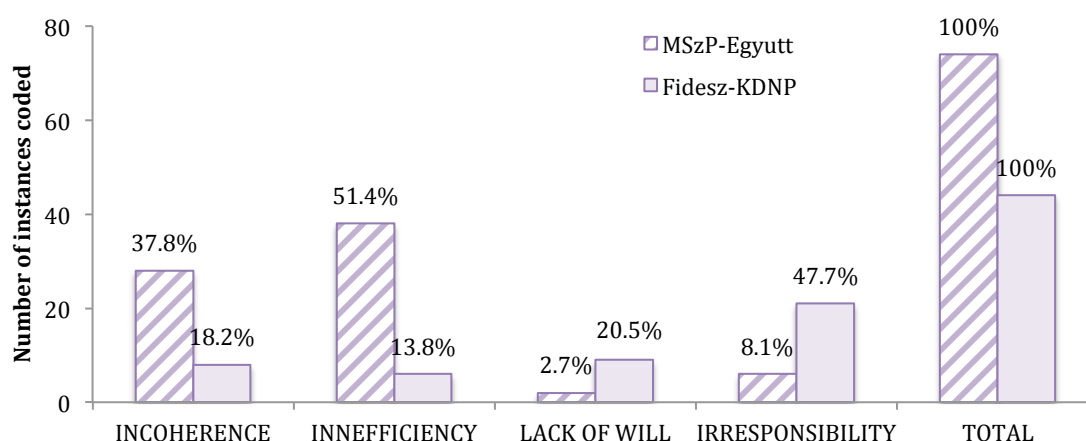
As for criticisms focused on the practices of adversaries, Fidesz-KDNP participants were most likely to target the irresponsibility of their opponents' actions (see Figure 27 below). This was especially the case when they evoked the MSzP's management of the economy from 2002 to 2010. The following dialogue is representative of this type of criticism:

Iván: In practice there is no consensus. And I was struck by what Virág said, that the socialists took one loan after another instead of putting (the economy) in order...

Eva: Yes, they did the same before 1990.

Virág: It was the same in the Kádár period.

Iván: They acted according to the idea that it doesn't matter what will happen later, it doesn't matter. To take the environment as an example, (it doesn't matter) what will happen with the Hungary of our grandchildren, let's win the elections today. Let's build the Megyer bridge, it doesn't matter that it will be paid by a loan. Let's have the bridge, it doesn't matter, the next government will pay back the loan. On the other hand the Fidesz... I think inflation has not been this low for 40 years? And we have no debts towards the IMF (anymore)<sup>117</sup>.



**Figure 27: Types of criticisms by Hungarian participants of their opponents' practices**

*N.B: See the note under Figure 5 for an explanation of how to read this figure*

<sup>117</sup> On August 12, 2013 Hungary repaid all of its outstanding debt (€2.15 billion euros) contracted with the International Monetary Fund. This debt originated from a 2008 emergency loan program contracted by an MSzP government, following the 2007 economic crisis.

As for the criticisms that MSzP participants directed at their opponents' practices, they were mostly centred on the incoherence and inefficiency of Viktor Orbán's government (see Figure 27 above). The decisions of the Fidesz government were thus often depicted as ill-adapted to the objectives they were intended to achieve and as producing suboptimal outcomes. In the following dialogue between Együtt participants, Zsofi highlights what she perceives as the absurdity of the Fidesz's public work program by comparing it with employment policies under communism:<sup>118</sup>

Brúnó: (...) In itself the public work program is not devilish, (the problem is) rather its execution. It is the 47 000 Ft (salary),<sup>119</sup> (it is the fact) that they keep people in this program and (that) they then replace the school cleaning lady by a public worker paid half the amount... So here it is rather the execution on which we can obviously not agree, but then the principle itself, that is not necessarily bad.

Zsofi: Yes, in my opinion there are strong similarities here in that the growth of employment is logically a central theme for both sides. But the Fidesz has addressed this differently than previous governments, in that it created useless jobs, which are not good (for the workers), from which you can't even live, but at least (these people) are not unemployed. This is a bit like in the Soviet era, with one person screwing the light bulb in, and two others holding the ladder. And in the meantime, all three were "working".

MSzP-Együtt participants also often emphasise that it is because the Hungarian government is subject to the whims and fancies of Viktor Orbán himself that it ends up making incoherent and wasteful decisions. In the following example, Péter describes how the obsessions of Viktor Orbán are converted into absurd policies. He is here talking about the fact that the Fidesz government has built a large number of new football stadiums in Hungary since 2010:

Péter: (...) It would be possible to use this money in other ways, but concretely they use the money in this way because Viktor Orbán has a weakness for football. And that's it. But it's likely that he really believes that football will offer young people a chance to break through, like in South America. Let's do good football, from this we will get money, and perhaps even the nation(al economy) recovers from it. So this is a completely, absolutely crazy thing. But anyways, this is the disadvantage of one-man leadership. For instance Viktor Orbán got it in his head, that Hungary could enrich itself through dental tourism, so he set aside a billion forints for dentists to advertise dental tourism in Hungary. So this is what you get with this leadership style, when you have just one man...

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<sup>118</sup> On Fidesz public labour reform, see footnote 71.

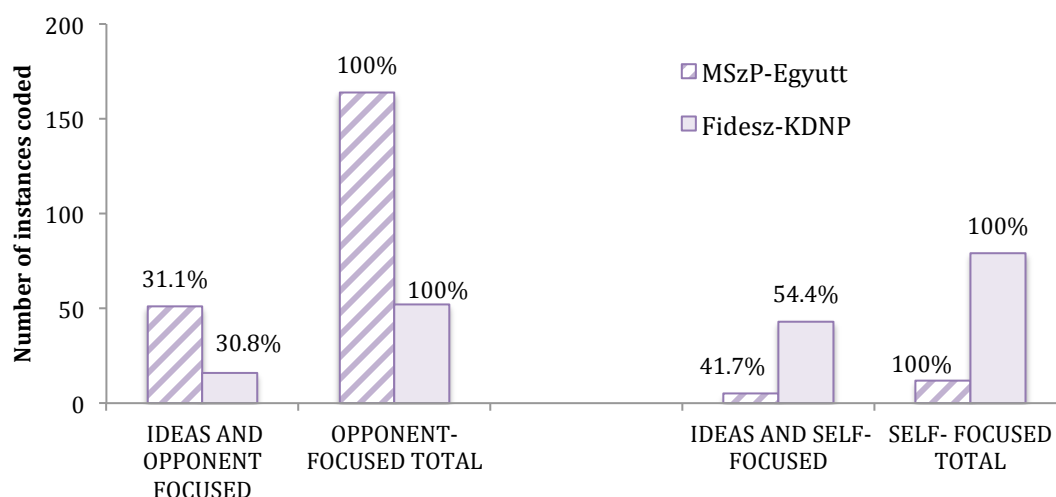
<sup>119</sup> Approximately £112.

István: (Everything is done) haphazardly.<sup>120</sup>

## 2. The principled nature of opponents

### *a. References to the principles of opponents*

The second criteria that I consider is the extent to which partisans recognise the principled nature of their opponents' positions. Overall, Hungarian participants do not systematically allude to the ideas that motivate the practices of their opposition. This is apparent in Figure 28: in only one third of the instances in which both MSzP-Együtt and Fidesz-KDNP participants spoke solely about the position of their opponents did they also allude to the ideas that motivate this position (31.1 and 30.8% of cases respectively). This is less, for instance, than in cases where they talk about their own positions: here they simultaneously talk about the ideas that motivate their position in 41.7% of the cases for MSzP-Együtt participants and in 54.4% of the cases for Fidesz-KDNP participants.



**Figure 28: References by Hungarian participants to the ideas of their opponents and of their own party**

*N.B: See the note under Figure 5 for an explanation of how to read this figure*

At this point, it may be useful to recall that a number of the examples given from French transcripts contained a neutral description of opponents' values, or even, explicit expressions of respect and tolerance towards the principles of opponents. There are virtually no such examples in the Hungarian transcripts. In other words,

<sup>120</sup> István here used the expression "kézi vezérlés", which literally means "manual driving". The expression is used to describe a situation where decisions are not made according to a well-established plan, but rather on an improvised, case-by-case basis.

where Hungarian participants did refer to their oppositions "beliefs", "principles", or what their opponents "think", they do not suggest that opponents may be legitimate in holding these different value-systems. It is in fact often part of the discourse of participants to criticise these values in themselves as misguided or irresponsible.

Consider this first example from a Fidesz group, where participants contrast their own approach to the state's role in the economy with that of their opponents. While they do refer to how their opponents "feel", and to their "liberal principles" more generally, it is not even clear whether they see their opponents as adopting liberal economic policies out of ideological commitment or out of a desire to evade their own responsibilities:

Náomi: The question of public utilities is, in a way, tied to the question of public services. And here we had several nationalisations, like now this affair with the gas provider Eon. So public utilities are also part of the public service. So, then there is the question to what extent this is necessary... the Left, the previous government privatised everything, and now the state is buying back everything. The latest examples were the gas provider section of Eon,<sup>121</sup> there was the water plant, and I don't know which other. And this is again that the state... So, in my opinion, disagreement exists on how we understand... whether the state is a good manager, or a bad manager. The State, the current government feels it has this responsibility, because it takes more responsibility and wants to do things in a responsible way. The previous governments felt like this was not of interest to them, let's privatize, then we don't have to bother with it, and we even get money out of it.

Bálint: And that the market will solve everything. This squares more with liberal principles. They were the party of smaller government (...)

In this second example from an MSzP group, Dávid recognises more explicitly his opponents' particular attachment to the idea of nation. He nevertheless presents these ideas as excessive, fanciful and harmful, rather than legitimate:

Dávid: (...) I don't know where this expression comes from, but I think it's very true, that "one shouldn't place the nation above the people". The Fidesz has done that, now also at the level of our vocabulary. I don't know whom they consider as part of the nation. But it's likely that poor people are not part of it. They have a picture of the nation, people sitting, posing for the picture in traditional Hungarian suits and costumes with pheasant hats on their head... and so we are looking at a very nice picture, (where people are taking) the pose... Or (they have an idea of the nation as people) sitting in the parliament and applauding them. But I don't know what they understand more generally as the nation. They talk about Hungarians in the world, 15 million people. But of those 15 million, it is slowly only 12 million that can speak Hungarian correctly.

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<sup>121</sup> In February 2013, the Hungarian government reached an agreement with German energy company E.ON to buy its four gas storage facilities.

### ***b. Negating the principled nature of opponents***

On the other hand, Hungarian partisans often explicitly negated that their opponents hold any values whatsoever. Fidesz-KDNP activists, for instance, frequently framed the Left as lacking any sort of ideological commitment. This image of the Left as non-ideological is paradoxically linked to the association that the Fidesz makes between the current Left and the past communist regime. Indeed, the fact that so-called 'communists' were in the 1990s able to re-define themselves as democrats is for Fidesz partisans the ultimate proof that their opponents have no ideals. This comes through in the following dialogue between two Fidesz members. The left-wing person is here defined not as the person who believes in a given ideology, but as the person capable of claiming he is a communist - or a social-democrat - if it serves his own interest:

Káldor: In 1989, they said that they did not need the reputation of the MSzMP (Hungarian Communist party), but that they did need its money. What was in the party's cash desk they needed. They needed the people. "We are not communists anymore, we are socialists". The Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party abandoned the "workers" part of its denomination.<sup>122</sup> Sure, now they aren't like this, ideologically...

Nándor: I'm sorry but the people are the same.

Káldor: Well the people are the same, but you don't actually think, that they are communists.

Nándor: Absolutely not. But the people are the same, devoid of principles... who were content with Kádár, the same way as they would have been content with Rákosi...

Káldor: Power... but that is also a trait of Fidesz.

Nándor: Yes, but no... Among us no one was a censor. You understand what I mean. We didn't have party-state censors, executioners, and people like this. That's the difference. Independently of that, I can accept the politician attitude. But this is just unacceptable to the present day. That this post-communist.. (that) the Hungarian Communist Party has simply changed its name, into democratic at present. *Believe me, if communism came back, they would immediately be the most fervent communists.* This is certain.

For Fidesz participants, the 'reversal' of Left and Right registers in Hungarian politics is also proof of their opponents' lack of principled commitments. Drawing especially on the opposition's record during the economic transition of the 1990s, Fidesz-KDNP participants often accuse their opponents of not upholding the left-wing

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<sup>122</sup> The acronym of the ex-Hungarian communist party, MSzMP, literally stands for Magyar Szocialista Munkás Párt, thus Hungarian Socialist Labour Party. It reformed to MSzP, Magyar Szocialista Párt, the Hungarian Socialist party.

ideals that they claim to stand for. In the following example, a Fidesz activist is talking in these terms about the MSzP-SzDSz coalition between 2002 and 2006:

Zsolt: (...) And that's why we had all those criticisms and resignations during the Medgyessy government, because the SzDSz had at that time all those corruption scandals... By then it was crystal clear that (the government) was not leading the country to where it should have led it according to a left-wing ideology, but was rather delivering it to big business.

This tendency was also noticeable in the unease Fidesz-KDNP activists often displayed when they used the terms Left and Right. They would often mime brackets with their hands, use the words 'so-called', or question the appropriateness of these terms in other ways. Fidesz-KDNP participants were also keen on emphasizing that their party is in fact the true representative of the values that the Left fails to embody.<sup>123</sup> This comes through in the following statement:

Benedek: (...) Well, it is very often a topic of discussion, who can call oneself left-wing or right-wing. Now these well-defined roles have been completely turned around as... well, while the official left-wing, or the MSzP and the DK, they call themselves left-wing, liberals, these (roles) are now inverted. Now it is much more the right-wing which does something for the workers, for the agricultural sector, for the industrial sector, and I don't know what else... you just have to look at the decisions that have been taken in the recent past. Bajnai, Gyurcsány, these guys are all about money.

As for MSzP-Együtt participants, they also regularly emphasised an absence of values or principles as characteristic of their political opponents. One socialist group explained for instance that they struggled to classify the different cards because they could not identify any of the values that motivated Fidesz's position:

István: I don't think that there is any kind of ideologically-motivated politics infusing the Fidesz, and therefore they have nothing that we can compare ourselves to.

Péter: We can compare the practice and the communication (...) The Fidesz accuses everybody else of stealing, lying, cheating, but then they steal, lie and cheat even more. So what then?

They repeated this same idea later in the introduction to the discussion, after I advised them to classify disagreements on the cards according to whatever logic seemed most appropriate to them:

Pál: I'm quite unable to (classify these), because, as István said, the Hungarian Right has just no principled political stance.

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<sup>123</sup> The claim these participants make to 'left-wing' principles reflects a more general discourse of Fidesz's leadership. For instance, the front cover of one of the main pro-Fidesz weekly magazines in the winter of 2013 ran "Orbán is a real social-democrat" (Stumpf, 2013). In some ways the party represents itself as a total actor, one which will take the 'best' of what both Left and Right have to offer.



István: Then take the practices, what they do.

Pál: Well yes, their practice, but then one can only criticise everything they do. Because (...) if we take the previous eight years and compare them for instance, here there are huge differences. But only in the practices, there are no principles.

István especially emphasises something crucial in the first of these dialogues: it is the unprincipled nature of Fidesz that, according to them, makes comparisons between the parties impossible. This also betrays a feeling that their opponents are not political equals. Their lack of values removes, to some extent, any kind of legitimacy to their positions, thereby making any discussion about the differences or similarities between parties irrelevant.

Much like Fidesz-KDNP participants, MSzP-Együtt participants would also picture principles as a tool that their opponents use in order to meet their personal interests, a convenient electoral bait that serves more base motives. This idea is made particularly explicit in the following example, where Együtt participants describe Fidesz's ideology as a carefully crafted discourse, designed to gain political power and money. Zoltán is talking about Fidesz's trajectory since the early 2000s:

Zoltán: In my opinion, that was the direction in which the political wind was blowing. They simply... they needed a toolbox (to quench) their thirst for power. And that required some demagogy. So, I think they became what they are just because that was the most comfortable path. They saw that we have a post-socialist, Kádárist, patriarchal society, that needs a strong leader figure, and for everything to be free. And that requires some ideological nonsense to stuff people's heads with. And they provide this. And let's be honest, it actually works quite well. I believe that for the Fidesz... for Viktor Orbán and the Fidesz, only one thing matters, and that's power (...) It doesn't matter what practical political measure is at stake, what principle is at stake, what alliance is at stake... if it can be traded for power, then they trade it.

This group of participants would also, like their Fidesz-KDNP counterparts, insist that their opposition did not represent the principles that the label they attribute to themselves - here the label 'conservative' - would normally entail. In the following dialogue, DK participants stress that the word 'conservative' is an empty slogan in the mouth of their opponents. They are talking about the connect between the economic policies of the Fidesz, and the values that their opponents claim to stand for:

István: (...) If we start looking at whether the Fidesz actually functions like a conservative party, I would answer in the negative. From this starting point, I don't know what their values are. I have no idea.

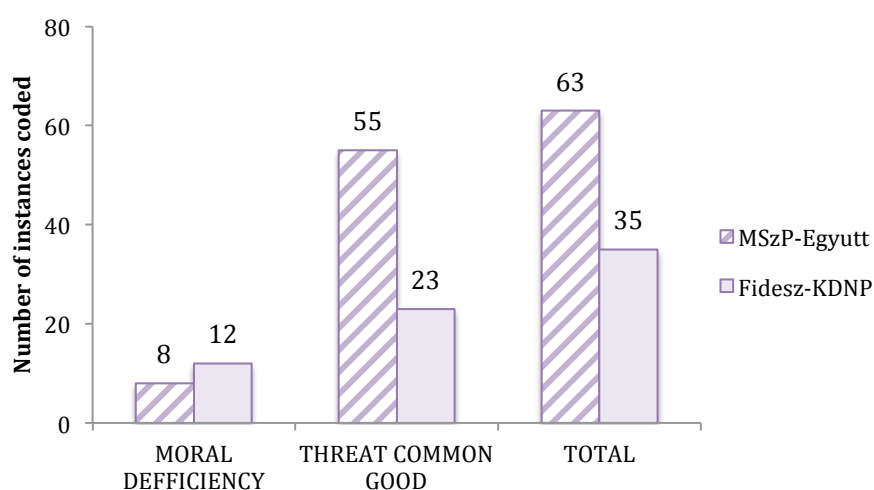
Péter: I don't know either.

István: I'd like to know, but I think this is simply impossible. I'm sure that on paper they would give a nice, textbook definition of what a conservative party

is, that they would say Fidesz is a conservative party. But there is no sense to this.

### 3. Opponents and the common good

The third criterion is tied to partisans' belief in the desire and willingness of opponents to further the common good. This does not entail agreeing on the exact definition of the common good, or the means to reach it, but rather taking the morality of political opponents as a starting point. At the very minimum, this entails that partisans refrain from depicting the personality of opponents as fundamentally evil (coded MORAL DEFFICIENCY). Another, more indirect way of challenging the general orientation of opponents towards the common good is to accuse them of intentionally threatening it, for instance, by purposefully harming the general interest, opposing the principles that form the basis of the political community, or undermining the regime itself (coded THREAT COMMON GOOD). As represented in Figure 29, Fidesz-KDNP participants tend to use the first argument more frequently than their MSzP-Együtt counterparts, while MSzP-Együtt participants make a greater use of the second type of argument as compared to Fidesz participants.



**Figure 29: Criticisms by Hungarian participants of their opponents' ability to further the common good**

*N.B: In Figure 23, the corresponding figure for the French data, I do not indicate percentages because of the low number of total instances coded. I keep this consistent here to facilitate comparison across both cases.*

If we consider the discourse of Fidesz-KDNP participants first, their critic of the morality of political opponents often starts with associating them to the past communist regime (see Chapter 3). By linking the pre-1989 communist elite and the current MSzP, Fidesz-KDNP participants can establish a historical narrative to ground

their assertions. Indeed, if the past communist elite is deemed fundamentally wrong because of the dictatorial nature of the past regime and if there is a personal continuity across the regime divide, then Fidesz-KDNP participants can denounce the very character of opponents as flawed, corrupt and immoral. This comes through very clearly in the following statement:

Nándor: (...) But we know, that (those in the) MSzP are the same as those who were hanging people in Budapest in 1918, in 1945,<sup>124</sup> and everywhere else. They are the same people. There is this Lendvai,<sup>125</sup> who was a censor under communism. She represented the censorship, the communist censorship. And now that she is in Parliament, she is the one who says that under Orbán, there is no freedom of the press.

While in the second part of his sentence, this young party member refers to a very specific individual (Lendvai), the first part of the sentence describes the *kind of people* that are today in the MSzP. They are described as the descendants of the persecutors and traitors of 1918 and 1945. The fact that some MSzP members were actually in positions of power before 1989 is seen as supporting this narrative. The ability to persecute and to betray is thereby cast as part of the 'personality type' of the left-winger. In the following example, this idea is spelt out clearly. Here a young Fidesz activist sees immorality and thus a disregard for the common good as the fundamental trait that characterizes the *left-wing personality*, and distinguishes it from the *right-wing personality*:

Zsolt: In the long run, as a general rule, a right-wing person finds interest in public life, his disposition is to think in terms of the common good. The difference with a left-wing person is that the left-wing person is more generally an individualist who has no respect for the collective, and who is capable of hating anybody. Even if they happen to be in power, I have the impression that... - but perhaps one should ask them - that if at that moment he has no concrete interest in exerting his power, then he is capable, following his conscious-emotive state, to even hate his own kind. (By this I mean) how can I put this... his preferred... the political elite. As a result *he has no ideological engagement* that would link him to his party, or to a certain side of the political spectrum.

In the following example, a young KDNP activist also differentiates between the Left and the Right according to their concern for furthering the country's interest. The proof of the MSzP's lack of commitment is here again rooted in their identification with

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<sup>124</sup> Attila is most likely speaking here about the communist revolution of 1919, which led to the short-lived Hungarian Soviet Republic of March-August 1919, and the 'liberation' of Hungary by Russian Soviet troops in the winter of 1944-45.

<sup>125</sup> Ildikó Lendvai worked for the Central Committee of the Hungarian Communist party handling cultural matters from 1984 onwards. In this capacity, her functions did involve limiting the possibility for publication of works considered a threat to party. She then became an MSzP politician and served as party leader between April 2009 and July 2010.

the communist past:

Lázár: (...) For me, the basic difference is that today, in Hungary... the way in which a citizen of average age differentiates between the Right and the Left... and that's something that we see from the polls... (The citizen establishes this difference) not on the basis of the opinion one side or the other have concerning this or that question and what the differences are between their two opinions. But rather on the basis that they do not believe that the Left, being as corrupt as it is, is really engaged to do something for the country, and that they believe this more to be the case for the Right. In the case of young people, for our political generation, it is not believable that they (the MSzP) really want to work in the interest of the country, given the MSzP is the heir of the past communist regime and were the parasites of this country for 40 years.

If Fidesz-KDNP participants believe the above, then one may wonder how they explain that anyone in Hungary would actually vote for their opponents. Beyond nostalgia for communism, which is one argument Fidesz-KDNP participants give to explain the past electoral successes of the Left, some of them emphasise that the MSzP's voter basis also share this disregard for the common good. While Fidesz voters are presented as hard-working people concerned for the good of their country, MSzP voters are non-productive individualists, who fail to contribute to society. According to one participant, Naómi, a right-wing citizen will say "I want to do things for this country to prosper and I pay my taxes and work correctly", while a left-wing citizen reasons, according to her, in the following way: "I just want to make the most of the situation and I avoid (my responsibilities) or, even worse, live on social benefits". According to her, these different electorates also orient the discourse of each party:

Naómi: (...) If we consider what the messages are, what the electoral bases of the different parties are, to whom the messages of the parties are directed, what kind of laws they vote for once in power... Then it's quite obvious on whom the parties are relying, whom the parties represent. Like, it's clear that today the Fidesz helps families. They don't distribute benefits just if you have children, as something (that is) due (to you). Rather, if those who work and give something to the country count on having a child, then they get a tax rebate. They may not even have to pay tax, if they raise a certain number of children. And it's quite clear that the socialists rather speak to those who... how to say it politely? Those who do not really wish to do something to help the country and society develop.

While this is not explicit in Naómi's statement, the idea according to which the Left is unconcerned with the common good often overlaps with Fidesz-KDNP participants' perception of their disregard for the idea of nation. To be more specific, Fidesz-KDNP participants establish equivalence between concern for the common good and the defence of national interests. This idea takes root, again, in a certain interpretation of history. Indeed, Fidesz participants represent the communist regime

as a time when Hungary's 'national spirit' was crushed and forced to go underground. Communism, being the epitome of 'evil', the idea of political community that they opposed is seen in turn as embodying the repressed common good. Fidesz participants see their current opposition as carrying this disregard for the nation and thus as having no desire to further the common good. This narrative is clear in the following example, in which Tamás is first talking about life under communism:

Tamás: The context then excluded the notion of nation. This question didn't exist under socialism. Those who haven't lived through that period, and I haven't, but I have read and learned about it, cannot imagine how different the thinking was at that time. In France, both sides fight for the nation. I've been told that, and I studied it too. But in Hungary, this is quite different. The roots are really different. This whole thing has very different foundations. Because the idea of the nation is really an emotional one.

The more general idea according to which opponents do not 'fight for the nation' is recurrent in Fidesz-KDNP transcripts. As already emphasised in Chapter 3, 'EU politics' was a topic of choice for the expression of these views. The attachment of the MSzP to Europe is like the communist regime's dedication to the USSR: it is proof that they are ready to subjugate their own country to foreign interests, out of sole concern for the power they derive from being vassals. This comes through in the following dialogue:

Iván: The defence of national interests is not something they aim for. On the contrary, take Viktor Orbán with the media law...<sup>126</sup>

Sándor: They just represent foreign interests.

Iván: The representation of foreign interests, yes. We have already talked about this, Moscow, now foreign multinational firms and other foreign interests are what they defend. But take Viktor Orbán, in relation with the media law... Oh (I shouldn't be talking about) the Fidesz. So let's take a socialist Prime minister, I should be just talking about the socialists. A socialist prime minister wouldn't have travelled to Strasbourg by himself, for the first ever time in the history of the EU, to explain the Hungarian point of view concerning, let's say, a media law. A socialist prime minister wouldn't have done that. That way I'm not talking about the Fidesz. What else do socialists do, I have to think about it...

Eva: The socialists...

Virág: They are not interested in the nation, only in their own interests...

Pluralist partisans could realise that the emphasis they place on the idea of nation is a partial interpretation of the common good, and therefore still admit that

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<sup>126</sup> On March 10, 2011 the European Parliament issued a resolution expressing concern over Hungary's new Media Law of July 22, 2010 (European Parliament, 2011). On January 19, 2011, Viktor Orbán was in Strasbourg to defend the Media Law in person in front of the European assembly.

their opponents defend another vision of the political community. Fidesz-KDNP participants cannot do this precisely because they perceive nationalism as the only legitimate path to the common good, and their party as its only legitimate representative. Counter-examples to this general tendency are very exceptional. The following example, for instance, is an anomaly in Fidesz transcripts, as a Fidesz supporter calls his opponents 'compatriots' and recognise their attachment to the nation:

Gergő: Actually I can understand that, even not so long ago, there were MSzP gatherings where they sung the International and not the Hungarian national anthem. The problem here is that it doesn't help to breach the (partisan) divide. I'm sure that our left-wing compatriots have the same national feelings as us, it's just they don't want to emphasise it in the way we do.

I will now turn to the discourse of MSzP-Együtt participants. The latter also provide cases where the Fidesz is presented as intrinsically immoral. For instance, Zoltán a young Együtt participant, asserted, "we just don't agree with them, because they are barbarians". As shown in Figure 29, such cases are however less frequent in MSzP-Együtt transcripts as compared to Fidesz-KDNP ones. While MSzP-Együtt participants did question their opponents' orientation towards the common good, this rested more on a critic of the actions of Fidesz in power, rather than on a critic of what being part of the Fidesz elite necessarily means. In the following example, MSzP-Együtt participants make more measured assessments on how specific steps taken by Viktor Orbán at the EU level may be 'dangerous' for Hungary. They do not stress, however, that this is because the Fidesz is geared against the country's interests. They rather present these steps as the political miscalculations of an "insane" prime minister:

Dávid: For me this is also the... or at least one of the most conflictual topics, (the question of) relations with the EU. Despite the fact that Orbán is one of the European People's Party's vice-presidents, he still tries to give the appearance of huge fights (...) He tries to push things to their limit. To the point where there are still no sanctions towards Hungary, but almost. In this he unfortunately gets help from the European People's Party, although there are also people there who don't favour this at all. But we do know what it is like when right-wing people agree with each other. This is the way it is, they pull it in many directions...

Margit: It's very dangerous (...) because... what happens if once... how can I say this, (if he) pushes things too far. If once he doesn't know where the limit is, where he needs to stop. And then the rock-hard sanctions will come. So it's dangerous. In fact the man is completely insane, he is very dangerous.

MSzP-Együtt participants would also emphasise more often that their opponents endanger fundamental democratic principles - that form part of the 'common good' broadly defined - and this especially through their institutional reforms.

In the following statement, a young MSzP activist is talking about the way in which the Fidesz used the two-third majority they obtained in 2010, depicting his own party as a model of democratic virtue and his opponents as fundamentally authoritarian:

Levente: So they abused their position of strength. As Laci said, when between 1994 and 1998 the MSzP had... or rather the MSzP-SzDSz coalition had a two-third majority, they did not use this opportunity to govern the country in an authoritarian fashion.<sup>127</sup> They could have done it, but principles were more important back then. It was more important for the MSzP to prove that it is not a surviving inheritor of the party state, but a modern, Western European-type social-democratic party. And not a nostalgic left-over from the Kádár era. That was the important thing back then. Whereas for the Fidesz what matters is to demonstrate that there is only them, to capture power for themselves solely, and this they don't even hide.

Fidesz's constitutional reforms do reveal, for MSzP-Együtt participants, a deeper form of amorality, and more specifically, a lack of commitment to democracy stemming from self-interest. In some way, MSzP-Együtt participants are reproaching their opponents for being 'unethical', for failing to exercise their 'negative capacity'. This comes through in the following dialogue concerning the constitutional re-drafting process of 2011. Here Együtt participants speak of the Fidesz as lacking the 'moral urge' and 'political culture' to take their opponents' opinion into consideration:

Zsofi: And the Fidesz doesn't feel the need to ask for the opinion of others, because they have the majority to make the laws. It wouldn't be politically comfortable to negotiate with anybody, and because they are sufficiently strong themselves, they don't need it. And they don't feel the moral urge, let's say, to exchange with the representatives of the other 3 million voters, because they feel just fine on their own, which is logical anyways...

Ábel: And there is a difference between the Left and the Right, because there was a time in 1994 when the Left had a two third majority, but they had the courtesy to require a 3/4 majority, or rather a 4/5 majority, for the laws that today require a 2/3 majority.<sup>128</sup> But this political culture doesn't exist on the right. And they haven't made the same gesture towards the Left.

It is worth stressing that in most of these examples specific practices are taken as examples of Fidesz's assaults on the common good - with these criticisms MSzP-Együtt participants do not necessarily imply that their opponents are *in essence* incapable of doing otherwise. There are, in fact, examples in MSzP-Együtt transcripts that testify of a clear separation between their assessments of these practices, and their

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<sup>127</sup> A year after having obtained a two-third majority in 1994, the MSzP-SZdSz coalition raised the threshold for a new constitutional drafting from a two-third parliamentary majority to a four-fifths one; the requirement for constitutional amendments, however, remained a two-third majority. One of the first constitutional amendments of Fidesz was to lower the threshold for constitutional re-drafting back to a two-third majority.

<sup>128</sup> On the period when the MSzP has a two-third majority, see footnote 127.

assessments of Fidesz as a political actor. The following dialogue is particularly revealing in this regard. Here Együtt participants point to the fact that they did agree with many of the policies set forward by the previous Fidesz government (1998-2002). In saying this, they also admit that in principle the Fidesz is capable of contributing to the common good:

Pálko: If you'd asked me three years ago... I also hated Fidesz then, but I would have said that on EU-related questions we completely agree. And now it's not the case, so... I don't know. And I haven't changed, it's the (Fidesz) government...

Béla: And there are some more questions like this. Under the previous Fidesz government there were also some problems with these questions, with their social policies also, but they were not extremists at that time. Obviously I'm not saying that... I mean they were always a classical right-wing party, in favour of a small state, a low share of redistribution, but (it was) nothing like now. There wasn't this extreme... (...) I could agree with 100% of the previous Orbán government's education policy. I could agree not with 100% but with 90% of the ideas of the Pokorni package.<sup>129</sup> So for me, if they had continued to follow this line, then I wouldn't really have a big problem with their education policy. All right, I'm pushing the argument, but it's sure that I wouldn't have this big of a problem (with it) and disagreements would be limited to specific, local questions. So the whole big conception of... I mean they made a full U-turn, not only when it comes to the EU, but in many other domains as well (...)

Some examples from MSzP-Együtt transcripts also included an indirect recognition of the existence of a suprapartisan political community, one that does not include only their own kind but also their opponents. This was especially the case when they attempted to defend themselves against accusations from the Fidesz that the Left fails to defend national interests. Against this stance, they often positioned their own party as more inclusive. The following statement is a good example:

László: (...) The point is, on the left we have the same love for our homeland, and the nation, questions related to the nation, are as important for us. However we don't say that those who are not with us do not belong to the nation. This is the difference between the two sides. We accept everyone as Hungarian, while in practice they negate our identity as Hungarians.<sup>130</sup>

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Many of the Hungarian activists I interviewed displayed a weak form of commitment to pluralism in their attitudes towards political opponents. They engaged in motive-cynicism, frequently accusing their opponents of being motivated by the

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<sup>129</sup> Zoltán Pokorni was Minister of Education under Fidesz's 1998-2002 government. During this time, he established a student-loan system and abolished tuition fees.

<sup>130</sup> In Hungarian, László uses the word "magyarság" which would literally translate "Hungarianness".



desire for material gain or personal power. They rarely recognised their opponents as principled, and when they did, they did not ascribe a positive value to these convictions. They in fact frequently denied that their opponents obey any kind of value-system, depicting them as fundamentally devoid of principle. Finally, they often directly accused their opponents of being a threat to the common good and implied that they are outside the sphere of common political morality. Each dimension of this disrespectful political discourse holds together. Engaging in 'motive-cynicism' requires to assume the unprincipled nature of opponents. Denying that opponents act out of principle is also to see them as lacking concern for the common good.

Notwithstanding these general results, there are key differences between MSzP and Fidesz participants. While MSzP participants do not fare better on every coding category used here, we can nevertheless assert that, in their discourse, they were more committed to pluralism than their Fidesz counterparts. Indeed, the criticisms that both groups addressed their opponents had a fundamentally different starting point. MSzP participants took the undemocratic practices of their opponents as proof that their opponents are ill-intentioned, unprincipled, and uncommitted to the common good. On the other hand, Fidesz participants took as their primary focus the identity of opponents as heirs of the communist regime, and this is the basis on which they established their opponents' ill intentions, lack of principles and weak dedication to the common good. In short, MSzP participants were less likely than Fidesz participants to question the *intrinsic morality* of their opponents.

### III. DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

#### 1. Variations in patterns of partisan discourse

At the outset of this chapter, it is possible to draw some conclusions on variations in French and Hungarian partisans' commitment to pluralism and thus provide a second series of answers to the question: *to what extent does real-world partisanship meet the standards of democratic partisanship?* Differences between French and Hungarian attitudes towards political opponents are striking throughout all three criteria considered, with French partisans consistently displaying greater respect for political opponents as compared to their Hungarian counterparts. While French participants refrain from targeting their opponents' motives, Hungarian participants repeatedly engage in motive cynicism. While many French participants recognise and declare as legitimate the principles of their opponents, Hungarian participants

regularly deny that opponents have any principles at all. While in France partisans very seldom imply that their opponents infringe upon the common good and show many signs of belief in the morality of the opposition, Hungarian activists in many instances actively deny that their opponents are oriented towards the common good. In Appendix 6, I systematically compare the coding-based evidence for French and Hungarian partisans, and this comparison further confirms these general tendencies. Indeed, French partisans are ahead of the activists of both Hungarian parties on all indicators considered.

There are also noteworthy differences between groups of partisans within each country. UMP participants are more critical of their opponents than their PS counterparts. They question the intentions of their opponents more frequently, and often see their opponents' principles themselves as a form of delusion, or as a convenient rhetoric destined to gain votes. Overall, the discourse of PS participants about their opponents was more pluralistic.

MSzP participants are in a limited way more pluralist than Fidesz participants. In their criticisms of opponents, MSzP participants most often focus on what they perceive as the undemocratic practices of Fidesz and take these as proof that their opponents are ill intentioned, unprincipled, and uncommitted to the common good. Fidesz participants are more likely to take as their primary focus the deep character of their opponents and to put in question their intrinsic morality.

## **2. Explaining variations in patterns of partisan discourse**

The second task of this conclusion is to formulate potential explanations for the above-mentioned variations and thus provide an answer to my second research question: *how can we explain variations in the extent to which partisans uphold the standards of democratic partisanship?* As explained in Chapter 2, I take as a given that whether or not partisans uphold democratic standards does not simply result from variations in personal idiosyncracies, but that these patterns are partly dependent on the specific constraints and opportunities that partisans have for political discourse in their own political environment. In the following sections, I formulate possible explanations for the variations I describe above, focusing on the more specific cultural resources or events that different groups of partisans draw on to make their claims.

### ***a. Cultural resources***

#### *A history of open political competition*

One inference that we can draw from the evidence presented in this chapter is that the history of political opposition within each country, and the types of partisan identities that result from them, influence partisans' present degree of respect for political opponents.

In France, the historical opposition between Left and Right may be interpreted as an opportunity for respectful partisan discourse. As seen in Chapter 3, French participants have a shared framework within which to understand the terms of partisan disagreement. Both PS and UMP groups understand the defining features of the left-wing and right-wing traditions in a similar way. Many of their descriptions of political debates are fairly neutral: they are described in similar terms by one or the other group. The established nature of these political identities also presupposes a certain form of respect. Each group of partisans can more easily see their opponents in light of a certain political tradition, and this tradition itself is attached to a series of values and principles recognised by all. While partisans may sometimes doubt the intentions of their opponents or question their ability to reach the common good, these attitudes are tempered by a form of respect for the wider tradition within which their opponents ground themselves. As Dyrberg insists, this is why the Left-Right dichotomy may be considered as a *democratic* ideology: Left and Right are necessary counterpoints for each other and are thus in a fundamentally democratic relation of equality (Dyrberg, 2005).

For Hungarian partisans, the past history of political competition rather seems to act as a constraint on pluralist attitudes. First, the frame that Hungarian partisans inherit from their political history is one in which one camp has always ruled at the detriment of the other. Competition was not open and equal between the Hungarian conservative and socialist traditions before 1989. This also means that Fidesz and MSzP partisans have a fundamentally different reading of what the terms of Hungarian political competition are. Contrarily to French partisans, they have no shared frame of understanding. Fidesz partisans see party competition as opposing the foreign to the national, the communist to the anti-communist. MSzP partisans see party competition as opposing the democratic to the authoritarian, modernity to backwardness. With a limited experience of being political equals, partisans also do not treat their opponents as political equals. They instead reproduce the 'us vs. them' narrative of pre-

democratic times. Opponents are still enemies that constitute a threat to the common good and should therefore be suppressed.

But the particular political history of both countries may also influence the capacity of partisans to be respectful *indirectly*, via its impact on the cohesiveness of partisan claims. One could argue that parties with a cohesive political identity are more likely to develop a constructive criticism of opponents; on the other hand, partisans that are unsure about what they themselves stand for are more likely to lash out and use disloyal arguments to contradict opponents.

In Chapter 3, I offered as one potential explanation for the cohesiveness of French partisan identities the importance of Left and Right as cultural resources. With such cohesive identities, partisans have real assets to use against their opponents: a set of values on which to judge their opponents' actions and a set of policies to suggest as an alternative to their opponents' practices. They have a clear idea of what sets them apart from their opponents, and they therefore know how to criticise them in a constructive manner. To this extent, they may also not need to question their opponents' intentions or their orientation towards the common good in order to compete and show their political worth. If opponents are cohesive, and therefore principled in their stances, then they are also more worthy of political respect.

Much the opposite can be said about the Hungarian context. Partisanship in Hungary, and especially on the centre-left side of the political spectrum, fundamentally lacks cohesiveness. This again is linked to the fact partisan identities have, for most part, not been built in a time of open political competition. If partisans indulge in disrespectful behavior it may also be because they do not have the means to criticise their opponents in a constructive manner: no clear set of values on which to ground their opposition and no clear set of alternative policies to suggest as an alternative to their opponents' doings. In the absence of a clear differentiation on values and policies, and therefore of structured arguments to justify one's political worth, it is also tempting to focus on corruption scandals or the personality of opponents. Conversely, if opponents are unable to ground their own commitment in a well-defined and coherent set of values, they also fall more easily prey to the accusation of being unprincipled.

#### *Political legacies in a post-authoritarian context*

It may be because Fidesz participants give in to historical narratives more forcefully than their opponents that they are less respectful than their MSZP counterparts. This is also because they more explicitly ground their self-

understanding in the memories of the victims of communism. To this extent, their particular position vis-à-vis history provides greater opportunities for disrespectful discourse: they act with the resentment of the dominated victim, while MSzP partisans carry the guilt of past perpetrators. In this configuration, the opponents of Fidesz are not worthy of respect precisely because they are viewed as the inheritors of an oppressive tradition. The terms of the partisan opposition are therefore themselves contested, as this narrative cannot be shared by the MSzP: they do not recognise themselves in this oppressive tradition, or pride themselves in carrying its memory. The Fidesz's framing of the Left is therefore also perceived as a form of injustice, a disloyal attack against the MSzP. This situation may, in turn, not be conducive to MSzP partisans respecting their opponents.

### ***b. External events***

#### *Frequency of corruption scandals*

Different levels of corruption in both countries may also partly explain differences in levels of respect for political opponents. Indeed, corruption scandals are a type of external event likely to generate disrespectful behavior, as they constitute a legitimate reason to doubt the intentions of one's adversaries. Hungarian partisans denounce the corrupt practices of their opponents more frequently than their French counterparts, and these denunciations are central to the 'motive-cynicism' that they commonly display. This variation can be explained by differences in the levels of corruption in each country. In this sense, corruption scandals, and a high level of corruption more generally, may act as a constraint on respectful partisan behavior.

Corrupt practices are, in general, a far greater problem in Central Europe than they are in Western Europe. Weak legal capacity deriving from incomplete state building is a common characteristic of the post-communist region (Falkner, Treib, & Holzleithner, 2008; J. n. Kornai & Rose-Ackerman, 2004; Linz & Stepan, 1996, p. 436). The weakness of Central European state capacity has facilitated an extreme form of state colonisation by political parties, an even stronger form of party cartelisation than in Western Europe, and more widespread corrupt practices among public officials (Innes, 2014; Kopecký, 2006, 2007; Kopecký & Spirova, 2011). While corruption has also been on the rise in Western Europe over the last three decades, a parallel deterioration in Central Europe means that the East-West divide remains stark in these matters (Innes, 2015; MacDonald & Tariq Majeed, 2011). These differences also hold for France and Hungary more specifically. On Transparency International's Corruption

Perception Index which ranges from 0 as highly corrupt to 100 as least corrupt, Hungary meets a score of 54, and France a score of 69, with an average EU score of 66 (Transparency International, 2014). This is also supported by the World Bank Governance Indicator “control of corruption”, with Hungary reaching the 61 percentile mark in 2014, against 88 percentile in France in the same year (World Bank, 2014).

Corruption scandals may therefore constitute types of events that provide Hungarian partisans with arguments against their opposition and those arguments are less available to French partisans. In this sense, corruptions scandals may be seen as a type of event that constrains the respectful behavior of political opponents. With a greater number of scandals involving their opposition and corruption being higher on the list of preoccupation of Central European citizens (Rose-Ackerman, 2001), Hungarian partisans are likely to be more easily tempted to make use of these cases to criticise their opponents.

There is nevertheless evidence in both cases to suggest that partisans retain agency in the way they choose to use - or not to use - cases of corruption involving their opponents. For instance, despite the widespread nature of corruption in Hungary, partisans could nevertheless have more accurately described corruption as a plague affecting all parties, and which all parties need to fight in their own ranks. Not only do they instead solely focus on scandals involving their opponents, but they also use these scandals to question more generally the moral integrity of their opponents. The reverse can be said for the French case. While corruption is certainly less developed in France than it is in Hungary, a number of high-ranking politicians were involved in major scandals in the spring of 2013, at the time of my interviews.<sup>131</sup> These cases made the first pages of many French newspapers and drawing on these would have been an easy way for my participants to frame their opponents as corrupt and their own party as virtuous. However, with only minor exceptions, French participants did not raise the issue. This suggests that corruption is indeed better conceived as a resource for anti-

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<sup>131</sup> Nicolas Sarkozy, former president of the French Republic from 2007 to 2012, and still one of the UMP's leading personalities in 2013, was involved in three major scandals. The first is the Bettencourt Affair, in which Nicolas Sarkozy is suspected to have obtained illegal financing from Liliane Bettencourt, head of L'Oréal, for his 2007 campaign. Sarkozy himself was put under investigation on March 21, 2013. Another investigation opened early 2013 following revelations of the online journal Mediapart, according to which Sarkozy's 2007 campaign would have also been illegally financed by the Libyan regime of Mouammar Kadhafi. Finally, another case was opened in October 2012, investigating the conditions of a 1.5 million euros contract between the polling agency Publifact and the President's office between 2007 and 2012. Another large affair involved Jérôme Cahuzac, PS Minister of Budget, in the winter and spring of 2013. He was accused of owning an undeclared bank account in Switzerland by the online investigative journal *Mediapart*. Jérôme Cahuzac had to resign from government on March 19, 2013 and was indicted two weeks later for fiscal fraud.

pluralist speech, rather than a reality that partisans can only account for in anti-pluralist terms. If a corrupt environment increases the likelihood of disrespectful discourse, partisans nevertheless retain the agency to choose whether or not to use corruptions scandals as a weapon against their political opponents.

*Socio-economic constraints and imbalances in cohesiveness*

The fact that overall right-wing partisans are slightly less respectful than left-wing partisans can also be explained by their different positions with regard to socio-economic constraints. As explained in the conclusion to Chapter 3, there is an imbalance in cohesiveness between right-wing and left-wing parties, and this imbalance can be partly attributed to the greater weight of socio-economic constraints on left-wing platforms as compared to right-wing ones. Arguably, this imbalance creates a greater incentive towards disrespect among right-wing partisans than among left-wing partisans.

In France, the imbalance in cohesiveness seemed linked particularly with the lesser ability of the PS to adapt to an increasingly constrained context for economic policy. This particular context puts them in a vulnerable position and the UMP in a relative position of strength. Indeed, the globalised economy offers UMP participants evidence to argue that traditionally left-wing positions on social equality, public services and state interventionism are unrealistic and delusional. As seen in this chapter, it is then easy for UMP partisans to conclude that if the PS still holds these position, it is for base motives, rather than out of concern for the common good. Much the opposite can be said for PS participants. As is apparent in this Chapter, they are too preoccupied with themselves, too concerned about their own party's incapacities, to unsure about the stance they can legitimately defend in the current circumstances, to effectively criticise their opponents. If PS participants are, *de facto*, more respectful, it is thus also because they simply do not engage to the same degree in deconstructing their opponents' stances.

This also holds, to a certain extent, in Hungary. One of the main explanations for the lack of cohesiveness of MSzP claims is that since their birth in 1989, they have more or less renounced to defend a social-democratic platform on economic issues, despite arguing that they are social-democrats. As shown in this chapter, this particular fact makes them easy targets for the criticism of Fidesz partisans. Fidesz partisans regularly refer to the MSzP's 'betrayal' of socialist ideals as proof of their ill intentions, and of their lack of principled commitment to a certain idea of the common good.

## CHAPTER 5: Pluralism in partisan attitudes towards political agreement and disagreement

In the last empirical chapter, I focus on the extent to which French and Hungarian uphold the standard of commitment to pluralism in their attitudes towards political agreement and disagreement. These attitudes provide an adequate ground for assessing pluralist partisanship. Indeed, if partisans were to only follow their particular convictions without exercising self-restraint, they would wish for a consensus to be established in favour of their own views and thus for political disagreement to come to an end. Commitment to political pluralism should act as a break on these drives. Beyond respect for political opponents, ethical partisans will also have a certain appreciation of the value of partisan disagreements in a democratic political community.

In chapter 1, I offered two criteria to evaluate the attitudes of real-world partisans towards political agreement and disagreement. I summarize these below and indicate the type of evidence that my interviews offer for each criterion:

*Criterion 1: The importance of shared principles:* First, pluralist partisans recognise and appreciate the principles that ground the political community and are shared across partisan lines. The political community starts with the idea of the common good: 'what we are' is what we share with others that transcends particular group interests and our defence of particularistic convictions. Following Galston, we can identify three separate components of the 'common good' in democratic societies (Galston, 2013). First, 'matters of common concern', issues that should be considered collectively because they result from social linkage. Second, a series of fundamental principles that define the common good *at large* - generally listed in the Preamble of a democracy's constitution. Finally, democratic institutions themselves may also be seen as a common good. Partisans should uphold a pluralistic idea of the political community in which such a broad understanding of the common good is shared across partisan lines.



This also entails that they refrain from contesting these common foundations or from claiming their mastery.

The focus groups provide direct evidence for this criterion. At the end of each interview, I asked participants specifically whether they would rather have more agreement or more disagreement on the twelve topics they were asked to discuss. This allowed me to code for instances where partisans value political agreement and to analyse the type of arguments that participants make in support of these normative claims.

*Criterion 2: The ineliminability of disagreement:* A second, fundamental characteristic of pluralist partisanship is the capacity to value political contestation for its own sake. Pluralist partisans believe that disagreement over the *meaning* and *implications* of the principles that form the common good is not only ineliminable in a liberal democracy, but core to its perpetuation. To this extent, pluralist partisans are aware of the moral indeterminacy attached to foundational principles and do not attempt to foreclose it. In other words, they accept the partial nature of their claims and the fact that these will necessarily and permanently spur contestation.

The focus groups provide direct evidence for this criterion. As indicated above, I asked participants specifically towards the end of each interview whether they would rather have more agreement or more disagreement on the topics they were asked to discuss. This allowed me to code for instances where partisans value political disagreement and to analyse the type of arguments that participants make in support of these normative claims.

Another source of evidence are responses to the last question in each interview concerning participants' personal experiences of interpartisan dialogue. I coded especially for both positive and negative accounts of these experiences. While these only partly reflect the opinion of participants on the value of disagreement, partisans do often cast an opinion on the benefits of confronting one's own views to those of others. Valuing or depreciating the experience of interpartisan dialogue may to this extent offer an additional measure of this criterion.

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As in the previous chapter, I will present the qualitative and quantitative evidence for both France and Hungary in turn. In the final section, I discuss both country-cases in a comparative fashion and provide tentative explanations for the variations in patterns of partisan discourse that I uncover.

## I. THE FRENCH CASE

I start by examining the attitudes of French partisans towards political agreement and the extent to which they see themselves as belonging to a suprapartisan political community built on shared values. I then focus on French partisans' attitudes towards political disagreement and the extent to which they value partisan contestation for its own sake.

### 1. The importance of shared principles

There is much empirical evidence to support the claim that French partisans feel part of a common, suprapartisan political community built on shared values. The evidence presented in Chapter 4 already goes in this direction. To see opponents as moral and political equals is to see them as part of the political community. Partisans that respect their political opponents see that what they share with opponents, a desire to serve the common good, supersedes their particular convictions on what serving the common exactly means. Much of the previous chapter thus already shows that French participants feel that they belong to an inclusive and pluralist political community.

This realisation nevertheless takes different forms for UMP and PS participants. As emphasised in chapter 3, UMP participants often emphasise a commonality of objectives between political parties. This is clear in the types of arguments they use to justify political disagreement over the different issues they were asked to discuss. More frequently than PS participants they insist on the common goals of political parties and their dissimilar means to reach these goals (coded *CONSENSUAL OBJECTIVES* vs. *CONFLICTUAL PRACTICE*, see Figure 13 in Chapter 3). This emphasis on shared political objectives also carries the recognition that there exists a symbolic political space within which all parties operate. This comes through in the following example, where an UMP participant talks about issues that both parties consider as 'essential' and this because they 'affect the citizen directly':

Simon: These topics are consensual in that on both sides we agree that political life needs rules, that we cannot do politics the way we did 30 years ago, and that there are demands of morality today, citizens relate to politics in a way that has changed. I think that both Left and Right have understood this, in any case, but of course the answers that we bring can sometimes be different. But on the necessity of moralizing public life, I think that on this point, Alexis is right, there is a consensus. On the necessity to do something to really bring employment to young people, to fight against unemployment, it's obvious. While clearly what the Right and the Left suggest is different, there is the realisation that these issues are essential because they affect the citizen directly.

The last section of each interview offers additional evidence for this point. Indeed, each group interview concluded with a discussion on the general value of political agreement and disagreement. I more specifically asked participants whether they would rather have more agreement or more disagreement on the topics they were asked to discuss. By answering this question, participants also offered a series of justifications for why they attach worth to political agreement. A large number of responses emphasise the necessity of having a shared definition of the common good with opponents and attribute a positive quality to belonging to a political community built on shared values. Towards the end of each discussion, participants from the UMP often emphasised the positive value of a suprapartisan agreement on the 'common good' broadly defined and the existence of a shared desire among political parties to further this 'common good'. Simon, for instance, makes an argument about the general value of political agreement that is coherent with his above-cited position:

Simon: I don't think politics are like a civil war, on this point... I mean, it's possible to say things... it is possible to disagree on a number of solutions, it's possible to spell these out clearly, but it's not a civil war, I mean... we are here to work things out, in all logic we all have, on the left and on the right... I mean, at the end of the day our preoccupation is to better the everyday lives of our fellow citizens, to be very honest...

Léa: But disagreements are necessary, in any case, that's what creates debate...

Simon: We have different responses on some issues, but we should...

Léa: There will be a point when we will need to agree...

Simon: We are working towards the same objective, which is to... I was going to say 'change life for the better', to take up a slogan that is not necessarily a right-wing slogan, but well... (Laughs), in any case, to better the existence of our fellow citizens, and this is the aspiration we all have.

On the other hand, PS participants were more likely to emphasise the existence of a suprapartisan agreement on fundamental principles and institutions. In the following example, a young activist discusses the card PUBLIC MORALITY. In contrast to the previous statement by Simon, he does not emphasise a commonality in objectives, but a shared respect for key values and of the institutional framework:

Edgard: The consensus here has to do with... a way of seeing the separation of powers that is valid for everyone, the same way as (on both sides) introducing morality in public life is done on the basis of... not necessarily on questions like the holding of multiple public functions, but on a number of values, a number of engagements too, of respect for one's engagements and this starts with... At bottom there is this idea that elected representative should have a form of respect for certain things, for their own work with regard to citizens. And that there should be a respect for pre-existing institutions. An example of this is

when the Right tried to call on the CESE, the Economic, Social and Environmental Comity, as a public institution, for advice on gay marriage...<sup>132</sup>  
Well there is a certain idea of respect, we don't agree on everyone, but this idea of respect (...)

PS participants adopt a similar kind of argument when they value consensus in the last part of the discussion. The following dialogue is particularly striking at a number of levels. Two PS activists contrast a period of France's history in which these suprapartisan agreements did not exist to the more appeased current state of political debate. They emphasise especially the emergence of a consensus on the Republic (*République* in French) - the "public matter" - a concept which, in itself, summarizes the notion of the common good:

René: This being said, I don't regret that a consensus has emerged on... I think the society of the 1970s, the society of the 1960s and 1970s was excessively conflictual.. I wouldn't trade...

Didier: But that's necessary, that is what the Republic is, it's a consensus. That is what the *Res Publica* is. A consensus that exists today is the Republic. I mean that the Right and the Left are Republican...

René: In this sense... Yes, you see, I don't regret the 1900s... (...) we don't regret the Dreyfus affair, we don't regret the 1930s, to get closer (to the present day). A real gathering of French society has occurred around the Republic, and around some fundamental values. These can be instrumentalised, but nevertheless I think that (the principle of) secularism<sup>133</sup> remains something... This is also actually why it can be used as a political instrument, we use it as a political instrument precisely because we know that at the end of the day it has a positive value for everyone.

Didier: Let's say there is a consensus on the organisation... at least on the rules of public debate. Generally speaking, these include the Republic, democracy, etc (...)

As René points out in this example, it is *because* all parties value certain fundamental principles, that an appeased contestation is possible around their interpretation. To see the positive function of a suprapartisan consensus on the common good is therefore not contradictory with valuing political disagreement for its own sake. I now move to this specific question.

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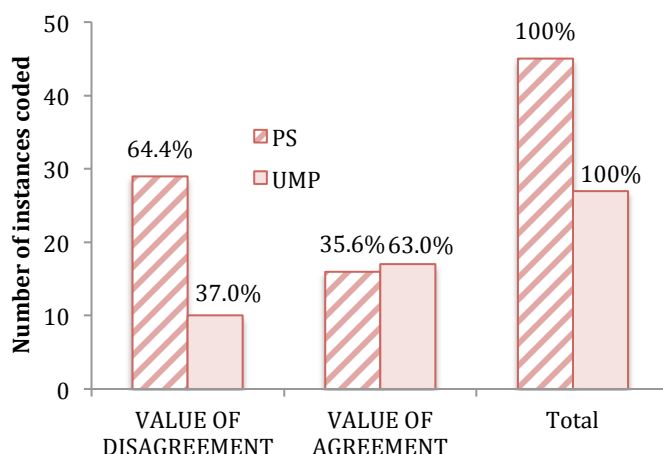
<sup>132</sup> A petition was signed by approximately 700 000 French citizens and addressed to CESE for it to examine the bill and its societal consequences in February 2013. The CESE considered the request as invalid, given that the law had not yet been voted on at the time.

<sup>133</sup> In French, "laïcité".

## 2. The ineliminability of disagreement

### *a. The value of political disagreement*

In the last part of each group discussion, French participants frequently expressed the conviction that political disagreement is a necessary and positive feature of a democratic society.



**Figure 30: Value associated by French participants to political disagreement and agreement**

*N.B: See the note under Figure 5 for an explanation of how to read this figure*

As shown in Figure 30, UMP participants were less likely to emphasise the value of agreement as compared to PS participants. This is unsurprising in light of the general orientation of UMP activists towards pragmatism, solution-seeking and their emphasis on a commonality of objectives among political parties. Transcripts of UMP groups nevertheless provide examples of participants recognising the ineliminability of political disagreement. In the following example, Thomas emphasises that partisan differentiation is necessary for citizens to make a choice among political alternatives:

Thomas: Well, I absolutely agree, I think that... So we shouldn't try to make everyone believe that the Left and the Right have the same ideas and.. very far from it, but... That being said, I think it is because people are mature that we can find back to each other on issues of national interest... After that, if... I mean, on topics where there is no ideological philosophy, it would be a waste not to find a consensus. On topics that cause cleavage because we have a different philosophy, it's absolutely normal and each power in place will enact their own policies. I think that after that the French can... judge each policy according to the facts. If the Right has been so long in power it is maybe because we noticed that... it worked better.

This example is interesting because the young UMP activist can retain a certain vision of legitimacy based on problem-solving and policy output while admitting the

democratic necessity of leaving it up to citizens to decide which ideas and policies are most appropriate to reach socially desirable objectives. Other examples from UMP groups demonstrate a more straightforward endorsement of the ineliminability of disagreement. This is the case in the following dialogue, where UMP participants more explicitly emphasise that democracy entails the confrontation of alternative programs of government:

Nelson: Actually, compromise cannot be found. I think that there are issues on which we will not be able to find a compromise.

Agnès: And fortunately so. Because it's... it's the foundation of democracy, I mean, if we agreed on everything, it would be... I mean, I don't know. It leads to totalitarianism.

Jeanne: Well, others speak of unity...

Nelson: Well I don't know, because we speak of conflict... I would say we need more alternatives. See, because conflict is a bit... war-like, it's maybe just that when it comes to discourse we should actually have the possibility of comparing different discourses on every topics. See, it's more like that, (at the moment) we don't see the different options that we have. We have declarations of good intention, but we don't see where the different paths are leading to, I think that is what is missing. This being said, whether it should take the shape of a general fight, why not, that's possible... (...) But I think there is a need for more choice, more choice because our ideological spectrum is too narrow.

Importantly, the above-mentioned example is also from a local group of UMP activists, who self-avowedly locate themselves on the right-wing fringe of their party. As becomes clear later in the transcript, Nelson also calls for widening the spectre of ideological choice because he is critical of his own party for being too 'mainstream'. This type of reasoning was very frequent in the case of PS groups, who far more frequently than UMP activists wish for their own party to be more assertive than they perceive it to be (see Chapter 3). If, as shown in Figure 30, they are more likely to see disagreement in a positive light than their UMP counterparts, it is therefore also because they regret a consensus which, in their view, is established at the detriment of left-wing ideals. This comes through in the following dialogue:

René: (...) What I have an issue with, because now we were essentially talking about issues of EU politics and public debt, what I have an issue with is that consensus has been formed around right-wing theories. The liberal Right ... not neo-liberal, no need to exaggerate, but around liberal, right-wing theories. Which means, basically... reducing public spending... giving-up on an assertive monetary policy, to pressure the Central Bank, renouncing a European budget, giving-up on a common economic policy. That is what disappoints me. And we could also speak about protectionism later on. What I have an issue with... yes, this is what I have an issue with, beyond the very notion of consensus, what I have an issue with, is that it is us who have capitulated in this consensus.

Didier: And who have not defended our positions, or at least the positions we consider needing to be defended by the PS (...)

On this basis, PS participants often make a defence of political disagreement because they would wish for their own party to disagree with the UMP in a more open and clear-cut way. In the following statement, a young PS activist is talking about the topics on which he would welcome more disagreement:

Patrick: All of them! All of them, to be plain. Because the Left should be much more feisty on (the question of) public morality, the Left should be much more feisty in its discourse and in its actions when it comes to immigration, on (the question of) secularism, on (the question of) protectionism (...) On European integration we need to go much further, and do things very differently, on environmental issues we need to be much more aggressive. On every card today there is not enough (of a) cleavage (...) In my opinion, if we were to reach a consensus on Europe after a real debate, a real political battle, all right (...) If we wage a battle and we lose it, then we lose it, that's democracy, that's the debate. But if we shut up, if we just give a little speech to say: we will renegotiate the treaty, and we renegotiate it without really trying to renegotiate it, in this case the Left really needs a change of orientation.

As Patrick's statement suggests, PS participants first deplore their party's lack of assertiveness because this amounts to a betrayal of left-wing ideals. They also, however, regret this situation because they see democracy as a confrontation of clear alternatives and consider that their party is failing to participate in this confrontation. There are, therefore, many points in the interviews where PS participants also valued disagreement for its own sake. In the following dialogue, Didier and René equate democracy with a continuous struggle in which each party tries to convince others of the validity of their views, yet each party is aware that their views cannot and should not fully triumph:

Didier: That's it actually, I don't really see the point of consensus... For me politics is a struggle, it's (about) creating cleavages. That being said, as we are in a democratic society I have no enemies, I don't have... I mean, if the person I'm faced with disagrees with me, I will talk with them, I will try to convince them, but I won't reach a consensus (...) I'm not engaged in politics to find a consensus actually.

René: It may seem a bit paradoxical because we each promote... At first glance, one could think that people get engaged in politics to see their ideas triumph. So the more they triumph, the more we should be glad.

Didier: But at the same time, the day when they triumph completely and everyone agrees, it's the end of democracy because that would mean... We can't always think 100% in the same way (...)

### ***b. Experiences of interpartisan dialogue***

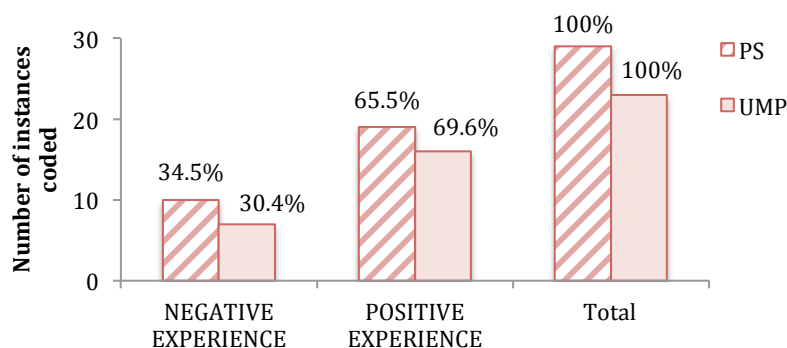
The accounts participants make of their everyday life experiences of interpartisan dialogue constitute another, albeit indirect, source of evidence on their attitudes towards political disagreement. I concluded each interview by asking participants about their real-life encounters with political opponents. When analysing the interviews, I coded specifically for both positive and negative experiences of interpartisan dialogue. While these only partly reflect the opinion of participants on the value of disagreement, partisans do often cast an opinion on the benefits of confronting their own views to those of others. To this extent, whether they value or depreciate the experience of interpartisan dialogue offers an additional measure of their appreciation of political disagreement more generally.

It is first worth worth noticing that a large share of the accounts partisans give of encounters with political opponents refer to political discussions with friends. Several participants on the right in fact declared that most of their friends were on the left, or that their closest friends were on the left. Below are several examples:

Alexis: I'll tell you a secret... 70% of my friends are left-wing, actively engaged on the left, not simply people who see themselves as close to the Left. And among these 70%, there are about 30% who have key positions in the current government, so people who are advising ministers, collaborating with members of parliament, senators, activists with national level responsibilities, so... at the MJS, so I know them, very well. We co-exist, we've done the same universities, we've done the same high schools, we've done the same schools, so they are truly friends (...)

Or Simon, in the same group:

Simon: Well me I... surprisingly, I have more or less the same number of... I mean, perhaps it's not the same friends, but the large majority of my friends are engaged, very active, on the left.



**Figure 31: References by French participants to their positive or negative personal experiences of interpartisan dialogue**

*N.B: See the note under Figure 5 for an explanation of how to read this figure*



As shown in Figure 31, the majority of experiences that French partisans accounted for were positive: 65.5% of instances coded in PS transcripts and 69.9% of UMP transcripts. Some participants would present political disagreement with opponents as a playful and pleasant rhetorical exercise, in which one can both try out and exaggerate one's arguments. In the following example, two young PS activists describe discussions with some of their right-wing friends as a source of enjoyment:

René: They aren't adversaries, the aim is not necessarily to convince the other, I mean that if we are all honest with each other, there is a playful side to debating with right-wing people who are really friends, we play a little... we tease, we provoke each other... we test our arguments a bit, we defend things that we don't necessarily believe in... I don't want to say this, but it's kind of true...

Didier: No, but it's true, it's for the pleasure of the game...

René: It's for the pleasure of the debate, we radicalise a bit our positions...

Others described discussions with political opponents as a necessary exercise for someone engaged in politics. In these cases, they would especially insist on how such encounters allow them to refine their views and arguments and thus to learn about how to convince those that still need convincing. The following statement from a young PS activist is a good example:

Edgard: (...) I like to be confronted on these things, it forces you to refine your arguments as much as possible. To be not just capable of saying... "we should fight against unemployment because unemployment is bad" and... Nowadays, I'm working for Élisabeth Guigou,<sup>134</sup> and these are (the type of) things one could say during a campaign period. So when I go to Seine-Saint-Denis<sup>135</sup> and say, 'what we want is fight against unemployment, because unemployment means no jobs'. Well great, you will have a huge support of the whole population who will applaud you, etc., it's really easy. But try to say the same thing in the 7th district<sup>136</sup>, to guys who tell you, 'well, I'm not unemployed!'

The experiences of UMP participants also combine these types of arguments. In the following example, Martine emphasises not only that she enjoys talking with opponents, but that the challenge it represents also makes it particularly interesting:

Martine: Well yes, I'm on the right(-fringe) of the (centre-)right, so it does cause opposition on some questions, but it doesn't preclude us from having drinks together, from having discussions. And it's quite fun as I can see that even among themselves (the left-wing people I know) don't all agree, some of them come closer to my opinions, others not at all. But there is respect there, we

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<sup>134</sup> PS Member of Parliament for Seine-Saint-Denis and head of the Foreign Affairs Commission in the French Parliament.

<sup>135</sup> Seine-Saint-Denis is one of France's poorest departments, with one of the highest unemployment rates. This has traditionally been a left-wing bastion.

<sup>136</sup> The 7th district is one the wealthiest neighborhoods in Paris, also called Saint-Germain-des-Près.

never insult each other, they never say "well you're just a jerk, you are a right-wing fascist", I never heard things like these from them. On the contrary, I find it even more interesting because well, we know that we disagree, but there is an open-mindedness which means that... we try, we allow the other to speak, we try to understand his point of view (...)

Loïs, another UMP participant who is also part of a local city council, is even more explicit in making this same argument, emphasising that he finds it more interesting to debate with opponents than to talk with fellow partisans from the Right:

Loïs: (...) People are really open-minded, the socialists in my town. We drink coffee together, we talk a bit about (our) ideology, or a bit about the future of Clichy<sup>137</sup>, what should be done, etc. So on this front there is no problem. Quite the contrary, it's more enriching than to talk with the UMP section of my town, where we all agree on the same topics, so in the end we conclude 10 topics in the space of 5 minutes. With people from the PS... It's really fascinating, because... we don't try to convince each other at all costs... (With statements like) "He's in the wrong, etc.", so really there is mutual respect. Then of course there are people with whom you can't talk, for instance, on the far-left, it's true that... not necessarily physically, but at least verbally they are quite violent. It's true that with them there is little dialogue. With people from the FN not really either, so... but with people from the Left, that yes, yes, of course.

As transpires from the last example cited, participants' negative encounters are often not with partisans of the main opposition party, but with supporters of fringe political parties. In the following statement, Alexandre, on the right fringe of the UMP, gives quite a striking account of the contrast between these two groups of opponents:

Alexandre: At the Tolbiac University<sup>138</sup>, [student union] elections always end in a fight, and... There are two lefts, there is... one of my best friends is at the PS, she is a social-democrat. We talk for hours on certain topics, we quarrel a bit, but it all goes fine. Same with other friends that are at the PS, we talk, it goes well, I mean, we disagree but...

Edouard: Even with some people from the *Front de Gauche*<sup>139</sup> it's possible to have a discussion...

Alexandre: Some of them yes, but with the radical Left, it's really not worth it. I can see it at Tolbiac. They see me, they threaten me, there will always be one to try to punch me and that starts a fight. I don't mind at all, I'm the feisty type, and so if there is a need to scrap, I'll do it. But it's because they have that objective...

When accounting for 'negative' experiences of interpartisan dialogue, participants also tend to blame the radicalism of their opponents - rather than

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<sup>137</sup> Clichy is a town located in the Parisian periphery.

<sup>138</sup> Tolbiac is of the campuses of the Sorbonne, known to be very left-leaning.

<sup>139</sup> The *Front de Gauche* is an electoral coalition created for the 2009 European elections between the French Communist Party and other political parties on the far left. This coalition obtained 11.1% of votes in the 2012 presidential elections and 19 seats in the 2012 Parliamentary elections.

dismissing the actual experience of encountering divergent views altogether. Echoing the experience of other speakers in different groups, Bertrand from the PS describes how he fell out with a right-wing friend of his:

Bertrand: (These encounters) don't go so well! (Laughs) I have a friend who is right-wing, and during the 2012 electoral campaign we had quite a quarrel because of topics... it's true that when they defend arguments that we really disagree with, it's hard to reach an agreement. I mean now recently with same-sex marriage, when we hear that homosexuality and being zoophilous are the same thing, well, we have problems debating with them. I mean, there is a complete split, we have no desire to share what we think with them. But it's true that on less contentious topics debate is possible, even if it's hard, afterwards, to reach an agreement.

From these accounts of interpartisan dialogue we can conclude that in most cases participants see encounters with members of their main opposition as experiences they can *benefit* from, either politically or personally. Beyond a mere acceptance of the inevitability of political disagreement, the latter is seen to have a value in itself and to produce a fundamentally positive outcome.

#### *The limits of valuing disagreement*

While the above-mentioned evidence suggests a strong commitment of French participants to political pluralism, there are nevertheless limits to the self-restraint they displayed in this particular area. There were cases where their particular convictions, and their belief in the validity of their own views, trumped their belief in the necessity of partisan contestation.

This came through in some of the arguments that UMP participants gave in favour of political agreement. As shown in Figure 30 above, they were less likely than PS participants to value disagreement and more likely to value agreement. As already stressed at different points of this thesis, the baseline assumption of many UMP participants is that parties want to solve similar problems. They therefore criticise their opponents for the means that they choose to reach these common objectives. Such a line of argument, however, easily turns into what Muirhead has termed the "naive holism" of political centrism (Muirhead, 2014, p. 145): a belief in the fact that there is one obvious path to the common good and that it is sufficient to do away with ideological considerations to grasp the right means to realise it. The types of arguments they give for valuing consensus is thus a double-edged sword. On the one hand, it entails recognising a common good, on the other hand it obscures the fact that there may be alternative ways of defining it than their own. This ambivalence comes through in the following example:

Antoine: I find (consensus) positive, it means that we have the same ideas, the same objectives, for the same country, and that is good, that's good.

Marie: We don't always have to be in opposition to each other...

Antoine: And today sincerely, what I would like would be to put these cards (*showing the cards he classified as 'conflictual'*), now that François Hollande is in power for five years, for the future of France, I would wish for these cards to be on the other side (*showing the 'consensual' part of his classification*), but I can't. Because today, after all, there is a difference between the Left and the Right, I would like for us to have the same objectives during these five years, for the country to be better governed, but I cannot...

Charles: I think that is the aim, in the end, to find solutions, so the consensual topics should be more numerous, that's what we all wish for, clearly... After all we all wish for François Hollande to succeed, we don't believe in it, but we hope for it...

From here UMP participants sometimes concluded that those who disagree, those who contest rather than strive towards consensus, are not truly trying to further the common good. In the following statement, Thomas expresses this idea clearly:

Thomas: To tell the truth, those that look for disagreement in all circumstances are just trying to grab attention... So yes, we have to tell the truth. If we are really here to build something strong in France and to get our country to grow, there is nothing better than consensus, so we shouldn't be... we shouldn't be naive. I mean if someone is always looking for conflict, it means there is a reason behind it... I mean that at base there is often a willingness to further personal interests, interests that are personal.

Finally, UMP participants often present their own camp as lucid and pragmatic, while they perceive their opponents are blinded by their ideology. In the following example, Simon suggests that the PS should lift its socialist veil and accept that 'responsibility and rigour' are on the side of the UMP. This idea is expressed in the following dialogue, in which UMP participants talk about their own weak appreciation of political disagreement:

Jean-Louis: We would like less of it but... on our side I mean... in favour of what we believe in...

Simon: Yes I mean, once again, I believe in the virtues of consensus, but on all of these topics, we really need our left-wing friends to go through a cultural revolution, at least in their behaviours. On the question of immigration, etc., it will be necessary that they be hit by reality at some point, that they look at the world as it is and not as they would want it to be... as they always wanted it to be and as it never was, in the end. Because it is clear that their solutions have failed. So we can hope for a consensus, but on these issues I believe... I mean... *if we take into account the fact that responsibility and rigour are on our side, it will be for our left-wing friends to come in our direction*, and I don't think that will happen soon on these issues. They would need to abandon part of their very ideological vision on these issues, because in my opinion it has remained very deeply rooted in them, and for a long time! (...)

While PS participants did occasionally advocate a consensus on their own positions, they were more measured in their statements than their UMP counterparts. In the following dialogue for instance, Jean argues for greater consensus on a limited number of societal topics, while emphasising that this does not preclude the more general persistence of disagreements between parties:

Jean: And what I wanted to say is... oh yes, concerning (the question of) consensus, I would actually like more consensus on those topics where the Right adopts an opportunistic discourse. And I think it would be more responsible on their part, even if we have differences, to at least have less of a simplistic discourse, and perhaps to think things through more...

Author: So what topics are you talking about?

Jean: So we were talking about...

Léonard: Immigration, religious minorities...

Jean: Immigration, security, sexual and religious minorities, all of these. So (the Right) has the tendency to stigmatise (minorities on these topics), and here it's true that we could wish for greater consensus...

Justin: Well but they target us for running after the *Front de Gauche*<sup>140</sup> and all, so...(...) it's true that if nobody acted out of political opportunism, and if each stayed on their own line, then there could be more points of consensus because... between a socially oriented Right and today's PS, well there are far less differences and a far greater possible consensus than with today's Right, Sarkozyst and hard...

While Justin does suggest that he would wish the Right to be more 'social-oriented', he also frames this as a way for the Right to stay true to itself (to stay 'on its own line' in Justin's words), rather than as a capitulation to the views of the PS. More generally, these partisans seem to regret not so much the persistence of political disagreement than what they perceive to be the recent radicalisation of their opposition. This approach also comes through in the following dialogue. Here participants stress that, while they do sometimes wish for a political agreement on their own positions—Quentin emphasises especially the question of gay marriage—such agreements would not signify the end of political disagreement more generally:

Quentin: This is typical of contemporary political thinking, people think that from the point where there would be some kind of a consensus... (...) Because this is how people conceive of political thinking, that from the point where we reach something, some kind of general idea where people agree, that means in essence that we stopped thinking. It's like the question of gay marriage, when you say that... The thing of the Right that concerned... (The Right said we needed) to stop the one-thought system. Of course a one-thought system is dumb, but if there is some kind of consensus towards the good, that will never

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<sup>140</sup>On the *Front de Gauche*, see footnote 139.

prevent us from putting this question back into perspective, and to... (...) To say that because there is a consensus that implies the death of thinking, I don't agree.

Louis: Me neither. From the point where you have a consensus, you can mark the point on which you reach consensus, and then go beyond.

Edgard: Because there are always people that will be born after us, we will die in 80 years, there will always be people that will think (through these questions) again.

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French partisans do reveal their commitment to political pluralism in their attitudes towards political agreement and disagreement. First, they recognise and value the existence of shared objectives and principles across partisan line and do not claim the mastery of these foundations. In this, they also show allegiance to a suprapartisan and pluralistic idea of the political community, one in which what partisans across political lines have in common trumps what sets them apart. French participants also demonstrate an attachment to political contestation for its own sake. Not only do they express their belief that political disagreement is an ineliminable feature of French democracy as a whole, but they also see the value of interpartisan dialogue in their personal life. They know that they gain from confronting their own convictions to contradictory views.

There is a caveat to this generally positive conclusion: the tendency of UMP participants to succumb to a form of naive holism. When they recognise that parties have a shared commitment to the common good, they tend to emphasise the broad political objectives that parties have in common rather than the principles that parties share. With their pragmatic emphasis on problem-solving, UMP participants are too quick to assert that there exists a unique set of solutions to reach these shared goals. They criticise their opponents for choosing the 'wrong' means in the pursuit of the common good and describe their own party as the only one capable of making the 'right' choices. In turn, PS participants reproach their own party for succumbing to this vision of the political world, in which there is only one set of appropriate means to reach a 'commonsensical' common good. What becomes obscured with such a worldview is the necessity of disagreement in a democratic society and the intrinsic legitimacy of contradictory claims.

## II. THE HUNGARIAN CASE

In the second case study, I proceed in line with the theoretical framework summarised in the introduction. I start by examining the attitudes of Hungarian partisans towards political agreement and the extent to which they see themselves as belonging to a suprapartisan political community built on shared values. The second section is dedicated to the attitudes of Hungarian partisans towards political disagreement and whether they value partisan contestation for its own sake.

### 1. The importance of shared principles

#### *a. Longing for a community of values*

Much of the empirical evidence discussed so far indicates that Hungarian partisans do not feel part of a common, suprapartisan political community built on shared values. The previous chapter has already suggested this idea. Most often Hungarian participants do not consider their opponents as principled and oriented towards the common good. Partisans' weak respect for their political opponents indicates that they view what separates them from their adversaries as superseding what they should be sharing: a desire to better the common good.

As emphasised in Chapter 3, Hungarian participants had great difficulties identifying any ground of agreement with political opponents on the different cards they were asked to discuss (see Figures 5 and 7, and Table 3). It is not only that they could rarely point to cards on which they found parties to agree. They would also only rarely emphasise, contrary to what French participants did, that parties may seek similar objectives in these different domains (security, prosperity, etc.), while holding divergent value-systems and suggesting different policies. As was also made clear in Chapter 3, for Hungarian participants disagreement with opponents is more of a matter of principle, than grounded in thorough justification. MSzP participants explain this widely shared tendency in the following dialogue:

Barnabás: Apart from environmental policy, there is no real consensual theme.

Lukács: And I say there won't be any, because we are opposed in everything to the ruling party

Csilla: Basically (everything).

Barnabás: Hungarian public life is so divided, the cleavages are so great, oppositions on the different themes are so great, disagreements on these different themes, that it's really difficult to find any consensual theme among

these (cards) (...) Because in public life, the dominant style is really that if a person is against the government, he is declared a traitor to the nation. And at the same time, to be honest, even if the government sometimes makes some good suggestions, it cannot be accepted, because the voters of the opposition would see that as a proof of weakness. So today there is just no chance for consensus in Hungarian politics (...)

The last section of the interviews, in which participants are asked to ascribe value to either political agreement and disagreement in their society, confirms this general point, but with a fundamental nuance. Indeed, while Hungarian participants recognise that they lack common principles with their opponents, they also regret this state of affair. They long for the united political community that they do not have and wish for the existence of broader forms of agreements within society. This feeling is expressed plainly in the following dialogue, where two Fidesz participants regret the absence of what they call a 'national minimum' in Hungary:

Tamás: In my opinion, the main problem with Hungarian politics is that there is no 'national minimum'. Those things on which both sides would agree. In practice this does not exist.

Author: A 'national minimum'?

Olivia: That is there is no such...

Tamás: A level...

Gábor: There is no point in common

Olivia: No (such) themes, on which a common...

Tamás: (Something) that is shared. On which (parties) aren't torn apart. Something on which they could come together, a shared view. Unfortunately, that doesn't exist. I think that on this, Hungarian politics stands out (as compared to) Europe (as a whole).

Participants often emphasise that such minimal forms of agreements would be necessary in order to keep society together and for parties to be able to govern effectively. In the last section of the previously quoted Fidesz group, participants gave me the following reasons for why they desire a more consensual society:

Tamás: It would be better if there was more consensus

Olivia: It obviously would be better.

Tamás: Of course it would be better. The most important thing would be to have a national minimum. If we had that... in reality a very divided country cannot make progress. In fact, it leads to a lot of backsliding. And the society also falls apart. In reality, it's much harder this way. It's harder to solve economic problems than if we were united. Of course society will never be 100% united, because we are human. But it would still be necessary to somehow find a common way of thinking.

MSzP-Együtt participants adopted very similar positions. In the following



statement for instance, Dávid takes Germany as the example of a 'developed political culture', in which there is sufficient agreement between the main political parties that they can effectively govern together:

Dávid: (...) Like the fact that in Germany they will now have a grand coalition, that is possible because they have a very developed political culture. And in fact, such big, huge differences do not exist between what the CDU and the SPD say. There they have that sort of consensus that you've talked about. Those agreements that last for several governments, that nobody will tamper with, because it works this way. Well, we have none of these. None. Past governments have been unable to agree on an educational policy that would be approved by all the parliamentary and extra-parliamentary parties, and that would be carried forward by the next government. If we begin anew every fourth year, then nothing can ever be completed (...)

In rare instances, participants also recognised their party's own share in perpetuating this status quo. In the following example, a young Fidesz participant regrets her own party's inability to make a step in the MSzP's directions, and deplores the 'sensible reforms' made impossible by this attitude. More specifically, she is talking about a referendum organised in 2009 by her opponents on a reform of the national health system:

Naómi: And it is sometimes obvious that there aren't sensible discussions anymore, only ones that sound like 'if you go in this direction, then I go in that direction'. Even if a good idea is put forward, an idea that should be supported, if (your opponent) comes up with it, then it's a 'no'. And (opportunities for) sensible reforms are lost this way. Like, we had this referendum concerning a health reform in 2009, and at that time they didn't debate at all whether we need to pay for a medical consultation or whether we should have a daily fee for hospital care. Nobody was really interested. It was all about whether or not one supports Gyurcsány.<sup>141</sup>

Zsolt: Yes, exactly.

Naómi: This was the most terrible thing, that the discussion went in this direction, while in terms of policies it absolutely made sense. It's possible, even likely, that I would have voted in favour of it. But because this turned into a political question it became impossible. The right-wing declared that it could not support it, even though voters did not agree with this (position), because it became a core political question. And it is often the case that (the discussion of) really important and reasonable things goes in that direction. And then (the discussion) is not really about what it should be about.

### ***b. Negotiating the basis of political agreement***

Hungarian participants from both sides of the political spectrum concur that their

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<sup>141</sup> Ferenc Gyurcsány was MSzP Prime Minister at the time this health reform was debated.

respective parties should have more agreement. They similarly emphasise that an agreement on some core values would pacify Hungary's political debate, allow parties to work more effectively together, and better the quality of governance more generally. There is no agreement, however, on the principles that partisans believe should be shared in the political community. If partisans had similar ideas about which values should form the basis of the political community, they would not regret the absence of this common basis in the first place. Moreover, whenever participants do refer to the more specific principles and values that they believe parties should ideally share, they also point to the fact that it is not them, but their opponents that fail to uphold these basic principles. This is arguably the key problem of Hungarian politics: there is no agreement on the principles that form the common and these principles themselves are therefore an object of political contestation.

It is noteworthy that Fidesz-KDNP participants would rarely get explicit about the principles that they consider should form the common good. In the rare instances in which they did make such explicit references, it was with reference to the idea of nation. In other words, for their opposition to become legitimate in their eyes, these would need to have the same conception of the nation, and of its role in politics, than the one the Fidesz upholds. This comes through in the following dialogue, in which Fidesz activists are talking about those principles that should not be the object of partisan contestation. It is clear that it is their own ideas that they consider should be more widely shared:

Zsolt: There are some fundamental principles that shouldn't be used in the political arena for one's own gain...

Márk: Consensual...

Zsolt: ... that shouldn't be a topic of political debate, because we know that casting them as topics of debate causes damage (to these principles), that (our opponents) are trying to diminish their value. For instance, the referendum on dual citizenship,<sup>142</sup> this is not a contentious question, because it is not even a question (...) Making the question "who we are" into a political one, it is like hijacking one part of the country. Even if the person doing it is in our ranks, that's tough.

Zsolt is referring to a 2004 referendum called upon by a civil society organisation, the World Association of Hungarians, on whether or not to facilitate the acquisition of Hungarian citizenship by Hungarian-speakers living outside Hungary's borders for several generations. The MSzP, then in government, argued against the

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<sup>142</sup> On the referendum on dual citizenship, see footnote 63.

motion on the basis that this would also grant social and political rights to individuals that do not effectively take part in the country's day-to-day political life. The Fidesz argued in favour, on the basis that these populations are "ethnic" Hungarians, and have been deprived of their citizenship only because of adverse historical circumstances, the redrawing of the Austro-Hungarian Empire's borders under the 1920 Trianon treaty. Zsolt is therefore indirectly arguing, that the only legitimate way of answering the question "who we are" is through this ethno-historical lens. Contesting this definition of the political community is, according to him, profoundly damaging to the political community itself.

MSzP-Együtt participants also adopted the position according to which it is their opponents that contest principles that should, in fact, be common, and that it is therefore up to their opponents to join them in upholding these values. However, the principles that MSzP-Együtt participants place in this category form part of a more generally accepted definition of the common good in liberal democratic societies: a respect for the rule of law, the separation of powers, and fundamental constitutional principles more generally. In the following statement for instance, a young MSzP participant argues that this common basis was lost in the last decade, and it is clear that in his mind it is the Fidesz that carries the responsibility for it:

Levente: It would be good, if fundamental values, those basic values that were still alive in Hungarian political life before 2006-2008, those that concern democracy, Europe, (state) independence... those values characteristic of European civilisation, that everybody accepted before 2010 or 2006... if we could have these values in common again, if we would not have to discuss whether we should opt for a one-party system, or whether we should remain a multi-party system... I think it is a terrible, huge tragedy that Hungary has fell so low (...)

That MSzP-Együtt participants blame their opponents for this state of affairs comes through even more plainly in the following example. Here an Együtt participant claims that the Fidesz is not clearly committed to Hungary being a modern state:

Béla: (...) In a normal country, (political) debates concerns the means (of political action), I mean... there are value-based debates, but there are three-four things on which people agree, at least on the level of values. But we don't have any agreements on values. It isn't even decided whether we want to go to the Right... the differences are so serious, that even at the level of general principles we don't know... whether we want to go back to the past and set up a kind of semi-feudal system, or whether we want to develop a 21th century modern state, because... it's not even clear at the level of Fidesz's communication that they want to have a modern state apparatus. So at this basic level there is no agreement, there is no societal... The biggest problem is that society is not consulted, in fact there are is no debate, everything is being imposed and decided through force.

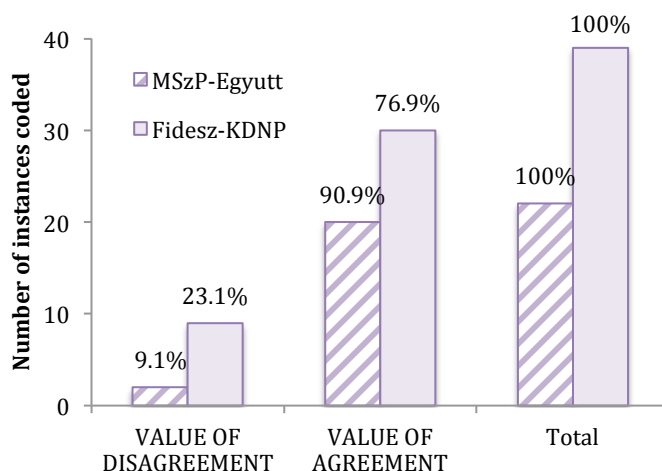
In categorising their opponents as fundamentally undemocratic, MSzP participants do put them outside of the sphere of common political morality. By the same token, they also contribute to foreclosing political debate. That being said, the principles that they implicitly promote in this critic of their opponents, for instance, the importance of a multi-party system or the necessity of consulting civil society, would not in themselves limit partisan contestation if they were adopted by all parties. In other words, MSzP partisans do not argue in favour of a specific interpretation of key principles, but in favour of an accepted constitutional framework within which all sensibilities can express themselves.

The stance of Fidesz-KDNP participants is, on the other hand, more problematic from the perspective of political pluralism. They are arguing for more particular ideas about the political community to be generalised. In arguing for the triumph, across partisan identities, of an ethno-cultural idea of the nation, they also fail to recognise the partial nature of their own partisan beliefs. To this extent, the type of principles that they argue should be shared, forecloses, rather than opens, the potential for partisan debate. In what follows I examine this last question in more detail, presenting evidence on Hungarian participants' attitudes towards political disagreement.

## **2. The ineliminability of disagreement**

### ***a. The destructive nature of political disagreement***

Given the above, it will come as no surprise that Hungarian participants tend to view partisan disagreement in a primarily negative light, and only rarely recognise the benefits that partisan contestation may bring. As indicated in Figure 32 below, Hungarian participants tend to recognise far more frequently the value of agreement or the negative consequences of disagreement (both types of arguments coded VALUE OF AGREEMENT), than they emphasise the value of disagreement or the negative consequences of agreement (both types of arguments coded VALUE OF DISAGREEMENT).



**Figure 32: Value associated by Hungarian participants to political disagreement and agreement**

*N.B: See the note under Figure 5 for an explanation of how to read this figure*

Beyond the negative consequences of partisan polarisation on good governance, an argument outlined above, activists would also frequently point to the adverse effects of partisan disagreements on interpersonal relations and societal cohesion more generally. Hungarian participants describe a political context in which individuals of opposite political convictions cannot talk about public affairs, where partisanship destroys family and friendship circles, and where the mass of citizens becomes disinterested in politics as a result. These ideas come through in the following dialogue between MSzP activists:

László: According to me the greatest problem in this whole thing, is that public life, like everything else, has been made into some kind of a constant war (...) All this has come to a point where families fall apart, where circles of friends break down. And a Fidesz and an MSzP supporter simply can't sit down - I'm talking about party members - at the same table, and talk normally.

Margit: For it to come to this, you don't even need to be a party member. It's enough to be a sympathiser.

László: It's true, sympathisers too. Of course among sympathisers there are also more normal people and we also have more dogmatic elements (in our ranks). But people have been turned against each other. There is such a deep divide in society between partisans of the different parties. And then we have the third largest category, which is completely alienated from it all. And there is absolutely no way that they will... so it will be very difficult to get them interested again in public affairs, in politics (...)

In the following example, a Fidesz participant similarly emphasises how the pervasive and intense nature of partisan divisions turns lay citizens away from politics:

Kálmán: (...) From the people's point of view, from the point of view of 95% of them, people abhor this. It's like, when tensions go on constantly in a family, at some point it leads to fragmentation, name calling, to breaking up. That's what

we have today in Hungary. It's so evident who is on one side, and who is on the other.

This last sentence points to a more general point made by Hungarian participants: if politics are so conflictual, it is because the 'partisan lens' is overwhelming in public life. Partisanship defines individuals not only because it implies a certain view of the political world, but because citizens look at each other as primarily defined by these political preferences. These preferences thus tend to take precedence over affective ties as a basis for interpersonal relationships. These connections are explained in the following dialogue between Fidesz participants:

Olivia: Politics contaminates society. What (politicians) do, does not stay within the walls of parliament.

(...)

Tamás: Discussions in friendship circles, in the family. It's there, in the practice of our everyday life.

Olivia: It's very much there. So the fact that... People have internalised this to a point that you judge people immediately when you learn that a person is... you immediately identify the person with that party. For example, if he says "I don't like Viktor (Orbán)", you immediately say, aha, all right, I see. And it's really built into people, they look at one another like that, like (through a) red and orange (lens).<sup>143</sup> And that's really not good. Because it becomes difficult to build human connections, you just can't forget it. Because it's so decisive in one's own life.... at least where we live, in our own lives, that you just can't really let go of it when you meet somebody (...). If somebody says he is voting for the MSzP, then you know that you won't agree on much. Even though he's possibly a really good person. But you feel like, how is it that this person can stand for these things that are completely opposite to the ones that I stand for? I think that for us it is something that is very emotional.

### ***b. Signs of appreciation of disagreement***

As a result of the above, instances where participants explicitly praised Hungary's polarised political debate were seldom. The following statement from a KDNP participant is one of those examples:

Márton: The issue of public morality is an interesting one. There will obviously never be an agreement on this as long as the country is as politically divided as it is. Until then, each side will claim that the bad state of public morality is resulting from what the other side does. I think that there is no problem with this, because I would actually find it quite boring to live in a country in which you can't tell apart the Right and centre-left parties. In fact I definitely enjoy the fact that they are divided, that it's possible to debate, that there are differences. So I know what the exact differences are between one and the other, what are

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<sup>143</sup> Red is the colour associated with the MSzP, while orange is the colour associated with Fidesz.

the values promoted by each party. I believe this is something important (...)

The fact that such examples are rare, and that in general Hungarian participants cannot see the benefits of the current state of partisan contestation, may in fact be seen as an encouraging sign for the future of Hungarian politics. That they are critical of this situation is a first, albeit insufficient step, towards breaking this cycle of antagonism. It is the form that disagreement takes in Hungary which participants regret, and this regret does not signify their outright rejection of partisan contestation for its own sake. This was in fact recognised explicitly by a number of Hungarian participants, and MSzP participants especially. In these instances, they emphasised more specifically that, while the ways in which partisan contestation expresses itself in Hungary is problematic, political disagreement remains, a necessary feature of democratic life. This is expressed in the following dialogue between several MSzP activists:

Dora: I think having a lot of disagreements would not be a problem, if (parties) could build on one another's achievements). Because it is not necessary to agree completely, democracy depends on these different opinions. If in all matters there were a lack of divergent opinions, then there would be only one party and no opposition.

Réka: (We would need) something more constructive.

Eszter: I can't remember which philosopher stated this, but when... there are two opposed views, and these clash with each other, then a third, higher, more sensible opinion will come out of it. And this opinion will generate its own opposition, and these (opinions) will also intensify and clash with one another, and from this there will also emerge a better result. We are not there right now, we have these clashes and then everybody goes away. Everyone is nicely destroying each other. The problem is not with the confrontation, but the fact that all we get is a dialogue of the deaf, rather than a third, better thing emerging from it.

In the following statement, a young Fidesz participant makes a comparable, albeit less elaborate point, emphasising that it is the scale and reach of partisan disagreement that is problematic in Hungary, not its mere existence:

Bálint: Look, take the American party system, they have two strong parties, but I think it's not as polarised (as the Hungarian party system). The problem is that this polarisation affects not only politics, but society as a whole. And that's really bad.

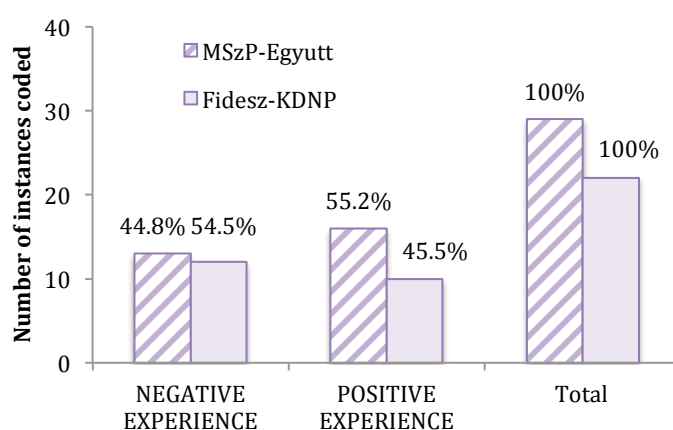
In the following dialogue, MSzP participants similarly stress that the problem of Hungarian politics is that it rests on 'rigid opposition' and not on the exchange of rational arguments:

Miklós and Dávid: Well, we could not be doing worse than this...

László: Well, we could not be doing worse than this. I would like decisions to be made between the two blocks using rational arguments... that in this whole

story rational arguments would dominate, not this rigid opposition.

Another, more outright sign of participants' appreciation of partisan disagreement are their own, positive experiences of interpartisan dialogue. As shown in Figure 33, there is a relatively fair balance between negative and positive experiences in the accounts of participants. Undeniably many participants had negative experiences to account for, and they were more generally aware of the negative impact of Hungary's extreme form of polarisation on their own personal relations (see examples above, as well as the following section). But that a number of participants could nevertheless appreciate the value of discussions with some of their political opponents is, in this particular context, a positive sign.



**Figure 33: References by Hungarian participants to their positive or negative personal experiences of interpartisan dialogue**

*N.B: See the note under Figure 5 for an explanation of how to read this figure*

Importantly, many of these examples establish a distinction between the participants' own generation and their elders in their capacity to exchange with political opponents. They emphasised that it is easier for younger members of Hungarian society to exchange with other youngsters of different political opinions than it is for elder Hungarians. This argument comes through in the following dialogue between Fidesz activists, who are talking about constructive exchanges that they have had with political opponents:

István: It's quite interesting. I can easily say that this would have been quite unimaginable 10 years ago, at most (this would have been unimaginable) for a public debate. But the situation has changed to such an extent in our generation, that we organise a series of events, the Tranzit meetings, where we regularly invite speakers from the Left, older ones, younger ones. And for example we can



have a beer with (someone like) Gábor Vágó from the LMP.<sup>144</sup> We don't agree on a lot of things, but that tension and visceral passion doesn't exist in our generation. I could quite easily imagine sitting down for half an hour with a young left-wing person to talk, even if we do not agree on many things. This would have been unthinkable 10 years ago (...)

Péter: (...) I was often in situations where we found ourselves sitting at the same table with young left wing and liberal political activists. These were in any case interesting conversations, we disagreed on many things, but in our generation we don't have this idea that the other aims at destroying the opposite side. This is just not the case anymore, rather we are able to sit at the same table and talk and debate with each other.

On the basis of these positive experiences, some participants also outlined their hope that generational change would solve the problems associated with partisan polarisation in Hungary and give way to more appeased forms of political debate. Márk, a young Fidesz activist, expresses this idea in the following example:

Márk: (...) (This polarisation) will disappear one way or another anyways, it's simply a question of generational renewal. The present political elite has demonstrated it's inability to find... to communicate with the other side and reach agreements. They are just unable (to do it). This is partly because of this communist/anti-communist, Left/Right divide. But these cleavages, that exist today (...) they aren't so divisive in younger circles. They aren't closely as divisive as they are among our fathers' circles. It's not even comparable. I can discuss politics very well, or anything else, with a left-wing friend of mine whose parents are left-wing, too. Actually, we can be very well together, we agree on so many things that I could even imagine forming a government with him (...) (In Hungary) we have this (partisan) divide. It is because of our historical heritage that we have such a divide, but only in our fathers' (generation). It's not something that really exists in the younger generation. It's insignificant. This divide doesn't exist. And with time this will dominate. At least I hope.

An MSzP activist expresses a comparable idea in the following statement:

Attila: When this right-wing generation, that is doing this top-down governance, will be on the way out, I am hopeful that there won't always be these intrigues between Left and Right, we hate this situation so much... I have right-wing friends, David has too, everyone does. We are open-minded, in this age group there aren't such serious conflicts. It is above that there is this "we hate the Left, we hate the communists" movement.

### ***c. Blaming opponents for the pathologies of partisanship***

We might nevertheless question whether Hungarian partisans are sufficiently self-reflective to counter the negative cycle that they are critical of. The evidence

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<sup>144</sup> The LMP (*Lehet Más a Politika*, which means 'politics can be different') is a fringe Green party founded in 2009. It scored between 2.5% and 7.5% of the vote in national and European elections since then.

presented in previous chapters makes clear, that these young partisans are contributing to the bleak quality of Hungarian political debate through their own discursive practices. If they are in any ways representative of the upcoming generation of politicians in Hungary, then their hope that political change will come through generational renewal will most likely be disappointed.

There are other signs that Hungarian participants are not in a position to reverse the tendencies that they themselves deplore. This would first require that participants be aware of the role that their own party, and ideally, they themselves, play in fuelling the fire. As Naomi's statements on page 221 show, there are cases when participants regretted the stubbornness of their own party. Instances of self-criticism are, however, very rare in Hungarian groups (see Figure 24 in Chapter 4). And even in these rare instances, participants are far less severe with their own party than they are with their opponents. Consider the following dialogue between MSzP participants. After having criticised his opponents for using injurious vocabulary in Parliament, he is far more lenient towards similar practices in his own camp:

Dávid: I listened to some speeches from the first Hungarian Parliaments in the 1990s. Compared to what we have today, these were really pleasant to my ears. So I listened to them...

Margit: You were not even born then.

Dávid: I didn't listen to them at the time... So there were things like "may I remind the honourable MP that what he says does not correspond to reality". And even that sounded really rude. While now... I was in the Parliament, they shout at each other to a point that the TV viewer can't even hear anything. They insult women, disparage them. The fact that there are Nazis in the Parliament makes things even worse. And unfortunately we ourselves sometimes contribute to lowering the level. Like this Tibor Szanyi. I like him a lot, he's a swell guy. And he is right when he says 'fuck' in Parliament.<sup>145</sup> But...

Margit: Well, no, that's not really good-mannered

Dávid: But he shouldn't do that in Parliament. Exactly...

More generally speaking, both groups of partisans tend to blame their opponents for Hungary's particular situation. Each are waiting for the other to change, rather than talking about what they could be doing themselves. There are in fact striking parallels in the discourse of both groups of participants. Both tend to blame the initial degradation of public discourse in the early 2000s on their opponents. In the following statement, a young MSzP participant is talking about changes in Fidesz's

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<sup>145</sup> Tibor Szanyi was an MSzP Member of Parliament between 2010 and 2014 known for having particularly strong language.

strategy during the 2002 campaign:

László: From 2002 onwards, Orbán defined himself as an enemy of the MSzP. From that point on I don't really see how it would be possible to find a consensus. There may be some trivial affairs in which we can agree (...) But on the major questions that feature on these cards, these twelve cards, (the Fidesz) said openly that everything we did was wrong. It's not that I want to accuse them of having 'started it', like kids do. But from that moment onwards, they really went in the opposite direction on everything. And then they had no other choice, but to actually put (these discourses) into practice. Or they undid what we had done. And for us, that's bad. Because, well, obviously! From that point on it becomes an impossible situation.

The words of Iván, a young Fidesz activist, closely mirror the above-cited statements by László. He directs very similar accusations towards his opponents:

Iván: Another important difference is... Well you know, we said that we stand for something, while they just watch the other side, and they go against it, criticise it. At the time of the 2002 elections, the Fidesz was not fully aware of the importance of negative campaigning. But the socialists did not do anything else but attack the previous four successful years on every possible front. While the Fidesz, and even Viktor Orbán himself, felt that... it's not necessary to conduct a negative campaign, it's sufficient to emphasise the results. To talk about the results (...)

Participants from both sides of the political spectrum would similarly accuse their opponents of ascribing labels to them that delegitimise any of their actions, and against which no defence is possible. Here a young MSzP participant is talking about how her opponents call her party 'communist':

Csilla: (The) problem is that they are unable to get over the past. To this day they call the socialist party 'communist'. It doesn't matter if (the MSzP) has young people (in its ranks), it doesn't matter that we don't really know what communism was, and that we haven't experienced it. We just cannot get rid of this label, because here are people that actually lived through (communism), and they tell us that we are like that.

In the following statement, a young Fidesz activist addresses similar criticisms to his opponents, stressing that no debate is possible once the MSzP starts using words such as "fascist" and "Nazi" to characterize the government's actions:

Krisztoff: An unnecessary form of hysteria is being introduced in public life. I don't know, there is this demonizing... Obviously it is possible, and even necessary, to accept serious criticism again our party. But there are people crying out that we have here a fascist, Nazi dictatorship, that the persecution of gypsies is raging, that we are bringing people away, and that is a lie, I mean... If someone here says that there is a dictatorship, then it is impossible to debate, then everything... any possible debate is closed down with these (accusations). (...)

Finally, in most of their accounts of negative real-life encounters with political adversaries, participants picture themselves as the ones trying to establish a dialogue and their opponents as those making it fail. In the following statement, a young Együtt activist describes the difficulties he encountered when he tried talking to Fidesz supporters:

Miklos: I have to admit that, while I have Fidesz acquaintances, it's simply impossible to exchange with them. I consider myself a left-wing, intellectual person, and it is therefore in my habit to try and start some discussion (with them) and try to give some arguments. So I say, "all right, why don't you try and think this thing over". But at the very moment when I say something, I see a grey veil covering his eyes, he changes into Viktor Orbán and he shouts at me, letting me know that I'm just a stupid jerk to vote for the Left, a retard, and how can I not see that they have sold the country out... And (in response) to this, I just don't know what to say, I'm just sitting there, and wondering: What is this? How can this be?

This account closely mirrors the experience of Zsolt, a young Fidesz activist, who similarly emphasises the closed-mindedness he confronts when talking to opponents:

Zsolt: There is no content, only emotion. And to emotion one can answer emotionally - but then there is no communication or dialogue with the Left, only disputes. Or one tries to give reasoned arguments, but then it turns out, that this is not even really what the discussion is about. They aren't even criticising what you are saying. It goes in the register of passion, and there is conflict. And it just turns out that you don't even understand one another, because (your interlocutor) just says 'I hate, I hate, I hate', and I answer 'What's the problem? What's the problem? What's the problem?' This is how I experience these instances of conflict.

#### ***d. Questioning the necessity of opposition***

Finally, a number of examples suggest that Fidesz-KDNP participants question whether the existence of the Left is necessary in Hungarian politics. Fidesz participants, for instance, sometimes pictured the MSzP as a remnant of the past, one that would not necessarily remain a key political actor in the future. In these statements, they also convey the idea that Hungarian politics would do better, if this were to happen. In the following statement, for instance, a young Fidesz participant describes how the MSzP is dependent on an ageing electorate that is nostalgic of communist rule. According to her, Hungarian politics will be 'difficult' until 'society is not renewed':

Olga: We still have a lot of old people. I was at an MSzP convention, and 90% of them were old women (...) Until society is not renewed... or until young people become a majority and not the elderly who worked under communism, and had their best time back then... Because they had jobs, salaries, they could go to the

Balaton<sup>146</sup> twice each summer to some union holiday home, this was for them joyful, beautiful. While now, I don't know, they have small retirements, jobless children, and they will therefore not vote for anybody else (than the MSzP) (...) I mean, until society is not renewed and until the young people who haven't grown up under communism are in minority, it will be difficult.

Another Fidesz participant was more explicit, and predicted that the MSzP would disappear with generational renewal:

Nándor: The Left will disappear and its place will be taken by the radical and moderate Right (...) To make it short, the Fidesz will fall apart and become a right-liberal party, and its more radical (elements) will form a new party with the least radical element of the Jobbik, and they will be the next... And so... Because whatever the MSzP is trying, its voter base is shrinking over time. And in the meantime there are more and more right-wing voters, because young people are right-wing. Old people support the MSzP, and Bajnai will not be able to draw anyone from the MSzP.<sup>147</sup> (...)

Neither Olga nor Nándor imagine the possibility that the MSzP disappears but is replaced by another left-wing party. Their vision of the future is one in which the Right stands alone. And neither of them view this scenario as problematic. In the statement below, Zsolt, another Fidesz activist, makes this point more explicitly. He suggests that the only reason why the Left still exists in Hungary is that part of the population is irresponsible and 'non-productive'. He also implies that the country would be far better off without these people, and thus without their opponents being able to obtain power. In his first sentence, Zsolt is talking about Fidesz voters:

Zsolt: Because when you have responsibilities, it is also more difficult for you to be a mere profiteer. The person who produces things necessarily has responsibilities. And that's the root of the problem, we don't have 50%... There are 3,8 million people in Hungary who work, who give some revenue on a daily basis. And the population that can vote is of 8 million. That's the problem. That's why the Left exists in Hungary, that's why it can obtain power at all (...)

MSzP-Együtt participants did not predict the disappearance of their opponents, or imply that their country would do better without the Fidesz. They did, however, hope for Fidesz to change in the future and saw this change as necessary for a more balanced form of political debate to emerge in Hungary. In the following dialogue for instance, MSzP participants wish for Fidesz to change into a 'European conservative party', but do not predict that the Right as such will disappear:

Levente: (...) That would be good, I mean... if from the ruins of the MSzMP, a

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<sup>146</sup> The Balaton is a large lake in the centre of Hungary, where many Hungarians still go spend their summer holidays.

<sup>147</sup> Gordon Bajnai served as MSzP Prime Minister in 2009 and 2010. In 2012 he founded his own party, Együtt 2014.

party-state, we could built a European, West-European social-democratic party, then sooner or later the Fidesz could also change into a European conservative party

Attila: These people will get older and older. The Fidesz won't be like this for the next 200 years, Viktor Orbán won't live for 200 years...

Levente: The point is... the problem is...

Attila: That we have to wait until then.

Another MSzP activist develops a similar idea at greater length in the following statement. Here Kálmán emphasises that he has no problem with having a right-wing opposition and that his country needs a strong conservative party. He simply wishes for the Fidesz to grant more legitimacy to the Left in return:

Kálmán: I wish we could get to a point where, when the right-wing wins in Hungary, I wouldn't have to feel bad in this country for being left-wing. I don't have a problem with the Prime Minister coming from the Fidesz, rather than the MSzP. But simply they should not question my national pride, they should not question my right to exist. Because these people wanted to include in the Basic Law that those who are member of the MSzP are criminals and should be ashamed. In the Hungarian Basic Law, they wanted to include that being a member of one of the largest parties of Hungary is criminal.<sup>148</sup> I should not have to feel bad, in my own country, because the government is on the other side. I wish for an election day where it does not matter who wins the election. I don't mind it, I believe we need a right-wing, I would even say that there are many conservative values which I believe we need. But it's not right that people have to live under this aggressive domination, in fear. And (it's not right) to have today such a bad public atmosphere imposed on this country.

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In the two previous chapters on partisan cohesiveness and respect for political opponents, the conclusions for the Hungarian case were relatively straightforward. In both cases, the discourse of Hungarian partisans failed to meet the standards it was held up against. In contrast, the results for this third empirical chapter are mixed. Hungarian partisans do not meet the criteria established in the exact way that the theoretical framework would predict. Hungarian participants do not recognise that partisans of all tendencies share some basic principles and that they are part of a

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<sup>148</sup> Article U of the new Fundamental Law stipulates that "(t)he Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party and its legal predecessors and the other political organisations established to serve them in the spirit of communist ideology were criminal organisations, and their leaders shall have responsibility without statute of limitations (...) (p)olitical organisations having gained legal recognition during the democratic transition as legal successors of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party continue to share the responsibility of their predecessors as beneficiaries of their unlawfully accumulated assets" (Hungarian Parliament, 2011). While this does not directly restrict the rights of the MSzP to compete for electoral support, the wording of this article is sufficiently vague that it could serve as a legal basis to do so in the future.

suprapartisan political community. They have great difficulties identifying the positive implications of political disagreement in their society and in their personal relations. Notwithstanding this, they display a great amount of lucidity on the pathologies of partisanship in their own country. They long for the existence of those common foundations that parties in their country lack, and wish for their society to evolve in such a way that political disagreement could be valued for its own sake.

Hungarian partisans are nevertheless key contributors to the tendencies that they deplore, and they most often lack the reflexivity to see the responsibility of their own camp in this state of affair. This critical awareness is what Hungarian partisans are missing to make a positive contribution to Hungarian democracy. In this light, it is ironic that they depict generational renewal as a miraculous cure to their country's problems. Change through generational renewal would require that they themselves, as representatives of a new generation of politicians, see the share of their party in perpetuating these problems.

There are also key differences between the discourse of MSzP and Fidesz activists on this measure. MSzP activists wish for a greater consensus across partisan lines on what is generally understood to be the 'common good' in democratic societies: key constitutional principles and a democratic institutional framework. Fidesz activists also have an idea of what these common foundations should be, but it is ethno-cultural and grounded in a distinct political narrative. There is, therefore, a key difference between these two possible foundations for the Hungarian political community. The set of principles put forward by MSzP-Együtt activists can in theory be interpreted in many different ways. Their adoption by all parties would not preclude partisan contestation. The common principles that Fidesz activists set forward, on the other hand, do not accommodate alternative interpretations. Their partial view of the political community certainly has a legitimate place among other partial claims. But its adoption by all parties would necessarily foreclose political debate. It therefore comes as no surprise that some Fidesz participants are able to imagine - or even to wish - for an alternative reality in which their opponents do not exist. The nation as they conceive it could, in theory, accommodate itself of the disappearance of the Left. Even if MSzP participants wish for their opponents to change, they at least do not expect them to disappear. They can wish for Fidesz to endorse broad democratic principles without hoping for partisan contestation to come to an end.

### III. DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

#### 1. Variations in patterns of partisan discourse

With this last empirical chapter, we reach the heart of the matter in what separates the ethics of French and Hungarian partisanship. Recognising the existence of foundational agreements and valuing political disagreement for its own sake are the two ideas at the very core of a pluralist conception of the political universe. I will first summarize the variations in partisan commitment to pluralism in both countries under study and provide another answer to the question: *to what extent does real-world partisanship meet the standards of democratic partisanship?* Overall, French partisans have a far more pluralist approach to political agreement and disagreement than Hungarian participants. The comparison of the French and Hungarian coding evidence in Appendix 6 also confirms this general tendency.

In France the existence of an accepted, common political space sets boundaries to partisan contestation. Political disagreement can be valued for its own sake because it does not threaten the basic principles that hold the political community together. If partisans are sometimes tempted to argue for a greater consensus on their own views, they never suggest that politics could do without their opponents. They never even imagine a hypothetical situation in which they would be the only political actor.

In Hungary, there is no agreement on the basic principles that partisans should share in order for a democratic political community to exist. If the very foundations of the political community are the object of partisan contestation, then the peaceful confrontation of partisan claims about the common good becomes impossible. The Hungarian situation finds an echo in the words of Muirhead, according to which when "rival partisans inhabit 'different worlds' (...w)hen the common terrain of factuality is obliterated, (then) it becomes impossible to share a political community" (Muirhead, 2014, p. 125). In such a context, partisan disagreement is effectively destructive and hard to value for its own sake. Hungarian partisans show awareness of the destructive nature of this situation, but are unable to perceive their own party's role in it. The temptation is strong for partisans to make a claim on the 'mastery of the foundations', and thus to wish for the disappearance of an opposition held responsible for the turmoil that plagues politics.

There are also differences between parties in each country. PS participants are overall more pluralist in their attitudes towards political agreement and disagreement than their UMP counterparts. UMP participants tend to limit the 'common good' to a



broad set of political objectives parties have in common. They sometimes end up claiming that their own party is uniquely capable of promoting the right set of solutions to reach these shared goals. In this world-view, political disagreement becomes an unnecessary feature of public life, one that could recede if their opponents would adopt a more pragmatic approach to public policy. PS participants, on the other hand, do not succumb to this form of technocratic holism. They ground the common good in a set of shared values and more explicitly picture disagreement as an ineliminable and valuable trait of their democratic polity.

In Hungary, the attitudes of MSzP partisans are slightly more pluralist than those of their Fidesz counterparts. MSzP-Együtt activists wish for a greater consensus across partisan lines on key constitutional principles and a democratic institutional framework. This vision accommodates partisan contestation, as these principles can be interpreted in many different ways. As a result, while MSzP participants wish for their opponents to endorse these principles, they do not expect their opposition to disappear entirely. Fidesz activists wish to ground the polity's common foundations in an ethno-cultural vision of the nation. This vision does not accommodate alternative interpretations, and its adoption by all parties would necessarily foreclose political debate. As a result, Fidesz participants are able to imagine—or even to wish—for an alternative reality in which their opponents do not exist and in which they face no opposition.

## **2. Explaining variations in patterns of partisan discourse**

The second task of this conclusion is to formulate potential explanations for the above-mentioned variations, and thus provide a third series of answers to my second research question: *how can we explain variations in the extent to which partisans uphold democratic standards?* As explained in Chapter 2, I take as a given that whether or not partisans uphold democratic standards does not simply result from variations in their intrinsic political morality. Instead, these patterns are partly dependent on the specific constraints and opportunities that partisans have for political discourse in their own political environment. In the following sections, I formulate possible explanations for the variations I describe above, focusing on the more specific cultural resources or events that different groups of partisans draw on to make their claims.

### ***a. Cultural resources***

#### *The time to build common principles*

Differences in the cultural resources that both national histories provide appear once again as the main explanatory factor for the cross-country variations described above. The common foundations of a democratic political community are established over time, following periods of contestation over their content and nature. When such agreements are not in place, democratic setbacks are likely to occur. One camp will then see the other as being outside of the space of common political morality, declare that it can guarantee the unity of the political community on its own, and seek to eliminate disagreement. Times of revolution, civil war and dictatorship are likely to arise before partisans have sufficient confidence in what they have in common with others to welcome political disagreement.

In France, these upheavals have happened repeatedly. The 70 years that separate us from the Vichy regime represents the longest period in the tumultuous history of French democracy that has not been marked by a regime change. Today, the stability of French democracy is still conditional on parties sharing foundational principles that have been repeatedly challenged, violated, contested in the past. It is also through this history of strife that the value of these shared principles was established, their acceptance by all government parties progressively entrenched, and thus the possibility of peaceful disagreement opened. As one of my PS participants put it, French partisans do not regret the Dreyfus affair, or the 1930s. They know the price of disagreeing on foundations, and thus what they gain in sharing a once contested space with their opponents.

The last regime change in Hungary happened a mere quarter of a century ago. The country has since then experienced the longest period in its history with free elections, and its first peaceful alternations in power of elected majorities. In the 20th century, Hungary had three different regimes in which the ruling elite unilaterally proclaimed to hold the truth on the nature of the country's 'common good'. The fact that the foundations of the political community are today still contested is therefore not surprising: Hungarian partisans have had very little time to suggest, contest, negotiate these foundations, and discover their value.

#### *Political legacies in a post-authoritarian context*

The particular nature of Hungary's recent authoritarian past can also help explain imbalances in pluralist attitudes between Fidesz and MSzP partisans.

Hungarian partisans are marked by the memory of the Hungarian Communist regime, times during which only one idea about the common good - the socialist ideal - could publicly express itself. Present-day socialists are therefore considered illegitimate in upholding this ideal, or any other for that matter. Partly because of their desire to break with this past, they make themselves the champions of democratic principles and institutions. Due to their historical origins, and to their more general lack of a cohesive message, they have however no authority in advocating them.

On the other hand, Fidesz partisans ground their convictions in the memory of past injustices. They are fighting a hegemony that disappeared 25 years ago, in a contemporary context where the socialist ideal has no practical relevance. Against this ghost, they are declaring the supreme legitimacy of a nationalist conception of the common good, one that had no right of expression before 1989. As a result, they are repeating in present-day Hungary the past historical mistakes they themselves denounce. What follows from this dynamic is that the country is experiencing a set-back in its first attempt to establish a common political space, one in which shared principles are sufficiently strong so that dissent can be valued for its own sake. Once we consider this set-back in Hungary's larger historical context however, it ceases to appear as an accidental ripple in an otherwise linear process of democratisation.

### ***b. External events***

As explained in the conclusion to Chapter 4, socio-economic constraints and their effect on partisan cohesiveness can help explain the different levels of commitment to pluralism between PS and UMP partisans.

If we consider the discourse of UMP participants about the community's common foundations, they do carry the legacy of French Republicanism. They picture the common good as something that all parties strive towards and regularly insist on the broad objectives for the political community that government parties share. But UMP participants also use the resources that a new, globalised economic context offers them. The growing weight of external constraints offers the UMP an opportunity to reinforce a more traditional, right-wing discourse about the necessity for politics to accept "the world as it is", and follow its logic. This takes the form of a technocratic discourse, of using the logic of expertise in the realm of politics. As explained in the conclusion of Chapter 3, this lends a particular cohesiveness to the discourse of UMP partisans.

Such a stance, however, is also conducive to a form of 'naive holism' among UMP partisans (Muirhead, 2014, p. 145). They thus tend to emphasise that there exists a set of most appropriate means to reach established and undisputed societal goods. And that their own party, doing away with 'ideology', is in a better position to find the proper means to solve common problems. While UMP partisans do not go so far as to deny the need for political disagreement, they nevertheless tend to overlook one of the crucial pillars of political pluralism: that while we can all agree on the need to strive towards the common good broadly defined, the exact content of the common good, and therefore the proper means to reach it, will always be a matter of contestation. As expressed by Muirhead:

"The persistence of partisanship, especially of the sort that addresses the basic commitments that define a political community, is a reminder that nonpartisan expertise is insufficient because our agreement about ends is both incomplete and fragile. Politics is resistant to rational agreement about what is good and right because practical reason does not issue in general agreement about moral and political things. Reason either fails to culminate in certain conclusion or it fails to persuade. Where our reason fails us or whether we fail reason is beside the point: however much we may want agreement, we cannot agree" (Muirhead, 2014, p. 78)

While PS participants do not adopt this logic, they denounce the tendency of their own party to do so increasingly. What PS participants regret is that their party is more and more often joining the UMP in a univocal understanding of the common good and in the belief that only a given set of means—those traditionally promoted by the UMP—can bring about the common good. While PS partisans do defend the necessity of political disagreement in democratic societies, they believe it to be increasingly absent in their own party system. If this perception by PS participants is correct, it would indicate a worrisome dynamic in French democratic politics.

## Conclusion

In this thesis I have provided an answer to the question *to what extent does real-world partisanship uphold the standards of democratic partisanship?* I expected French partisans to conform better to the standards than their Hungarian counterparts. It remained a question open to empirical investigation whether this was confirmed in reality, and, if yes, how wide the gap between both groups of domestic partisans would be. The differences I uncover are very clear-cut. French partisans indeed fare better on both the standard of cohesiveness and the standard of commitment to pluralism than Hungarian participants. They rank higher than Hungarian participants on all of the sub-criteria for each standard that I established in my theoretical framework. It is also clear that there is a substantial, qualitative gap between the discourses of both groups of partisans. The most democratic of French partisans reach the most stringent ideals established by normative political theory. Those French partisans that fare the worst still appear more in line with the standards than the average Hungarian participant. Conversely, the most cohesive and pluralist Hungarian participants still seem far from the average French participant. As for Hungarian partisans at their worst, they display some of the destructive and divisive potential that partisanship holds.

The analysis has also uncovered distinct patterns of speech between different groups of partisans within each country. Overall, UMP partisans are more cohesive than their PS counterparts, and Fidesz participants uphold the standard of cohesiveness better than MSzP partisans. This relation, however, is reversed when we consider the question of pluralism. UMP partisans are less openly pluralist than their PS counterparts, and Fidesz participants do not uphold the principle of pluralism as well as MSzP partisans.

In this thesis, I also provided answers to the question *how can we explain variations in the extent to which partisans uphold the standards of democratic partisanship?* All three empirical chapters offer evidence to suggest that the cultural resources provided by a history of open party competition create an opportunity for democratic forms of partisan discourse in France. The absence of such resources in Hungary is in turn a strong constraint on the capacity of Hungarian partisans to uphold

the standards of democratic partisanship. Higher levels of corruption in Hungary as compared to France, may act as a further constraint on Hungarian participants' respect for political opponents. Finally, greater external constraints have weighed on economic policy-making in Hungary as compared to France, and this may also help explain the fact that democratic forms of partisanship are more developed in France as compared to Hungary.

As for differences between the levels of cohesiveness and commitment to pluralism of PS and UMP participants in France, and MSzP and Fidesz in Hungary, one explanatory factor seems to be a greater vulnerability of left-wing programs to external constraints on economic policy-making. This helps to understand why PS partisans are less cohesive in their identities than UMP partisans, and MSzP partisans less cohesive than their Fidesz counterparts.

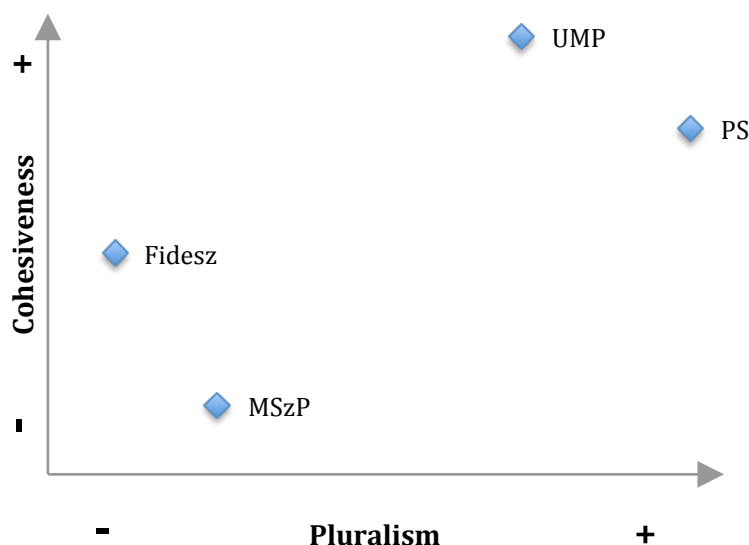
In Hungary, cultural resources also appear to constrain more heavily the cohesiveness of MSzP partisans, given their party's communist past and the negative connotations associated with it, than the cohesiveness of Fidesz participants, who can pride themselves of a tradition of resistance towards communism. This particular situation also encourages the disrespectful and anti-pluralist behaviour of Fidesz participants. Finally, while Fidesz participants have integrated their party's institutional reforms into a more general, cohesive rhetoric, these reforms seem to have an adverse effect on the capacity of the MSzP to develop a cohesive program.

## **I. DISCUSSION OF RESULTS**

### **1. The dynamics of cohesiveness and pluralism**

If we take a step back and consider the variations in patterns of political discourse that my study uncovers, an interesting pattern emerges. As shown in the visual representation of my results below (Figure 34), the parties that are most cohesive in both country cases, the UMP and the Fidesz, are also the least pluralist. Conversely, the parties that are most pluralist in both countries, the PS and the MSzP, are also the least cohesive. This would seem to suggest, at first glance, that there exists a trade-off between both qualities of democratic partisanship. On the other hand, however, partisans in France are both more cohesive and more pluralist in France than they are in Hungary. Notwithstanding the impact of cultural factors and external events discussed above, one would also infer from this that high levels of cohesiveness and

pluralism are mutually supportive, while low levels of cohesiveness and pluralism also serve to reinforce each other.



**Figure 34: Variations in patterns of partisan discourse across the four groups of partisans under study**

*N.B: This figure is primarily for illustrative purposes. The position of parties does not correspond to quantitative measures.*

While I cannot make firm conclusions concerning either of these dynamics on the basis of two country case studies, I make a tentative argument for each of these potential dynamics in the paragraphs below. As I discuss later in this conclusion, subsequent studies should further confirm and explore the existing dynamics between partisan cohesiveness and commitment to pluralism.

#### ***a. The case for a trade-off***

Differences in levels of cohesiveness and pluralism within each country lend some credit to the idea that there exists a trade-off between both standards of democratic partisanship. Indeed, within each party system the most cohesive partisans are also the least pluralist ones, while the most pluralist parties are the least cohesive ones.

The idea according to which partisan conviction and political pluralism are fundamentally in tension with each other is common in normative political theory. As emphasised in the introduction to this thesis, deliberative approaches to democracy have long excluded partisanship from their considerations, precisely because it was

considered a form of loyalty that undermines the respectful, constructive and open-minded attitude required to enter the deliberative process.

While theorists of partisanship have argued that partisans *can* adopt the pluralist attitudes best fit to sustain liberal democracy, they also emphasise a trade-off between partisan conviction and democratic ethics. Muirhead depicts an antagonistic relationship between cohesiveness and pluralism, where belief in the superiority of a set of partisan claims always puts one at risk of desiring their complete triumph. He stresses, for instance, that partisan loyalty brings with it "permanent moral danger", because "in transcending self-interested strategic reason, loyalty threatens to become immune to reason and judgment. It can become a form of unthinking stubbornness that brings with it a kind of closure—closure to fact, to principle, and to consequences" (Muirhead, 2014, p. 116).

If we consider the case of UMP and Fidesz partisanship, they would seem to support this idea. Both UMP and Fidesz partisans are particularly assured of the validity of their own convictions and this assurance easily converts into self-righteousness. When they lack the negative capacity to respect political opponents or see the necessity of political disagreement, it is also because they are so convinced of the superiority of their own claims.

Conversely, the adoption of a value pluralist outlook may be too much to ask from those who hold principled convictions. This is much the position defended by John Stuart Mill at his time, according to which the "salutary effects" of political disagreement will be visible to the "disinterested bystander", not the "impassioned partisan" (Mill, 1991 [1859], p. 58). By undermining the partisan's belief that he is in the right, by excessively tampering his assertiveness, his commitment to political pluralism may in fact deprive the partisan of the necessary tools to convince others of the validity of his claims. Like Mill's one-eyed man, partisans cannot be completely lucid. They need to be blind in some respect in order to further their claims in a cohesive manner.

My analysis of PS partisanship especially may be seen to lend some credit to these arguments. In this specific case, there seems to be a trade-off between lower levels of cohesiveness and higher levels of pluralism. The weaker cohesiveness of PS partisans stems from the fact that they are strongly preoccupied by the faith of their own party and very critical of their elites' actions. The forms that their commitment to pluralism take also reflect these particular troubles with their party's identity. For instance, PS partisans are far less critical of their opponents than are UMP partisans.



This is also because they spend far less time than UMP partisans talking about their opponents' platforms and far more time pondering the weaknesses of their own identity. This explains why PS partisans strongly value disagreement. It is because they fear the dilution of their own identity in the convergence of left-wing and right-wing partisan identities.

***b. The case for complementarity***

The above-mentioned points, however, do not account for the fact that partisans in France are *both* more cohesive and more pluralist than partisans in Hungary. Not disregarding the impact of cultural factors and external events in explaining these outcomes, there is also evidence to suggest that strong cohesiveness and pluralism may mutually reinforce each other in the case of France. At the same time, the weak cohesiveness and commitment to pluralism of Hungarian partisans may also reinforce each other. The claim that cohesiveness and pluralism are complementary in this regard is counter-intuitive from the perspective of democratic theory and thus worthy of discussion.

In France, strong forms of cohesiveness seem to serve, in some ways, the respectful attitudes of partisans in their criticism of political opponents. To a large extent, it appears that French partisans do not attack their opponents on their intentions or accuse them of being morally deficient because they do not *need* to do so in order to oppose them. They know what they stand for, have firm ideas on their own values and policies, and are fully aware of how they differ from those of their opponents. They put forward a constructive, justified indictment of their opponents without resorting to disrespectful arguments. The fact that opponents campaign on the basis of a well-defined set of values may also make it easier for partisans to recognise their opponents as principled. In other words, the cohesiveness of opponents' claims may generate respect in itself and more generally encourage the commitment of partisans to political pluralism.

Conversely, partisans' commitment to pluralism may also serve their cohesiveness. The fact that French partisans agree on fundamental principles and are convinced that their opponents are committed to the common good could facilitate their formulation of cohesive claims. French partisans do not disagree on the foundations of the political community. This is also why partisans can compete over rival interpretations of foundational values and on the means that are necessary to realise them in practice. To this extent, this common framework not only limits the

scope of partisan claims, it also allows for their cohesive expression. It is also because opponents are part of this common political space and worthy of respect, that they should be opposed with strong and justified arguments. Worthy opponents cannot simply be dismissed, they deserve to be opposed with a convincing set of values and policies.

The Hungarian case also suggests that these dynamics can operate the other way round. In other words, it offers evidence to support the claim that low levels of cohesiveness and low levels of commitment to pluralism can be complementary and even reinforcing. First of all, Hungarian partisans have an incentive towards disrespectful speech precisely because they have very little else to oppose their adversaries. With confused notions over the values and policies that they themselves stand for, it is also easier to accuse one opponents of being immoral and to engage in negative campaigning. Second, the lack of cohesiveness of opponents in Hungary may in itself spur lower forms of respect for them. When Fidesz participants, for instance, call their opponents unprincipled and lacking fixed commitments to a series of values, they are, to a large extent, simply describing reality.

Finally, the fact that partisans in Hungary have no respect for their opponents and disagree on core principles may also impede their development of cohesive claims. In the Hungarian context, the very foundations of the political community are contested. If rival partisans argue that they are the only legitimate representatives of the political community, then they do not need to justify this claim on the basis of limited values or policies. It is sufficient that they assert their moral superiority. By the same token, when opponents are considered as fundamentally immoral, then partisans do not need to oppose them with a coherent account of the common good, or a set of alternative policies.

## **2. Partisan discourse and democratic change in France and Hungary**

### ***a. The creative power of partisan discourse***

The idea that what partisans say or do matters to the vitality and endurance of democracy formed the starting point for this thesis. Their privileged position in the political system lends them more influence than lay citizens. Partisans certainly inherit certain structures and exert their power under the influence of these structures. The past weighs on the democratic present. Culture provides partisans with resources to formulate their discourse, but it also constrains activists in their efforts. However, the

agency of partisans lies precisely in their power to use and interpret the past. Partisans draw on available cultural resources, yet need to choose which ones to focus on. They also need to adapt these cultural resources to present circumstances, when confronted with unexpected events.

It is in this space left for creative interpretation that partisans can become agents of democratic change—be it positive or negative. If structural constraints were overbearing and there was no room left for the agency of partisans, then partisanship in its discursive expression would simply serve to consolidate pre-existing structures. But partisans can hold back from the obvious, and devise strategies for democratic speech against the odds. They can also choose, of course, to indulge in the worst that their past and present has to offer. It is their choice. But those choices are consequential for the future of democracy.

The effect that partisanship will have on democratic structures is likely to depend on how established democracy is in the first place. Established democracies are not protected against erosion, but it will likely take some time before undemocratic forms of partisanship reach democracy's bone. In newly born democracies the stakes are certainly higher. The birth of a democratic culture will always be slow and cumbersome and require from partisans that they give their very best. The nascent democratic system is also far more vulnerable to radical forms of erosion if partisans succumb to adopting the undemocratic patterns of speech their authoritarian past might provide.

***b. France: The ongoing vulnerability of established democracies to the weaknesses of democratic partisanship***

The French case demonstrates that a history of open partisan competition does provide a buffer to democratic erosion. The cultural resources that French partisans dispose of are favourable to democratic forms of partisan discourse. These resources create, to a large extent, a self-sustaining dynamic for democracy. By conforming to habitual interpretations and uses of these resources, partisans maintain relatively cohesive and pluralist identities. As this analysis shows, however, there are limits to this self-sustaining dynamic. Left-wing and right-wing identities were consolidated in a time when nations were more insulated from each other than they are today, and the actions of national governments were far less constrained. The increasing interdependence of national economies, the globalisation of finance, and Europe's progressive economic integration since the post-war era create a very different context

for partisan discourse. Partisans today cannot use the Left-Right dichotomy in the ways their predecessors did. They need to adapt the resources from the past to present-day situations.

The vagrancies that result from this necessary transition are visible in the discourse of French partisans. Their occasional lack of cohesiveness or pluralism reflect their efforts and difficulties to adapt past resources to contemporary circumstances. PS partisans are convinced of the value of the traditional Left-Right dichotomy and know that the real-world poses a challenge to it. Today's economic context raises particularly acute difficulties for those parties that have their roots in social-democratic ideals. These parties have traditionally denounced the established order, considered 'timeless laws' as serving those in positions of power, and exerted state power in attempts to limit the perpetuation of inequalities. PS partisans are committed to these ideas, yet aware of their limited present-day applicability. They view the actions of their elites in government as a form of capitulation, a selling out of their identity. But they have no real proposal of their own as to how their left-wing identity should adapt. Their discourse is only really cohesive when they disregard this disjuncture and focus on an ideal dichotomy that has less and less relevance in real-world politics.

UMP partisans are in a different situation. The particular 'tool-kit' that they rely on is more easily adaptable to present-day circumstances than the resources that PS partisans dispose of. The globalised economy confirms the right-wing stance that states should respect timeless laws—here, the law of the market—and that individuals should take responsibility for their own social trajectories. These contemporary changes do not put any particular strains on the cohesiveness of centre-right partisan discourse, quite the contrary. In adapting to this new situation, UMP partisans have nevertheless compromised on their commitment to pluralism. It is not necessarily surprising that UMP partisans conclude from this situation that their opponents' traditional positions on social equality, public services and state interventionism are unrealistic. However, they also imply that if the PS still holds these positions, it is out of personal interest and disrespect for the common good. UMP partisans also seamlessly slip into 'naïve holism', convinced that there is one set of appropriate means to reach a widely accepted societal good (Muirhead, 2014, p. 145). As they consider their party alone to be capable of implementing these means, the need for political disagreement becomes obscured.

These two weaknesses of French partisans' discourse are, to a large extent, mutually dependent and in a dynamic relationship. Socialist hesitations in the face of contemporary circumstances comfort the UMP in its sense of superiority. On the other

hand, the UMP's technocratic discourse—according to which there is only one valid way to respond to the world as it is—further paralyses the PS in formulating an alternative discourse.

If we take a step back and briefly consider some of the weaknesses of contemporary French democracy, they can tentatively be associated with these limitations of partisan discourse. As outlined in Chapter 1, partisan cohesiveness is particularly important to maintain citizens' belief in "the worth of engaging with collective political agency so as to exercise the fundamental democratic principle of popular self-rule" (White & Ypi, 2010, p. 809). The weak cohesiveness of PS partisanship and, more generally, the convergence of mainstream parties towards technocratic types of appeals has *de facto* restrained the scope of party competition. These developments may be fuelling French citizens' disengagement from traditional forms of political representation. In France, as elsewhere in Western Europe, this disengagement has manifested itself over the past three decades by rising levels of abstention, lowering rates of party membership, and growing distrust towards traditional parties (for a comparative overview, see Biezen van et al., 2012; Dalton & Wattenberg, 2000; Mair, 2006; on PS and UMP memberships, see pp. 81-82 of this thesis). Together with the lower commitment of UMP partisans to the principles of political pluralism, the deficiencies of contemporary partisanship may also be encouraging the rise of the French far-right (on this last phenomenon, see Berezin, 2009; Delwit, 2012; Dézé, 2012). As others have already argued, when mainstream partisans do not offer real alternatives while endorsing anti-pluralist attitudes, they also legitimise the views of populist parties that offer a more credible promise of political change (on this point, see Arzheimer, 2009; Arzheimer & Carter, 2006; Bornschie, 2012; Kitschelt, 2007; Thränhardt, 1995).

***c. Hungary: The critical importance of partisanship in newly established democracies***

In the Hungarian case, a limited history of open party competition seriously constrains the possibility for democratic forms of partisan discourse. Hungarian partisans start with many handicaps as compared to their French counterparts. The traditions of conservatism on the one hand, and socialism on the other, have mostly developed in times of dictatorial rule where one tradition would repress the other. There is therefore no well-defined set of values and policies that have been habitually put forth by one camp in response to the other and which contemporary partisans

could draw on today. With little experience of being political equals, partisans also more easily reproduce the 'us vs. them' narrative of pre-democratic times. Finally, there has been far less time than in the case of France to openly suggest, contest, and negotiate the foundations of the political community and discover their value. The fact that these foundations are still contested today breeds political polarisation, and makes political disagreement very difficult to value for its own sake.

The ways in which partisans are responding to contemporary circumstances, however, has not contributed to gear Hungarian political culture towards taking more democratic forms. In the 1990s and 2000s, the MSzP was eager to prove its commitment to democracy and capitalism. But by the same token, the party distanced itself from the socialist ideals that could have grounded its political platforms more. While the institutional reforms of Fidesz are today a real challenge for the MSzP to face, the MSzP partisans I interviewed do not even have ideas on the steps that their party could take in response to these reforms. While MSzP partisans blame the Fidesz for these institutional reforms, they have no clear set of values on the basis of which to criticise them, or policy alternatives to suggest in response. To have something to oppose to their main competitors, MSzP partisans attack Fidesz's ill intentions and corrupt practices. While corruption is a widespread problem in Hungarian politics that deserves to be addressed, MSzP partisans do not recognise that their own party also contributes to perpetuate this problem.

As for Fidesz partisans, their choices also accentuate rather than soften the unfavourable impact of Hungary's political history on contemporary democracy. They frame themselves as the inheritors of a Hungarian tradition of nationalism and conservatism repressed in communist times, and picture their opponents as perpetuating the legacy of communist rule. While this rhetoric does form the basis of a relatively cohesive discourse, it also entails very weak commitment to political pluralism. By carrying the memories of the victims of communism, Fidesz also carries the resentment that comes with victimhood. They critic the intrinsically immoral character of their opponents and systematically suspect them of ill intentions. The MSzP is not worthy of respect, or of competing openly with them, precisely because they are viewed as the inheritors of an oppressive tradition. Fidesz partisans *de facto* deny their opponents the legitimacy to formulate an alternative conception of the common good.

These weaknesses of Hungarian partisans' discourse are, to a large extent, mutually dependent and in a dynamic relationship. The weak cohesiveness of MSzP

partisans and their renunciation of socialist ideals confirms Fidesz partisans in claiming that their opponents lack any real principled commitments. The holistic stance of Fidesz and their aggressive institutional reforms also make it more difficult for the MSzP to develop a coherent discourse, and not to simply focus on the attacks that they are the object of. The position and actions of Fidesz also lends credit to the discourse of MSzP partisans, according to which their opponents are uncommitted to democratic ideals and therefore unworthy of respect.

On a more positive note, the period that separates us from 1989 has at least opened Hungary's political debate and allowed for a free confrontation of ideas about the common good. It has also revealed the problems associated with parties lacking a shared basis. The young Hungarian partisans I interviewed are learning from the contemporary political context. They know that they need more common ground with their opponents, and they know that the form taken by political disagreement in contemporary Hungary has negative consequences. They regret the present-day situation, and they hope for change. In making a lucid diagnosis of the pathologies of contemporary partisanship, they make a first step towards their resolution. In the long run, these are the sorts of realisations that could allow for the emergence of a more pluralist political community in Hungary. For now, and because young partisans fail to grasp the responsibility of their own party in this state of affair, their discourse contributes to reproduce those very traits of Hungarian politics that they consider problematic.

At present, the existing balance between both mainstreams parties is threatening Hungarian democracy. The MSzP is the only party that shows allegiance to a minimally democratic framework, but they have no authority to convince others of the worth of this framework. Their poor economic performance and mismanagement of government between 2002 and 2010 has durably affected the party's credibility and its capacity to engage citizens. They plunged from 42.05% of the vote to 19.03% over this period and have failed to recover their voter basis since 2010. They have also been losing their membership basis at a rapid rate over the last ten years.

Much the opposite can be said about the Fidesz. In opposition between 2002 and 2010, they convinced a large number of citizens to become party members, multiplied their local branches, organised several protests of over 100 000 participants, gathered a high number of signatures for large-scale petitions, and developed their links with conservative civil society organisations (Enyedi, 2015; Enyedi & Linek, 2008; Saltman, 2014, pp. 105-106). In 2010, this rise in support found its electoral outlet, the

Fidesz obtaining 52.7% of the vote and a two-third majority in Parliament, supra-majority that it also succeeded in renewing in 2014 (Hungarian National Election Office, 2010). The Fidesz's discourse has radicalised during this time. The party has increasingly adopted aggressive and populist forms of negative campaigning since the early 2000s (Bozóki, 2008; Bozóki & Kriza, 2008; Mesežnikov, Gyárfášová, & Smilov, 2008; Palonen, 2006, 2009). In 2014, Fidesz Prime Minister Viktor Orbán officialised his party's stance in a famous speech, defending the need "to abandon liberal methods and principles of organizing a society" and to build an "illiberal state" in Hungary (Orbán, 2014).

This combination of a weak liberal party and a strong illiberal party has proved profoundly corrosive for Hungarian democracy. Fidesz's institutional reforms since 2010 have deeply eroded the legal basis of Hungary's democracy, threatening the independence of the judiciary, the freedom of the press and the impartiality of electoral monitoring bodies (see Council of Europe, 2013; European Parliament, 2013; Norwegian Helsinki Committee, 2013; United States Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, 2013). Since the time of my interview, Fidesz has extended the reach of its illiberal measures, leading Freedom House to rate the country down in 2013 and again in 2014 (Freedom House, 2015b). The Hungarian case thus provides a poignant example of how weaknesses in the democratic character of partisan discourse is intimately linked to the undemocratic partisan practices of parties in government. Indeed, the events of these last few years can be read as a progressive translation of Fidesz's discourse into governmental practice. The Hungarian case thus demonstrates the power of partisanship over democracy and the particular importance of democratic forms of partisanship for the successful democratisation of post-authoritarian societies.

The Hungarian case may also serve as a "cautionary tale" for European partisanship in general (Komárek, 2014). Both France and Hungary have in their political mainstream a cohesive Right slipping into non-pluralism, and a weakening Left that lacks the cohesiveness to stand its ground. While these partisan traits are far more accentuated in Hungary than they are in France, the overall balance remains comparable. The restriction of governments' leeway for economic policy in both countries might provide a partial explanation for these comparable developments. What separates France most clearly from the Hungarian experience, and explains the difference in degree between both cases, are a hundred and fifty years of democratic history. To some extent, France's democratic history provides a form of 'buffer' to democratic erosion that Hungary lacks.



As highlighted above, however, a democratic history will not by itself make democratic partisanship eternal and protect established democracies from the negative impact of partisan pathologies. The Left-Right dichotomy is losing its relevance in contemporary Europe, precisely because parties are failing to adapt its meaning to contemporary circumstances. In this process, Western European parties are progressively cutting themselves off from political roots that have been built over more than a century of open party competition. In many ways, Western European party systems are increasingly looking like Central European ones. As Hanley stresses,

"it is time to turn around the telescope and reflect upon what CEE can tell us about the rapid erosion of historically based party configurations in Western Europe (...) Western Europe may be increasingly converging towards the CEE model of fragmented, fluid electorates, ideologically rootless parties and pragmatic managerial politicians whose hold on power is disturbed only by periodic populist upsurges at the polls" (Hanley, 2012, p. 795).

If democratic forms of partisanship in Western Europe are dependent on historically inherited identities, then cohesiveness and pluralism may well erode with the fading of these traditional identities. The Hungarian case may act as a reminder of what democracy in Western Europe still gains from its history and of what it has to lose by losing touch with its roots. It also highlights the urgency for partisans in established democracies to adapt and thus keep alive those political traditions on the basis of which democratic forms of partisanship were constructed over time.

## **II. IMPLICATIONS FOR PARTISANS AND EXTERNAL POLITICAL ACTORS**

### **1. Implications for partisans**

The results of this thesis have implications for partisans that are interested in furthering democracy in their own country. If democratic forms of partisanship are central to the vitality and even endurance of contemporary democracies, then partisans that are also democrats should strive to uphold the standards of democratic partisanship. Along with the body of theoretical literature that has sought to establish such standards, this thesis offers some guidelines for real-world partisans. The ideal-case scenario of democratic theory—a partisan that is both cohesive and pluralist—is not a far-fetched, removed ideal. Many of the partisans interviewed in France displayed the capacity to uphold both standards, thereby also demonstrating the accessibility of this ideal for real-world partisanship. These exemplary partisans show that partisans do not necessarily need to compromise their cohesiveness, and thus their capacity for

mobilisation, in order to act with respect towards political opponents and to defend the value of political disagreement. In fact, there is evidence to suggest that partisans can lose a share of cohesiveness by engaging in empty forms of negative campaigning. Beyond their positive impact on the functioning of representative democracy, partisans could also be furthering their own cause by upholding the standards of democratic partisanship.

I have stressed at several points in this thesis that whether or not partisans uphold democratic partisanship is *not only* dependent on their good will. Certain sets of cultural resources and external events may make their task easier or more difficult and thus contribute to explain some of the variations in patterns of partisan discourse. This being said, and as already highlighted above, partisans are not fully determined by the structures within which they operate. They have agency in the ways in which they decide to interpret the past and their current environment, and their interpretations will matter to the contribution they make to democracy. If partisans are aware of their own power, and aware of the constraints within which they exercise it, they can also work to minimise the effects of these constraints on their own discourse.

Take the question of corruption, for instance, and its constraining effect on partisans' respect for opponents. The fact that a given society is corrupt does not diminish the moral obligation of partisans to uphold the standard of political pluralism. They can talk about scandals affecting particular political opponents, while respecting the presumption of innocence, and without using these instances as political weapons against their opposition as a whole. They can denounce the plague of corruption, yet see the necessity for their own party to address this problem in their own ranks. Corruption certainly makes disrespect for opponents a tempting strategy. In these conditions, overt commitment to pluralism demands strict rigor from partisans, perhaps greater self-restraint than would be necessary in less corrupt societies.

Much the same goes for the other constraints on democratic partisanship that this thesis has uncovered. Partisans can be aware of the dangers that a restriction of their economic leverage represents for partisan cohesiveness and not succumb to a rhetoric according to which there is only one sets of valid means to reach the common good in such circumstances. In post-authoritarian societies, partisans can be aware of the danger of perpetuating an 'us vs. them' narrative and search their own history for values, ideas, and policies they can draw on without compromising their commitment to political pluralism. Faced with radical institutional reforms from their opponents, partisans can invest all of their energy in devising a coherent alternative to counter

these reforms efficiently. Witnessing the destructive effects of extreme polarisation, partisans can recognise and question their party's own share in this state of affairs.

At a certain point, democratic partisanship does, therefore, also demand the good will, effort, and awareness of partisans themselves. This is the share that partisans can do. In adverse circumstances, they can resist the tempting option of negative campaigning and see moral faults in their own self and not only in their adversary. Rather than lashing out against opponents, they can focus on putting together a coherent program of government. Partisans can at least take the task of overcoming the constraints they are faced with seriously and do the best that they can with the specific context within which they operate.

## **2. Implications for external political actors - The case of the EU**

This thesis also has implications for political actors external to the domestic politics of states and have an interest in encouraging their democratic vitality and endurance. The European Union is a particularly interesting case in this regard, given especially the influence it has on both candidate countries and current member states (Grabbe, 2006; Ladrech, 2009). Moreover, the EU was founded with the idea of promoting peace and democracy on the continent, and its treaties still frame these aims as its primary *raison d'être*.<sup>149</sup> Under the Copenhagen criteria established in 1993, the opening of accession negotiations with a candidate country is conditioned on the 'stability of institutions guaranteeing democracy, the rule of law, human rights and respect for and protection of minorities' (European Commission, 2012). As I show in the following paragraphs, my findings highlights the tensions that exist between this general objective and the realisation of other principles that have been central to the EU's practices.

As highlighted above, the findings of this study suggest that available cultural resources in a given country have an impact on the discourse of party members, and thus indirectly on the vitality and endurance of a given democracy. But the EU's approach to democracy in current and future member states sits uneasily with the idea of taking into account cultural factors in its enlargement or internal policies. The European Union has indeed always fostered a universalist, rather than contextualist, approach to democracy and mostly considered democracy in current and future

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<sup>149</sup> See Article 2 and 3 of the Treaty on European Union (Official Journal of the European Union, 2008).

member states from an institutional point of view. The political criteria of Copenhagen typically include traditional, institutionalist standards for democracy.

However, temporary institutional compliance is compatible with partisan dynamics that are highly corrosive to these same institutions in the short to medium run. In Hungary, for instance, political discourse started radicalizing in the early 2000s, before the EU accession process of 2002. This increasingly undemocratic partisan discourse has gone hand in hand with a degradation of partisan practice and an erosion of the procedural basis of Hungary's democracy in 2010. Today, the country would not reach the institutional standards on the basis of which it was accepted as an EU member. Other post-communist countries in the European Union may be taking a similar path. The Law and Justice party in Poland, for instance, has conducted several institutional reforms since the Fall of 2015 that have also eroded the legal basis of Polish democracy.

To this extent, the Hungarian story highlights the paradox within which the EU is caught in its approach to enlargement. If the EU maintains a universalistic and institutionalist outlook on democracy, it runs the risk of accepting more fragile democracies among its members. It could, on the other hand, add other standards to its procedural survey of domestic institutions. The EU could pay more attention to the expression of democratic norms in partisan discourse and practices and give more time to processes of democratisation before accepting a post-authoritarian country as a member. This approach may be a good complement to current procedures to ensure the internally democratic character of the European political space.

I have also argued that economic constraints on the actions of political parties are likely to have a negative effect on the democratic character of partisanship. These constraints threaten partisan cohesiveness on the left side of the political spectrum by reducing the possibilities for state intervention in the economy. These constraints also put right-wing parties in a position to declare their absolute superiority, and thus creates an incentive towards non-pluralist discourse. Given the difficulties it creates for partisans to express alternative positions on economic questions, these constraints also encourage the development of negative forms of campaigning on socio-cultural issues.

On this question the practices of the EU may also come in contradiction with its objective of preserving democracy on the continent. In the 1950s, the European Communities were built with the idea that economic interdependence between member states would contribute to preserve peace and democracy on the continent. In parallel, however, economic integration has limited the leverage of national

governments in their economic policy. Over the last three decades especially, the budgetary, fiscal and monetary constraints that weigh on member states have been tightened. In light of the findings of this thesis, these economic constraints are likely to have had a negative impact on the democratic character of European partisanship.

This supports the conclusion of a number of scholars, who have already emphasised that EU decision-making contributes to create widening democratic deficits among candidate countries and member states (Mair, 2005). A number of authors have, for instance, analysed the ways in which the tough economic benchmarks for EU accession have encouraged parties in post-communist Europe to distinguish themselves through their style and rhetoric rather than through their policies (Grzymalala-Busse & Innes, 2003; Innes, 2002; Mair, 2003b; Vachudova, 2008). The ways in which economic integration is currently conducted may thus be running counter the EU's larger objective to deepen democracy on the continent.

Finally, this thesis has shown that high levels of corruption are likely to encourage low levels of partisan commitment to political pluralism, which in turn fragilise democracy. There is also evidence that radical institutional reforms contribute to a degradation of partisan discourse by polarising the party system.

Given the EU's democratic moto and its preference for procedural definitions of democracy, one could expect the organisation would constrain its members to uphold the institutional requirements of democracy and the rule of law. This, however, comes in tension with another central pillar of the European Union: the constitutional sovereignty of its member states. While the EU does put an emphasis on these requirements during accession negotiations (see above), it has few instruments to ensure that governments continue to respect these criteria once they have become members. Indeed, constitutional matters and institutional design remain within the *exclusive competence* of member states. This means that the European Commission cannot directly instigate an infringement procedure against a member state for weakening democratic institutions or undermining human rights, nor can the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU) referred to directly on these matters.<sup>150</sup> The EU does dispose of the so-called 'nuclear option' of Article 7 of the Treaty on European

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<sup>150</sup> Only controversial measures in these fields that are also related to domains of EU competence can fall under an infringement procedure. For instance, states can be prosecuted if specific corrupt practices also infringe on the principles of market competition. As a more concrete example, the CJEU has examined the new retirement age for judges, prosecutors and public notaries in Hungary on the legal basis that it contradicts EU rules on equal treatment in employment (Directive 2000/78/EC). It could not have, for instance, directly addressed this measure on the basis that it challenges the independence of the Hungarian judiciary.

Union (TEU), which allows the Council to unanimously suspend a member states' voting right in case of a serious and persistent breach of democratic principles. In the absence of a series of specific criteria to determine the risk of a 'clear and serious breach' of democratic principles, and the strong lack of incentives for the Council to impose such drastic sanctions on one of its members, this article has however remained of little practice use until now.<sup>151</sup> As a direct result of this situation, the EU has as of yet done very little to address Hungary's ongoing process of democratic backsliding (Herman & Saltman, 2014).

To conclude this section, a wider debate would be necessary on the extent to which the EU's objective of furthering democracy on the continent is compatible with some of the other principles that structure the EU's practices. This would be necessary if European Union institutions are to play a positive role in encouraging parties to uphold democratic standards in their discourse and practices and thereby to foster democratic consolidation.

### III. AVENUES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

If the democratic character of partisanship is indeed central to the vitality and even endurance of contemporary democracies, then it should also become a more widespread object of academic study. As highlighted in the Introduction to this thesis, this would involve that empirical party studies take greater interest in the normative implications of partisan practice and discourse and engage in a closer dialogue with contemporary democratic theory. In the following sections, I suggest some more specific avenues for further research.

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<sup>151</sup> The only existing guidelines are set out in a 2003 Communication of the EC (COM 2003). The recent evolution of Hungary has nevertheless initiated a debate at the EU level on the inefficiency of existing instruments to address these types of problems and the need for new ones. In March 2014, the European Commission has for instance set forth a new EU Framework to strengthen the Rule of Law (European Commission, 2014). The European Commission intends this framework as a 'pre-article 7 procedure', which would allow European institutions to warn member states before imposing official sanctions. According to expert commentators, this new framework is a timid step that will only very insufficiently address the problem at hand (Kochenov & Pech, 2015). On January 13, 2016, this procedure was started for the first time by the European Commission to address suspicions of rule of law shortcomings in Poland, under the Polish Law and Justice party in government since October 2015 (European Commission, 2016).

## **1. New partisan subjects and methodological tools to evaluate democratic partisanship**

First of all, assessing the extent to which partisan discourse complies with democratic standards should be more systematically integrated in scholarly assessments of the vitality and endurance of representative democracies. The study of partisan discourse should become a more systematic endeavour in evaluating processes of democratisation in newly established democratic regimes. In the study of post-communist democratic transitions especially, the excessive focus on procedural and institutional indicators has led scholars to overestimate democratic progress in the region (Dawson & Hanley, 2016; Herman, 2015). They have paid far less attention to the deeper, cultural changes in political discourse that are key to the long-term endurance of young democracies.

A first step would be to diversify the categories of partisans studied. There were, as explained in Chapter 2, many good reasons to focus here on intermediary party members. We would nevertheless obtain a more complete view on the democratic character of partisanship by comparing the discourse of activists with that of party elites and lay party supporters. This would allow scholars to evaluate variations in patterns of discourse between these different groups of partisans and whether the extent to which activists uphold the standards of democratic partisanship is indeed representative of the discourse of partisans as a whole. This would also offer us an indication of the extent to which, and the ways in which elite discourse affects the party's lower ranks. Conversely, it could shed light on the extent to which party activists and lay supporters pick-up on the queues of party elites.

One could replicate the methodology used for this study in order to interview both lay supporters and elites. But other methodological tools could be devised, for instance, evaluating the public discourse of party leaders according to democratic standards, or designing a survey-study adapted to evaluating the extent to which party supporters uphold democratic standards .

## **2. Exploring the relationship between partisanship and democratic change**

More research is warranted on the impact of partisanship on democratic processes. We would need to determine in more detail the mechanisms by which partisans' exercise of political power affects democracy at large. In this regard, one important area of study concerns the impact of partisan discourse on public opinion. If

partisans have a responsibility in furthering both the political engagement of citizens and their commitment to pluralist norms, then we need to study in more detail how their discourse and actions either encourage or discourage these trends. The role of party discourse in furthering or inhibiting citizen engagement is already a topic of academic interest (Ansolabehere & Iyengar, 1995; Ansolabehere et al., 1994; Evans & Tilley, 2012; Romer, Jamieson, & Cappella, 2000). The evidence so far uncovered should receive greater attention and be complemented by further studies. Further, it would also be necessary to explore the ways in which the discourse of mainstream parties shapes public opinion and how it can serve to encourage or discourage the consolidation of pluralist values within society at large (for existing studies, see for instance Chong & Druckman, 2007; Druckman, 2004; Enyedi, 2005; Sniderman & Theriault, 2004).

Another potential area of research concerns the relationship between patterns of partisan discourse and patterns of partisan practice. While this thesis has focused on the discourse of partisans, the most direct ways in which partisans can erode democracy is through using the decisional power conferred to them via elections. We may want to conduct longitudinal studies to observe whether, at the macro-level, non-democratic institutional reforms are always preceded by non-pluralist forms of political discourse. We could also explore the ways in which political discourse comes to 'translate' into political practice. For instance, it would be interesting to compare and contrast the discourse of European parties that have undermined the legal basis of democracy in their country before and after they come to power. On the basis of such studies, the democratic merits of partisan discourse could become a more widespread indicator to assess the consolidation of newly established democracies.

### **3. Studying the factors that influence patterns of partisan discourse**

Finally, more academic interest could be devoted to the factors that influence the democratic character of partisan discourse. As detailed in the conclusions to each of my empirical chapters, this study has allowed to formulate tentative explanations for the variations in patterns of discourse that I uncover. More research would nevertheless be needed in order to substantiate these explanations, specify the respective weight of these factors on democratic partisanship, and clarify the possible interactions between the different factors that I discuss.

Consider, for instance, the relation between a political history of open party competition and democratic forms of partisan discourse. To generalise the claims that I



make on this particular point, we would need to examine whether there is a linear relationship between the 'age' of a democracy and the extent to which partisans uphold the standards of democratic partisanship in their discourse. Uncovering such regularities would ideally require large-n, comparative studies. This would also require obtaining data on democratic partisanship with methods that are less time-consuming and work intensive than the ones used here. This exercise could also be repeated to assess the correlation of democratic or undemocratic forms of partisan discourse with levels of corruption, socio-economic constraints, the institutional reforms of opponents, etc.

To specify the respective weight of the different factors I identified here and clarify the possible interactions between different factors, one could also conduct a number of additional small-n studies of the type conducted here. It would be particularly interesting to focus on 'hard cases', ones where the factors at play in the French or Hungarian case would appear to have a different effect on partisan discourse. Studying such cases would allow future scholarship to understand the idiosyncratic aspects of my own findings, and revise or nuance the conclusions of this thesis.

Here I will only consider one such case: the United States. This choice would be a fascinating addition to the two countries chosen here. All the available evidence points towards a radicalisation of American political discourse in the last two decades, with negative campaigning and personal attacks having become commonplace (Ansolabehere & Iyengar, 1995; Gutmann & Thompson, 2012; J. J. Mansbridge & Jo Martin, 2013; Nivola & Brady, 2006; Sinclair, 2006). We could therefore expect that American partisans would fare worse than French ones on the standard of commitment to pluralism. Yet the US is, like France, one of the oldest democracies in the world, with a long history of open party competition. This case would thus be particularly interesting, at it would allow scholarship to shed further light on the conditions under which a history of democratic competition allows for the expression of democratic forms of partisan discourse.

We could also enquire into additional factors that may come into play in the American case. Some authors have argued, for instance, that the growing role of the private sector in campaign financing and, more generally, the increasing interconnection of the American political sphere and business circles contribute to the radicalisation of American partisan discourse (Crouch, 2004). If a similar study to the one conducted here would confirm this, we could say that the political economy of America's party system plays a comparable role to high levels of corruption in Hungary.

While in Hungary high levels of corruption inhibit the development of a pluralist form of discourse, the growing role of the business sector would be contributing to a degradation of pluralist norms in the United States. This would then be a case where external events are sufficiently fundamental that they progressively trump the positive role of political history on partisanship, thus leading to a modification of political culture itself.

In this context, it would also be interesting to see how American partisans compare with French ones on the standard of cohesiveness, and more generally, whether cohesiveness is also affected by changes in the political economy. This would instruct us on the level of resilience of a democratic political culture in the face of such deep changes, but also allow us to further specify the dynamic relationship between cohesiveness and pluralism. If we found, for instance, that cohesiveness remains high despite low commitments to political pluralism, this would rather confirm the idea that there exists a trade-off between both dimensions. If we find, on the contrary, that American partisans fail to uphold both the standards of cohesiveness and pluralism, this would rather comfort the idea of a complementarity between both dimensions.

These and many further questions will have to await future research. For now, however, I hope to have shown the relevance of partisan discourse for the present and future of democratic politics and that it is worth our time to rigorously evaluate the factors which foster or obstruct democratic forms of partisanship.

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# Appendix 1: Comparative fieldwork account

In this appendix, I offer the reader a more detailed account of my fieldwork experiences in both France and Hungary. I learned a lot about my country cases simply *being* in both countries for a total of seven months, and having to organise and conduct these group discussions. I attended many political events, including local town hall meetings, local party section meeting, a national party congress, party-sponsored conferences, and several organised exchanges of party elites and grass root activists. I also conducted a number of informal, one-on-one interviews with party members, scholars, journalists, and political analysts. To keep track of all of these events, I kept a detailed fieldwork journal, in which I accounted for my experiences. To this extent, this appendix is the product of participant observation, a method of data collection that can be defined as "the process of learning through exposure to or involvement in the day-to-day or routine activities of participants in the researcher setting" (Schensul & LeCompte, 1999).

The research process in both countries was dramatically different: smooth and uncomplicated in France, cumbersome and sometimes unpleasant in the case of Hungary. In the following sections I aim to underline differences in these experiences, how I adapted to them, and what they taught me about the political context in each country. I first talk about the process of recruiting participants in both countries, and then the process of conducting focus groups.

## I. RECRUITING PARTICIPANTS

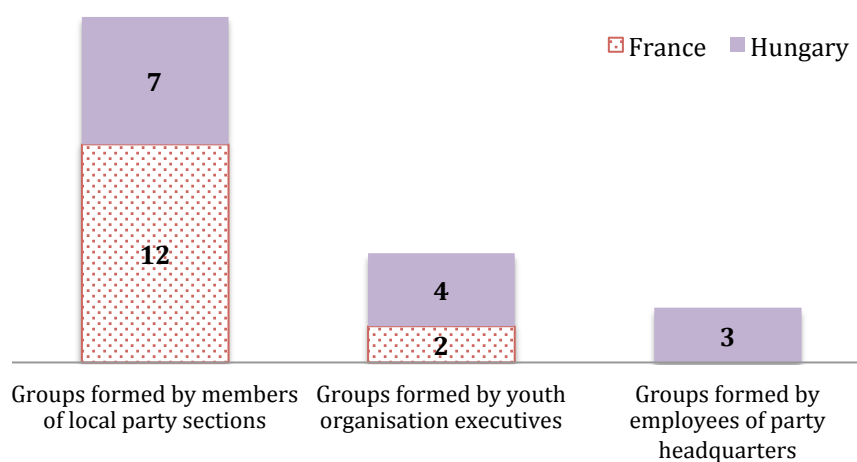
### 1. General method of recruitment and evaluation of its success

#### *a. Recruitment strategy*

I mostly recruited participants from the five relevant youth organisations in



both countries. In France these included the PS's *Mouvement des Jeunes Socialistes* (MJS) and the UMP's *Jeunes Populaires* (JP). In Hungary these included the MSzP's *Societas*, the Fidesz's *Fidelitas* and the KDNP's *Iffúsági Kereszténydemokrata Szövetség* (IKSZ). Most targeted groups were local party sections with relatively young demographics, whether local sections of these youth organisations, or party university sections for instance. A smaller number of groups were composed of leaders from the youth organisations that were acquainted with each other, or party members employed by the party and that knew each other through work (see Figure 35 for the different 'types' of groups interviewed).



**Figure 35: Distribution of groups according to type of partisan organisation participants were recruited from**

I first contacted grass-root partisans with a sufficient level of responsibility to act as intermediaries between myself and a given party section, mostly heads of local or university party sections, or leaders of the youth organisations. In both France and Hungary I could find a large number of people to contact on the websites of either parties' youth organisations. All five youth party organisations provided points of contact for each local district section in Paris and Budapest on their websites, generally the email address of the district section leader. At the beginning of my stay in both countries, my first step was to send out emails to these contacts.<sup>152</sup> I presented the project in general terms, picturing an interest in the political opinions of young party members, and especially in their positioning within the public debates that emerged in French or Hungarian political life since the last national elections. Potential participants were then asked if they would care to take part in the study, and invite other members

<sup>152</sup> See Appendix 3 for the template emails.

of their local party section for a group discussion.

Because much of the youth organisations' activities are today coordinated via social media and especially Facebook, I also created a separate Facebook account from my own for the purpose of this research. This account was used both to stay informed about various events organised by local party sections, and to find further sections and party members to contact. Finally, as groups started being conducted, I also participated in different types of political events and met more party members in person. These either accepted to be contacted directly about the project, or to give me contacts they thought would be useful.

In order to obtain a sample reflecting the diversity of currents within the Hungarian and French political mainstream, I made a conscious effort to contact heads of sections with diverse political orientations in France, and from different parties in Hungary. As could be expected, heads of sections generally recruited participants with similar orientations to their own. This resulted in rather homogeneous groups from this perspective. In France, with regard to young socialists for instance, it was essential for me not to recruit participants *solely* from the *Mouvement des Jeunes Socialistes* (MJS). The MJS was created in 1993 as an organisation that is politically independent from the PS, but nevertheless permanently affiliated with the French Socialist Party. As a result, it has its own internal currents, separate from those of the PS, and the line of the MJS is openly to the left of the PS as a whole. If I had solely recruited from the MJS, I would thus have over represented the PS's left wing. I therefore also recruited in local and university sections of the PS, which were more likely to hold reformist views, as well as among the more centrist, social-democratic currents in the MJS.

In France, the situation was more straightforward on the right side of the political spectrum. Indeed, the *Jeunes Populaires* are not independent from the UMP. Thus while it is possible to be a young member of the PS without being part of the MJS, and vice-versa, any UMP party member younger than 30 years old is automatically considered a *Jeune Populaire*. Not only do the *Jeunes Populaires* vote for the same currents as their elders, but the divisions among the youth organisation also reflect more accurately the divisions within the party as a whole. I also made sure that the different currents within the UMP would be represented in my sample of French participants.

In Hungary, this task was paradoxically simplified by the absence of established currents in the parties under study. The representation of diverse political orientations on both sides of the Hungarian political spectrum was ensured by the fact participants

were recruited not only from the MSzP and Fidesz, but also from their close electoral allies or sister organisations, Együtt/PM and DK on the left, and the KDNP on the right.<sup>153</sup>

### ***b. Success of recruitment strategy***

This initial strategy of recruitment generated very different results in the two countries under study. In France, the method proved particularly efficient. Out of 89 individual activists initially contacted, 41 answered my email, and 20 accepted to help me organise a group discussion.<sup>154</sup> These interviews were then all conducted within a period of six weeks. This is a good 'turnout', especially considering the fact that I offered no financial incentive to participants (this is common in many focus group studies, see for instance Duchesne & Haegel, 2004; Gamson, 1992; Perrin, 2006; White, 2011b). The intermediaries who accepted to participate expressed a great amount of trust in my work. With one exception, they all accepted to help organise a group without meeting me beforehand or knowing more about my project than what I described in my email. I did also not have to involve my personal networks in the recruitment process. None of these intermediaries knew me beforehand, and I was never introduced to potential interviewees via pre-existing common acquaintances. In three cases only, one group facilitated the set up of another, with participants suggesting further activists I could contact.

In Budapest, the recruitment process proved far more complicated. I contacted 191 party activists via email. 67 answered and 18 of these exchanges led to a group interview.<sup>155</sup> This means that I had to contact over twice the number of partisans than in France in order to obtain a similar number of groups. Conducting these 18 groups in

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<sup>153</sup> For a detailed description of the party landscape in both countries, see Chapter 2, III, 1, a.

<sup>154</sup> Only 14 of the 20 groups conducted in France, and 14 of the 18 groups conducted in Hungary, were used for the purpose of this research. The main reason for this is that I needed a comparable number of groups from each party and country, and in France I could only interview seven UMP groups. In order to make the number of groups equal for each party, I decided not to analyse a number of the groups conducted among members of the three other parties. I selected the groups to eliminate before I analysed the transcripts, not on the basis of my results. I chose to keep those 28 groups that I considered the most comparable, and eliminate those that stood out, or were faulty in one way or another. For instance I did not take into account some groups I conducted in both countries with party sympathisers, given that most other groups were conducted with members. I took out those groups that were far shorter than others. I also privileged groups that involved larger numbers of participants (4-5) rather than fewer (2-3) as the conversation did not pick up as well in the latter category. In Hungary, I privileged groups from the two main parties under study (Fidesz and MSzP) rather than their satellite parties (KDNP and Együtt/PM). The overall objective I kept in mind in doing this selection was to constitute final samples that would be as homogenous as possible, and as comparable as possible across countries and parties.

<sup>155</sup> On how I selected 14 out of these 18 Hungarian groups for my analysis, see footnote 154.

Hungary also required over three months, so twice the amount of time that I needed in France. Finally, the recruitment process involved far more personal networking than in France. Six out of the 18 willing intermediaries asked to meet me before the group was conducted, and for 14 of these 18 interviews I had to proceed through being recommended by a third person. Out of these 14 recommendations, four came from activists I had already interviewed, one interview leading to another. For the remaining ten groups, I had to contact and meet a number of journalists, scholars, political analysts and higher profile politicians, who then put me in relation with young party activists that they were acquainted with. Budapest being a small world, these were often individuals that I had already sent an email to, but without any success.

### *c. Reasons for participation*

I can only make an informed guess on the reasons why these young partisans decided to take part in the study, as this is not a question that was raised directly during the interviews. Generally speaking, because politics is such a central aspect of these citizens' lives, they may have perceived participation in the group discussion as a continuation of their political engagement, as an additional expression of their activism. Allowing heads of local sections to recruit the groups themselves also had advantages in this sense. I likely gave these individuals an opportunity to express a form of authority over their team by inviting them to the talk. This may have played in favour of the recruitment process especially among very young and newly constituted teams. Second, the fact that these young party members knew they would be participating with others from their local section may have created an incentive to take part, by bridging their own political engagement with a contribution to the group.

Specific emails participants sent back and exchanges with activists before or after interviews suggest a diverse range of more specific motivations. Some interviewees expressed an interest in the topic of the focus group. A young French socialist, Fabien, wrote me the following:

Fabien: I find your research topic very interesting, especially because populist parties have managed to gather a large vote among young Europeans (...) I would be very interested in the reasons that led you to choose this topic of research, and what you aim to do with the study once it is finished. I hope you can answer me, or that we can talk about it when we meet.

Similarly, three of my Hungarian intermediaries were post-graduate students in the social sciences, and had already been involved in some form of data collection process. Not only did they express an interest for my topic of research, but they

explicitly stated that they would also participate out of solidarity with a fellow researcher.

Others seemed to consider the group as an opportunity to testify of their experience as party members, with this expression of academic interest being perceived as a form of validation of their own action. Benoît, a young UMP member, expressed this well in his email to me:

Benoît: I thank you sincerely for having chosen (our constituency). Indeed, I have responsibilities in a rather poor district, where we are fighting on a day-to-day basis to win back the electorate. Our engagement is very different from the one of young people in the west of Paris. I can assure you that you will learn a lot on the engagement of young people, and on-the-field activism.

In Hungary, some activists appeared to expect not only validation, but also some form of political recognition and visibility out of their participation in the study. These potential participants seemed to consider the study as a way of communicating their point of view to the Western part of Europe. This was even more the case among Fidesz supporters, who regularly positioned themselves as ambassadors of their own party, with a duty to correct what they perceived as misrepresentations of their government's actions in the Western press and public opinion. The following response from Fidelitas member Endre to one of my initial emails suggests this attitude:

Endre: I'm happy to participate in correcting the negative Western views concerning our country, for (Westerners) not only to hear the opinion of the left-liberal<sup>156</sup> media orientated by foreign multinationals.

In fact, this was a major differences between my French and Hungarian groups. In Hungary participants often approached the study as a platform from which their party and its message would be given visibility and publicity. In France, party members rather seemed to participate out of curiosity, desire to help, or to have an opportunity to share their experiences as party members.

## **2. Understanding differences in the French and Hungarian recruitment experiences**

This last difference is also important to explain the greater difficulties I had to recruit participants in Hungary as compared to France. The fact that Hungarians saw my study as a platform from which their party would be visible was a double-edged sword. On the one hand they could participate out of a desire to enhance their party's

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<sup>156</sup> In Hungarian 'balliberális' in Hungarian, assembling the word 'left' and 'liberal'. It is mostly used by the Fidesz in a pejorative sense to designate the Left.

reputation. On the other hand they could refuse to participate because they were worried that their message would get distorted and their image tarnished. My study could be as well perceived as a political opportunity than as a political threat.

Fidesz members especially were concerned that I could be a critical observer, one that would ask questions they did not want to answer, write about them in a critical manner, and ultimately, harm the party's reputation. Given the fire under which Fidesz has been from EU institutions and the Western press more generally, this is in fact hardly surprising. Several foreign correspondents with whom I met in Budapest testified of the difficulty, if not impossibility for them to interview Fidesz party members. At the time, one of them told me that no Fidesz official had been interviewed in Budapest by a foreign correspondent since the 2010 elections, and I could not find any information contradicting her point.<sup>157</sup>

I received evidence that such suspicions led many potential Fidesz participants to turn down my invitation at first. The first signals came not from the grass-root members I initially contacted, but from the higher ranks of the Fidesz hierarchy. Following my first wave of emails, I received more positive responses from the right than the left side of the political spectrum. Within ten days I already had a number of meetings planned with Fidesz activists, individually or in groups. At that point, it did not seem that I would have any particular problems with Fidesz participants. Approximately two weeks after my arrival, I received an email from a party member at a national level of responsibility in the Fidesz youth party organisation (*Fidelitas*). I had not contacted this person, or been in communication with him before. His message was succinct, containing barely more than the following:

Koppány: Zsuzsa Molnár has transferred your request, in which you ask for help with your research. Please, send me the list of questions that you would like to ask, and I'll help organise the focus groups.

Given the position of this man in the *Fidelitas* hierarchy, this email put me in a difficult situation. Not responding at all could have increased the party's suspicion, and condemned my efforts. On the other hand it was not possible to send back the exact discussion guidelines, as these could have been forwarded to potential participants and introduced a bias in my research. I sent an email back with a general description of the

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<sup>157</sup> According to this foreign correspondent, this excludes interviews given in Brussels, or abroad. In her opinion, Fidesz officials were less worried abroad because they were also less directly under the fire of the national press. She also told me that in these cases, Fidesz politicians were also confronted to journalists who are less well informed about Hungarian affairs. Foreign correspondents, contrarily to most journalists abroad, are specialists of Hungarian politics, and often speak Hungarian. To this extent, they are also a more direct threat.

study, although a more detailed one than the one sent to potential participants. I emphasised especially the comparative dimension of the study, and gave a few examples of the more specific topics of public policy that I intended to discuss with party members.

Koppány did not answer this email, but I did find out that my response had not been to his satisfaction. Over the following two days, four out of five of the Fidesz activists who had agreed to meet with me cancelled our appointment. One had an urgent professional obligation in the countryside. Others were overwhelmed with work. All of them suggested that I write to the central office of the youth organisation for further help, as in the following email by Naómi:

Naómi: In the meantime I became aware of the fact you have sent this letter to many other people as well, therefore I kindly ask you to turn to the Central office of Fidelitas at [fidelitas@fidelitas.hu](mailto:fidelitas@fidelitas.hu), or at any of the contacts given on the site of Fidelitas, because that is from where this will be coordinated. This solution will be simpler for you too, because you'll be able to work in a more focused manner.

Another activist, Lajos, was more explicit about his need for hierarchical approval:

Lajos: I'm sorry, being leader of a Fidelitas group and representing therefore Fidelitas, I cannot give out an opinion without the leaders' permission. Please, turn to the central office of Fidelitas, they will most probably willingly help! You can find the contacts on the [www.fidelitas.hu](http://www.fidelitas.hu) site!

Approximately a month later, I obtained a confirmation that a number of grass-root activists had received an email from their hierarchy at about that time, discouraging them from participating in the research. This information came from an acquaintance of mine, Benjamin. He was trying to convince Simon, a friend of his and Fidesz activist, to get in contact with me. Simon motivated his refusal by the fact he had received an email a few weeks earlier, advising against me. Two additional intermediaries - a journalist working for one of the main pro-Fidesz weeklies in Budapest, and a young Fidelitas activist with national level responsibilities - confirmed that I had been the object of suspicion within the Fidesz. While I managed to convince both of them of the validity of my research, they reported being confronted to resistance when they tried to talk their party activist acquaintances into participating.

The hierarchy may have thought that I was a journalist, someone coming 'undercover' from the opposition, or simply a 'westerner' who would *a priori* cast a critical eye on their party. While I did not have the chance to read the email that was sent out by the Fidesz hierarchy to potential participants, Benjamin reported that it

referred to me as a 'fake', pretending to be someone that I was not. The hierarchy may have, more generally, been of the impression that they could not control the spontaneous group discussions I suggested to organise. If I had done one-on-one interviews, for instance, they could have tried to discuss the questions and negotiate them in advance. With group discussions, they had no real way to monitor and manage the process. If many of my initial contacts were far less suspicious, they were most likely unwilling to purposefully disobey the instructions they were subsequently given.

After I received this email from the Fidelitas hierarchy, it took me several weeks of lobbying before Fidesz members accepted to participate in the study.<sup>158</sup> I met with a number of people—right-wing journalists, researchers, and other people with influence within the party—to talk about the project, and convince them of its academic merit. I insisted, especially, on the fact that the information would only be used for research purposes, and that all names would remain anonymous. I hoped that news would spread, for my reputation to change, and to indirectly gain the trust of the hierarchy itself.

Whether a consequence of this strategy or not, I have evidence that at some point the Fidesz hierarchy reversed its position and engaged its members to participate. After several weeks of struggle, with no groups at all, there was a turnaround. Group discussions with the Fidesz snowballed in a small period of time. Many of those who did end up organising groups were in fact among the activists that I had initially contacted, and who had declined after the party hierarchy contacted them. If they 'changed their mind', it is likely that at some point in time they also obtained a go-ahead from people that were higher up in the hierarchy.<sup>159</sup> Among the last Fidesz groups I conducted, there were a number of more highly positioned activists of the youth party organisations. They no doubt knew about the suspicion I had been the object of. I even started being invited to Fidesz organised events, and treated as some sort of a 'special guest'. It seemed to me as if my study transited from the status of

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<sup>158</sup> Two of my initial contacts did accept to organise groups quite quickly, and this after my email exchange with Koppány. They showed no particular signs of suspicion. It is most likely, therefore that these instructions from the higher ranks of the youth organisation were not sent to all local sections. All the other groups, however, were conducted only several weeks later.

<sup>159</sup> One striking example concerns Naómi, the head of a local Fidelitas section. While she had enthusiastically responded to my first email, she was one of the activists to write back a couple of days later, claiming she could not take part anymore. In all likelihood, she was one of those to receive the email discouraging activists to participate. Approximately two months later she invited me very warmly to participate in a meeting held by her section, after which I conducted a discussion. In the meanwhile, several individuals that she could consider trust-worthy, one higher profile Fidesz politicians and a journalist from a right-wing weekly magazine, had recommended me to her.



'political threat' to the status of 'political opportunity'.

While such forms of resistance were less apparent with MSzP party members, I was also faced with a certain level of suspicion from potential left-wing participants. Levente, one of my intermediaries for this party, found it difficult to convince potential participants. Some of his acquaintances openly voiced fear that I would perhaps be an undercover journalist, an informer for the Fidesz government, or perhaps even for DK, their electoral allies! The slow process of recruitment among young socialists, however, also seemed to result from a great amount of inertia, and the smaller network of young party members in this ageing reformed communist party. It sometimes took up to a month of email exchanges between the point when I obtained a formal approval from an intermediary, and the group discussion itself. As for recruitment among the smaller parties I contacted—the KDNP on the right, Együtt/PM and DK on the left—it was relatively fluid. Activists from these parties showed no particular signs of suspicion towards me.

With hindsight, it is the way my research was perceived that explains best these differences between my French and Hungarian experiences of recruitment. In France my position as a neutral researcher was quite easily accepted *a priori* by participants. In this situation, taking part in the study was seen as an opportunity to contribute to the progress of knowledge on youth partisan engagement, a topic which the activists I contacted held dear. In Budapest, on the contrary, potential participants rarely apprehended this research as a scientific endeavour they could add to. Participation was instead first perceived as politically relevant and consequential. It was either seen as an opportunity to push a certain political, or as a potential threat to the party's image. This dichotomy I was somehow locked into is best understood in the light of Hungary's highly polarised political landscape. At present *one can only take* sides in Hungarian politics. Because I gave no signs of political support to either party, because activists had no guarantee that I was *with them*, I was easily suspected of being *against them*.

In this regard, intermediaries often reported that their fellow party members were unwilling to 'take the risk' of participating. It seems that a number of Fidesz participants felt they needed to ask for the approval of their hierarchy before participating. This is how the information went up the Fidesz's hierarchical ladder at first: a potential participant forwarded my email and asked her superiors for permission to participate. Fidesz participants were not prepared to disobey their party hierarchy once they were told not to talk to me. Considering the next parliamentary elections were to be held approximately six months later, party executives and

potential participants may have been particularly worried of my interviewees' words being twisted, or important information about the party being involuntarily leaked.

This anxiety of partisans is most likely grounded in their day-to-day experiences of Hungarian politics. Leaks in the media by investigative journalists and members of the opposition have regularly sparked political scandals over the last few years. In trusting an ill-intentioned stranger, Hungarian partisans could be involved in the revelation of information that would harm their party. Levente, an MSzP member who helped me a lot to gain access to the party, shared this feeling with me. He said that as party members they do not even know *what* they are allowed to say, they do not know what information could potentially endanger their party's image if they were overheard or recorded by the wrong person. Hungarian partisans are very aware of their image precisely because they are in a context where their rivals are ready to do anything in order to destroy their reputation.<sup>160</sup>

For the partisans I talked to, being at the origin of a leak or a scandal could have affected their political career. They could have been held responsible by their hierarchy for their negligence. This is a risk that partisans were not ready to take. If we consider the results of my group interviews, this is in fact unsurprising. In such a polarised environment, one can only be a friend or an enemy, there is no neutral middle ground. In some ways, I became myself the object of the partisan suspicion that I uncovered in my interviews. In this context, it was my responsibility to turn things around, and show Hungarian partisans that they could trust me.

## II. CONDUCTING FOCUS GROUPS AND RELATING TO PARTICIPANTS

### 1. General line of conduct

In practice, both the location and time of the group discussions were left open to my intermediaries. The email did suggest that the encounter could take place in a bar or café of the groups choice. Meeting in a public space, with music, drinks and sometimes food was likely to ensure the more informal and relaxed atmosphere that I

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<sup>160</sup> The most emblematic example concerns a speech made by ex-Prime Minister Ferenc Gyurcsány in May 2006 during the MSzP's party congress. The sound bites that were leaked by Magyar Rádío on September 17, 2006 (especially "*We lied morning, day and night*", "*We have obviously lied throughout the past one and a half-two years*") sparked mass protests in Hungary and riots in Budapest. Over the years, this speech took on a quasi-mythical character in Hungary, and has been systematically brandished by the Right as unquestionable evidence of the Left's duplicity.

intended. This may have also increased the trust of Hungarian participants especially, showing them that I did not intend to ask them anything 'secretive' that they could not have talked about in public. 12 out of the 14 French groups and 11 out of the 14 Hungarian groups took place in the evening in such public spaces. The remaining groups were conducted in the buildings of local party sections or in party headquarters. In certain cases due to the group's time constraints, the discussion started before every participant had arrived. Individuals that had not confirmed their participation in advance sometimes also joined the group. In all cases new arrivals were encouraged to join the discussion and given instructions if necessary.

The attitude I had towards participants sought to preserve the right balance between the familiarity and display of empathy that was necessary to gain my participants' trust, and the neutrality and distance demanded from my position as researcher. The first of these attitudes came naturally. Being from a similar age group was of great help to create a form of proximity. The fact that I was present in a number of events allowed me to meet some of the same partisans repeatedly before conducting a group and to become more familiar to them. To preserve a form of academic distance, I kept my dress code purposefully strict and neutral. I used the formal '*vous*' in France and '*ön*' in Hungary unless my interlocutor adopted a more familiar tone to address me.

I presented my own project in general terms. For instance in France, I would say "I am working on the political opinions of young party members, and especially on how they perceive the differences between Left and Right, and the conflict between the PS and the UMP in France. I base my study on collective interviews like these. I will also be leading these types of interviews in Hungary, with the aim of comparing the structure of political competition in a new and an old European democracy". Insisting on this last comparative perspective was useful, especially in Hungary. It put each country case in perspective and gave a more scientific aura to my approach. At all points of the process I avoided to emphasise that I aimed to evaluate the compliance of partisans to democratic standards. This information could have led my participants to pre-empt my results, and adapt their responses accordingly. This minimal form of deception was therefore both necessary and proportionate to the purpose of my study.

In each case, I can assume that participants gave their informed consent to participate. At the beginning of each interview I would present myself, and especially the fact that I was writing a PhD at the LSE on the political opinions of young European party members. I explicitly asked whether participants accepted to be recorded, and stressed that their names and personal information would remain anonymous. I

generally tried to push back more detailed discussions about the project to the end of the interview, and refrained from giving too much information on the content of the interview itself.<sup>161</sup> Beyond what I told them myself at the beginning of the interview, they were already informed by the group leader who I had sent an email about the project. In the email sent to intermediaries, I also invited questions, suggested to meet before-hand to discuss potential issues, and specified that the data collected would remain anonymous and only be used for academic purposes.<sup>162</sup> Between the first point of contact and the actual group, there was often a gap of several weeks. Potential participants would have had the time to check my credentials on the internet, ask questions and make up their mind as to whether or not to participate.

If I was asked whether I had spoken to other members of the same party I answered yes; I avoided entering into any details on who exactly had already participated, except when it appeared absolutely necessary to obtain additional contacts. I would not stress the fact that I was also talking to members of the political opposition, but would answer honestly if participants asked me specific questions about this. There were, in fact, real chances for participants to discover this through other channels. In Paris especially, partisans from both parties under study often navigated in similar circles. As shown in Chapter 5, it was far from exceptional that a young MJS knows, or even is friends with, a young JP.<sup>163</sup> Also, my professional Facebook account was used for both parties. Despite settings that ensured a certain amount of privacy, it still made apparent my interest in both sides of the political spectrum. Dissimulating this aspect of my work would not have been proportionate to the aim of my study, and could have easily backfired if participants had obtained knowledge about this through other channels.

It remained important, however, that participants would not be able to place me on one side of the political spectrum rather than another. As a general rule, this required that I remain strictly in the role of a neutral researcher. During the discussions, I said as little as possible and refrained from switching from the role of moderator to the one of active participant. If asked explicitly about my political orientations I would

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<sup>161</sup> In one case, the head of section had already heard about the content of the group through another young partisan, who had participated previously. However, she did not communicate to the other participants any more than what was in the initial email.

<sup>162</sup> For a template of this email, see Appendix 3.

<sup>163</sup> I had once a socialist partisan on the phone, Cédric, who happened to be having a coffee with Nicolas, a young UMP member. It turned out I had also contacted this second partisan by email a few days beforehand!

emphasise my position as researcher, and the fact that I was not supposed to adopt a partisan attitude given the situation.

## 2. Application in France and Hungary

These lines of conduct proved easily applicable during the French fieldwork. As a general rule, participants were not expecting for me to take sides and in most cases, they accepted as a given my position as a neutral researcher.

For instance, participants did not have any particular issue with the fact that I was also talking to their political opponents. Because participants did not conceive of interpartisan dialogue as either impossible or problematic, they also did not question the neutrality of my position on the basis of my communication with both sides of the political spectrum. In four instances party members did ask me directly about my political affiliation. This happened three times with young socialists, and once with young conservatives. In all but one case, this was done after the group was finished, and in a rather informal way, out of curiosity if anything. As mentioned above, I emphasised my position as a neutral researcher and added that I was not a member of any political party. This was sufficient in two cases to change the topic of conversation. Twice however they insisted on knowing more about my orientation on the left or on the right. To this I answered that I felt disillusioned about politics and had no clear view where my affiliations lay as a result.<sup>164</sup> Only once was I asked about my political affiliation before the discussion.<sup>165</sup> Again I delayed to the end and repeated the same general stance.

In Hungary relating to participants was complicated by the fact that I was often, especially among Fidesz participants, suspected to be politically hostile to the line of my interlocutor. Moreover, intermediaries often asked to meet with me before organising a group, and this most evidently to verify my trustworthiness. This put me in a situation where I had to gain the trust of people who were expecting me to take sides, and this without fulfilling these expectations. In this situation, stressing my Franco-Hungarian dual nationality revealed particularly useful. My Hungarian origins, the fact that I could hold a simple conversation in Hungarian, made me more sympathetic to Fidesz participants. For instance, one Fidesz member answered my

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<sup>164</sup> In one instance this sparked an interesting conversation with a young socialist, whom I asked what difference would it have made to the conversation whether he thought I located myself on the left or on the right. He said that he would probably have been more offensive in his arguments if he knew I was on the right, and more relaxed and conciliatory if he had thought I was on the left.

<sup>165</sup> By a group of only two young socialists that I have, as a consequence of this small number, not included in the results of this study.

initial email by saying *"I hope that in the course of the study you will manage to reconnect with your Hungarian roots"*. On both sides of the political spectrum, the story of my family was systematically a topic of enquiry and conversation.<sup>166</sup>

While Fidesz participants would have been more suspicious of a complete foreigner, the fact that I was not a resident Hungarian, that I was not socialised in Budapest, and that my level of Hungarian was not completely fluent, also helped me in certain ways. If I had been fully Hungarian, I would have been suspected to have a clearly defined partisan preference. In the present political context, Hungarians who have an interest in politics either violently reject the Fidesz government or are strongly supportive of it. There is no apartisan space in politics, even for academics or journalists. As explained in Chapter 5, with no shared ground between partisans, without the sense of a common political community, one needs to take sides. I therefore constantly threaded a thin line. Too foreign, I would have been seen as necessarily supportive of the Left and critical of the Right. Too Hungarian, I would have been demanded to express a partisan commitment.

The discussion guidelines were generally well understood by participants, and provided for a fruitful basis of discussion in both countries. It is legitimate to ask, however, whether the suspicion I was the object of in Budapest may have influenced the attitudes of participants during the discussions. It was certainly the case, among Fidesz groups especially, that at least one participant in each discussion looked particularly on his guard, and said very little. One out of six Fidesz groups also happened in particularly tense conditions.<sup>167</sup>

Notwithstanding this, I witnessed far less suspicion during the discussions than what I was expecting, given the difficult recruitment process. In fact, most participants in both countries gave me the impression that they enjoyed the discussions. A number of participants were amused by the cards, and made remarks assimilating the discussion to a 'game' (such as 'Are we going to play poker?' or 'are you going to give us good and bad points?'). Some of them explicitly stated that the cards had made the

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<sup>166</sup> This not fully without political intent, however. Fidesz participants often made the guess that my father's family had emigrated in 1956. Crucially, the legacy of this revolution is today highly politicised, the Right in Hungary establishing a continuity between resistance under communism and opposition to the current MSzP. If members of my family were 1956 emigrates, which they are not, this would likely have given me some further credential for right-wing activists.

<sup>167</sup> This was a group with 5 participants, Krisztoff, Bogdan, Hektor, Hajni, and Tibor, and it took place in a local Fidelitas section. There were many more activists in a nearby room, and other party members regularly entering the room during the course of the discussion. The participants seemed particularly tense, as if they were being watched, and their discourse contrived.

exercise particularly interesting. In both countries, many participants insisted on the fact that the interview had been an opportunity for them to talk about and reflect on the more substantive side of their political engagement. They said that this is something which they did not always find the time and space to do, and which they missed in their day-to-day activism.<sup>168</sup> A number of intermediaries in both countries even told me they would try to use a similar system to organise discussions with their fellow activists in the future!<sup>169</sup> Finally, after these discussions, there were almost always one or two participants expressing interest in reading the study once completed; some were also curious in knowing what my preliminary conclusions were, and what were my experiences with the opposite political camp, or with my other country case study.<sup>170</sup>

It is understandable that the Hungarian discussions in themselves happened smoothly, despite a particularly tense context. At the point when intermediaries accepted me to organise a group, they had already entered a relation of trust with me. As for the fact that Hungarian activists appeared to view participation as a mean of promoting their party, this does not necessarily distort the comparison of their discourse with that of French participants. Indeed, the lack of self-critical standpoint among Hungarian participants can be understood in itself as a result of this research, rather than as a form of bias.

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<sup>168</sup> Alexis, an UMP activist told me for instance that "there should be more debates like these, more introspection on our own thoughts, on how we feel about these things". Similarly, another *Jeune Populaire*, Pierre, emphasised "I found it very interesting, because talking among each other allows us to have a better idea of the opinions we hold on these different topics". One MSzP activist, Margit, asked me whether she could take a picture of the cards after the discussion. She said that she wanted to think about the topics on her own, as the discussion made her realise that she still had much to learn about the policy suggestions of her own party.

<sup>169</sup> In Hungary, one Fidesz intermediary, Mihály, even asked me for the list of topics after the discussion, saying that he hoped to use the themes again to organise discussions with other activists.

<sup>170</sup> Speaking of my experiences with socialist groups in France for instance, a young right-wing activist, Loïs, told me that "it would be interesting to see their point of view on these cards, and how their opinions diverge from ours on the question of consensus, etc.."

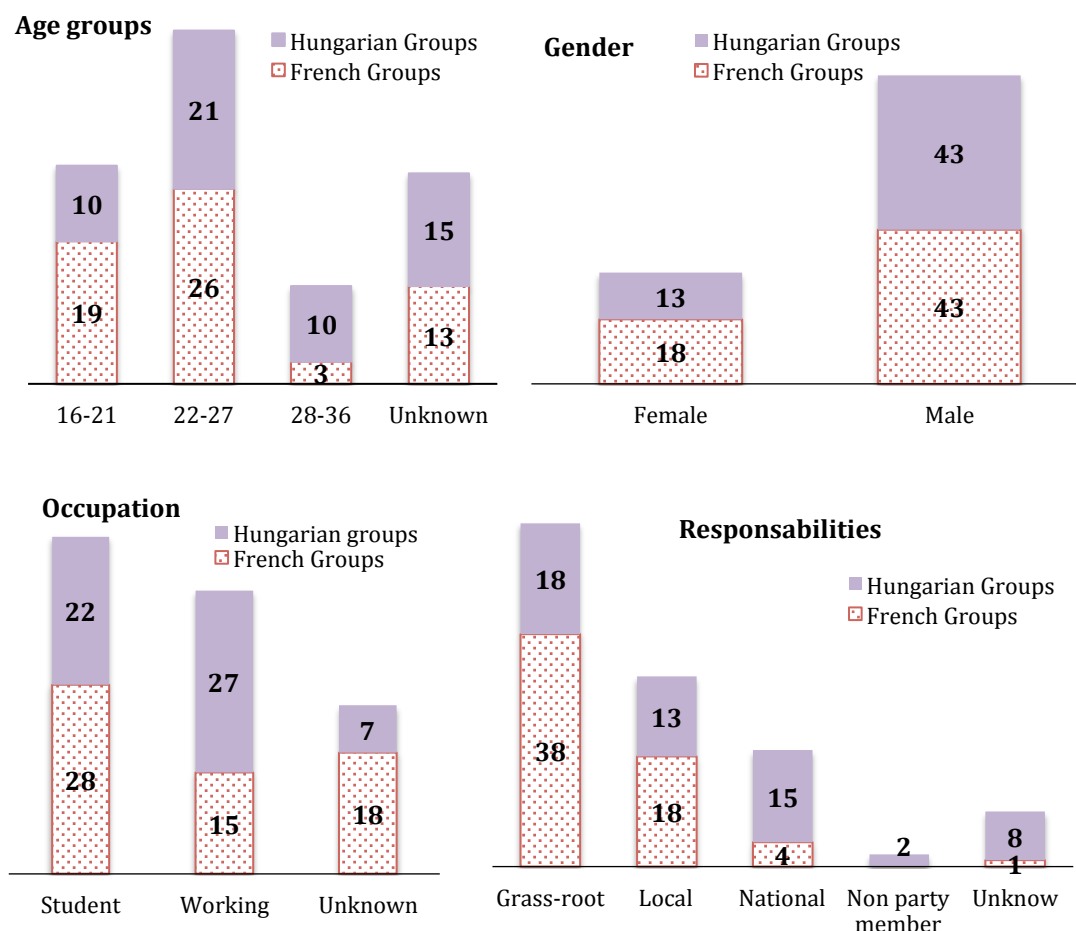
## Appendix 2: The population under study

In the following sections, I give more information on the demographics of the population under study. I discuss selection bias issues, representativeness, and differences in the composition of my French and Hungarian samples.

### **I. DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS**

Figure 36 below offers an overview of the main demographic characteristics of the population under study. The following numbers are limited to the 28 groups analysed in this study, amounting to a total of 117 participants.





*Figure 36: Distribution of French and Hungarian participants according to age groups, gender, occupation and level of responsibility in the youth organisation of the party*

A first characteristic of this group is that overrepresents the upper-middle class and the educated as compared to the general population in both countries. All of my interviewees were in the process of completing, or had completed, their higher education. None were unemployed, and very few were in a lowly qualified employment. Men were also two to three times more numerous than woman in both countries. Most of the local leaders that I initially contacted being men, they may well have themselves invited men more systematically than women to the discussion. Finally, the groups most certainly overrepresented the most active and engaged among young party members. In the absence of a financial incentive, it is likely that only the most politicised would have found an interest in contributing.<sup>171</sup> Heads of local sections will

<sup>171</sup> Focus group studies use financial incentives not only to motivate potential participants, but also to reduce selection biases, linked to interest in the study. This is especially the case in studies that aim at getting the 'lay citizen' to talk politics in a focus group setting. The absence of a financial incentive would limit participants to only the most politicised, and run counter the very purpose of these studies (for instance Duchesne & Haegel, 2004; Gamson, 1992; Perrin, 2006; White, 2011b).

also have found it easier to ask the 'inner circle' of their teams to participate, those that are most engaged in the day-to-day activity of the section. In addition, they may also have sought to select the most 'interesting' members in order to give the best possible image of their section.<sup>172</sup>

Many of these demographic traits reflect already existing tendencies among members of political parties. As the literature on political participation has repeatedly shown, political engagement is very much conditioned by one's economic, cultural and social capital. In contemporary Western Europe, party members are still disproportionately male, better educated, and with a higher level of income than the lay citizen, and this despite a trend towards greater representativeness since the 1990's (Scarrow & Gezgor, 2010; Widfeldt, 1995). The demographic composition of the youth party organisations under study in France are in line with these general tendencies. As Bargel's data shows, between 2003 and 2005, only 37% of members of the MJS and 31% of the *Jeunes Populaires* were women. 60% of the MJS and 54% of the *Jeunes Populaires* were students, against 46,3% of the 15-29 age group in France at the time. Among the parents of these young partisans, white collars and the self-employed were heavily overrepresented compared to the overall population, and manual workers widely underrepresented (Bargel, 2009, pp. 274; 288-290). While similar data is not available for youth organisations in Hungary, they are also likely to fall in line with these general demographic traits.

It is also important to emphasise that a perfectly 'representative' sample would have been both difficult to obtain, and unnecessary for the purpose of my study. The population of focus-group studies seldom obeys the criterion of the probability sample dominant in quantitative research (see Gamson's failed attempt at producing a probability sample, despite considerable financial means and 188 participants in his focus groups, Gamson, 1992, pp. 189-190). It is especially difficult for the scholar to control the demographics of his population when he relies on intermediaries for the recruitment of groups - as I did in my own study.

More generally speaking, studies that rely on qualitative methods rely on a critical case logic, rather than on a logic of representativeness, to select cases. In my case, what matters is that I can argue that the norms that my participants uphold say

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<sup>172</sup> One head of a local UMP section in Paris told me afterwards quite explicitly that he had invited those that had 'the most to say' within his team, and several intermediaries in Budapest also hinted at the fact they had sought to select particularly interesting people for the discussion. This attitude can be expected to have played out among other intermediaries as well

something about partisanship more widely within each national context. It would have been both unrealistic and unnecessary, for instance, to try to conduct groups in every major city in France and Hungary, smaller towns, rural areas, etc. Choosing to focus on Paris and Budapest in each case is perfectly adequate to the purpose of my study. Given especially the centralised nature of both France and Hungary, it is in the capital that partisans are likely to be most in touch with national level politics and politicians. In this sense, they are more likely to carry the discourse that is most influential in French and Hungarian politics.

## II. COMPARING THE HUNGARIAN AND FRENCH SAMPLES

Here I discuss differences in the demographics of my French and Hungarian population samples, differences that are apparent in Figure 36 above. Hungarian activists were on average older than the French. They were less likely to be students and more likely to be employed. There were a greater number of party members with national level responsibilities in France as compared to Hungary. While none of the French interviewees held a local electoral mandate or were on an electoral list for the upcoming local elections, 5 of the Hungarian participants were in one of these situations. This imbalance is also reflected in the types of groups among which I conducted discussions. As shown in Figure 35 in Appendix 1, two of the discussions in Hungary were conducted among groups of colleagues working for the party, while this case never occurred in France. And while only two of the French groups involved solely semi-professional politicians, this was the case of four Hungarian groups.

It is only possible to speculate on whether these different demographics have had an effect on the variations I uncovered in the course of this PhD. As detailed in Chapter 2, we have limited knowledge on the ideological variations internal to partisan organisations. May's law of curvilinear disparity would lead us to think that grass-root members are more radical than senior members of political parties. On this topic however, the empirical political sciences have not reached conclusive and clear-cut conclusions: while some studies' results support May's law, others invalidate it. If May's law does apply to Hungarian and French partisans, then the fact I had a slightly more senior group in Hungary would have 'biased' the Hungarian sample towards more moderation as compared to the French one. If May's law is reversed, then the Hungarian sample is 'biased' towards more radicalism.

I contend, however, that even if these differences in samples have introduced a

distortion in one direction or another, both samples remain characteristic of youth party membership in both countries. Not only did I apply the same recruitment strategy in both countries, but the intermediaries for most of the Hungarian groups were part of the first wave of emails I had sent: as in France, mostly heads of local sections of the party youth organisation. While there may have been some self-selection of better positioned activists in each party, this self-selection would most likely only marginally explain the overall imbalance between the French and Hungarian samples. I rather think that if I obtain a more senior, professional, and higher-ranked cohort in Budapest than in Paris, this also reflects different demographics within the French and Hungarian organisations I recruited from.

This is plausible given what we know of East-West differences in party membership composition. Parties in CEE are known for being even further cartelised than their Western European equivalents, with a greater dependence on state resources, and weaker and less numerous grass-root members (Kopecký, 2007). To this extent, not only is there likely to be a greater proportion of career motivated individuals engaging with political parties in CEE, but it is also most possibly easier to progress in the hierarchy given the smaller number of potential candidates to positions of responsibility. This later point was especially striking for the smaller parties I recruited from, as these had either no specific youth branch or a small one that was created only very recently. As a result, most of the activists I met from these smaller parties were *de facto* founding members, or at least executives, of these youth organisations. In larger parties it was also far more common in Hungary for activists with responsibilities at the local level to also hold a position higher up in the youth organisation hierarchy. Bruter and Harrison's comparative survey on youth party memberships in Europe confirms this general explanation for the cases of France and Hungary (Bruter & Harrison, 2009b). Among their interviewees, only 13.2% of young French party members were motivated by the idea of having a political career—rather than by political ideals or the desire to socialise with others—against 45.5% of young Hungarian party members (Bruter & Harrison, 2009b, p. 1272).

If Hungarian party members are *in general* more career-oriented, then the differences in the demographic composition of my French and Hungarian samples will not have distorted my results in any significant way. Whatever differences I uncover between the patterns of speech of my French and Hungarian participants, I can expect that they reflect more general differences between young partisans in France and Hungary.

## Appendix 3: Template email for recruiting participants

### I. TEMPLATE EMAIL FOR RECRUITING PARTICIPANTS IN FRANCE

Dear ...,

I am Lise Herman, and I am doing research on the political engagement of young people in Europe, at the European Studies department of the London School of Economics and Political Science (<http://www2.lse.ac.uk/europeanInstitute/home.aspx>). I am contacting you because I have a particular interest in the political opinions of (young socialists/conservatives/students, etc.), and especially in their positioning within the public debates that have emerged in French political life since the election of François Hollande. As (head of section, president of a group, etc.) your help and advice in this matter would be particularly valuable to me.

First, I will be in Paris from the beginning of February for 2 months, and would be delighted to meet you during this period to know more about your political engagement and opinions. Specifically, I hope you can participate in a group discussion that I will be organising with 3 or 4 other young members of your (organisation, party, etc). These discussions will have an informal feel to them and should, I hope, be pleasant and friendly! They will take place around a glass of beer or a cup of coffee at a time and in a place that is convenient for you, your headquarters or a local café in your neighbourhood for instance. As in an interview I will be asking questions, but you can answer them while you talk with others. Moreover, if you would like to compose this group yourself, that is suggest to some of your friends to participate, this is absolutely possible.

Whatever shape or form your participation should take, it would contribute to the progress of our knowledge on youth party organisations in Europe, a rather under-researched area. Your contribution will be completely anonymous, and will only be used for academic purposes.

Whether you would wish or not to contribute yourself to this study, I would be very grateful if you could spread the word among the political activists that you know; after this email you will find a short message that would be easy to circulate.

Finally, I wanted to ask you whether it would be possible for me to take part in some of your meetings from early February onwards. If this is easily feasible, please let me know when and where you generally hold meetings, and when it would be more convenient for you for me to join.

In any case, we will probably meet some time during the next few month, as I will be taking part in the public events of the (Jeunes populaires/MJS). If you or your friends wish to participate in this project, or if have any questions, simply send me an email at l.herman@lse.ac.uk; if you would like me to call you back, please also leave your phone number. I am also reachable by phone at +44 402 106 702 until the 31st of January and at 06 52 91 15 10 from the 1st of February onwards. I hope to hear from you soon!

All the best,

Lise Herman

# **I. TEMPLATE EMAIL FOR RECRUITING PARTICIPANTS IN HUNGARY**

Dear....

I am Lise Herman, a Franco-Hungarian doctoral student at the London School of Economics and Political Sciences. My research aims at characterizing and comparing the political commitments of young French and Hungarian citizens. I am more specifically interested in young people who feel close to a given political party, on any given side of the political spectrum, and in their positioning within the public debates that have emerged in Hungarian political life since the last elections. As you correspond to this profile, I would like to invite you to participate in my study.

I have already done my French fieldwork, and I am now in Budapest for a couple of weeks to complete the Hungarian part of my fieldwork. During this time, I hope to talk to as many young, politically active Hungarians as possible. More specifically, my research is based on collective interviews that last around one hour and a half, with 3 to 5 partisans of the same political party (In France I conducted approximately 18 such

interviews). The discussions I hope to organise will be of an informal nature and in Hungarian. Although I am not completely fluent, I can understand the language very well. The discussions will happen around a glass or a cup of coffee at a time and in a place that is convenient for you, your headquarters or a local café in their neighbourhood for instance. While I will have questions to ask to the group, the same as the ones asked in France, these should lead to a rather free and autonomous discussion among participants.

I would be grateful if you could help me organise such a group discussion, one that would involve you and a number of other, young activists that are close to you. Don't hesitate to send this email to participants who could be interested. If you find it helpful, I am also happy to meet with you one-on-one beforehand to discuss the matter.

Whatever shape or form your participation should take, it would contribute to the progress of Western European knowledge on Hungarian politics. Although we do hear about Hungary in France and the United Kingdom, especially from the press, I believe that it is important to communicate the opinions and experiences of individuals who actually live here. These discussions will only be used for academic purposes, and the personal information of the participants will remain completely anonymous.

If you or your friends wish to participate in this project, or if have any questions, simply send me an email at [l.herman@lse.ac.uk](mailto:l.herman@lse.ac.uk); if you would like me to call you back, please also leave your phone number. I am also reachable by phone on +36 70 2691 773.

Finally, I wanted to ask you whether it would be possible for me to take part in some of your meetings from early September onwards. If this is easily conceivable, please let me know when and where you generally hold meetings, and when it would be more convenient for you that I come by.

I am hoping for a positive response on your part and thank you in advance for any help.

All the best,

Lise Herman

## Appendix 4: Discussion guidelines

Introduction: Hello everyone. I am Lise Herman. I am of Hungarian origin, so my father is Hungarian but I was born in France and that is where I grew up. I did my higher education in Paris and London, and I'm currently doing a PhD at the London School of Economics and Political Science. My research project is a comparison of the French and Hungarian structures of political competition, and I am particularly interested in the worldviews of young political activists in both countries. In the Spring I already completed the French part of my fieldwork, in Paris. What I'm interested in here, in Hungary, is how young party members think about politics, what are their political opinions. For instance, I know that there have been strong political debates in this country in the last years. The type of things that I will ask you about is how you position yourself within these debates.<sup>173</sup>

*(Wait for questions)*

I would like to record this discussion, so that I can then work on your responses. Do you authorize me to do this? Of course your names will remain anonymous and the data will only be used for own research.

*(Wait for answers, turn on recorder)*

"We'll start by a small round. If you could each tell me in turn: your name, so I can address you during the discussion, your age, what is your main occupation (working, studying, etc), how long you have been member of the (PS/UMP/Fidesz, etc), and what position you have in the party organisation. Finally, I would love to know why

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<sup>173</sup> This introduction is adapted for my Hungarian groups - but the introduction for the French groups was very similar.



you decided to become a party activist, what were the motivations behind your engagement".<sup>174</sup>

*(Wait for answers)*<sup>175</sup>

Instructions: "Thank you. I'm going to give each of you 12 cards. Please have a look at them and let me know when you are done".

*(Wait until participants signal that they are done)*

"What I would like you to do is classify the cards according to how much conflict or consensus you believe there is between the (UMP/Fidesz) and the (PS/MSzP) on these different topics of policy. Feel free to classify them the way you want: in several categories, on a progressive scale, or even not to classify some of them if you think they don't fit your categories".

*If was asked whether I meant the party in government or their own political ideas:*  
"We'll start by the parties in government. But during the discussion you can talk about how that may diverge from your own opinions if you wish".

*(Wait until participants signal that they are done)*

Part 1: "Let's start with the most consensual topics and go towards the more conflictual ones. Can someone volunteer to talk about a choice he/she has made?"

*Follow up questions, if necessary*<sup>176</sup>:

"Do you all agree with what .... just said? You should feel free to intervene and to express a different opinion if you feel like it"

"Can you elaborate further? On what specific aspect of this issue do you think there is a consensus/conflict between political parties?"

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<sup>174</sup> This part of the discussion was removed from the transcripts and NVivo file made available to examiners to secure the anonymity of participants (see Appendix 7). All names given by participants were also changed to preserve their anonymity. This applies to the examples cited in this thesis, and the data made available to examiners.

<sup>175</sup> After participants had introduced themselves I sometimes asked them a few additional questions on their local party structure, day-to-day activism, or the structure of the youth organisation. This was mostly to further my own knowledge of the internal workings of the parties, but this information was scarcely used in my thesis. The same goes for participants' accounts of the reasons for which they decided to become party members.

<sup>176</sup> These questions have been asked only when participants did not raise them spontaneously in conversation, or when necessary to get the conversation going.

"Please, feel free to take up a new topic whenever you feel like you've sufficiently talked about this one"

"So how would you describe the position of your party on this question?"

"So how would you describe the position of your opponents on this question?"

*(Wait for all twelve cards to have been discussed)*

Part 2: "If we consider the classification of these topics overall, do you think, in your personal opinion, that the balance between areas of agreement and areas of disagreement is right between political parties? Do you think that the French/Hungarian political space would need more political disagreement between political parties? Or would France/Hungary rather need less disagreement, and more areas of consensus between political parties?<sup>177</sup>

*(Wait for questions to have been answered by all or most participants)*

Part 3: "Finally, do you often talk with people that are of different political convictions to your own? Can you tell me a bit about these experiences?"

*(Wait for questions to have been answered by all or most participants)*

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<sup>177</sup> In France, participants had a clearer separation between 'consensual' and 'conflictual' topics, which also created two relatively distinct parts in the discussion of the cards themselves. For this reason, I generally divided this second part of the discussion, on participants' normative assessments of political agreement and disagreement, in two parts in the case of France. For instance, once participants had discussed all of the topics that they considered as 'consensual', I would ask: "If we consider all the cards that you classified as consensual, would you say that it is a good thing that there exists an agreement between mainstream parties on these topics? Or on the contrary would you prefer there be more dissensus between the two main parties on these questions?" Similarly, once participants had answered these questions and then discussed the topics they classified as conflictual, I would ask: "If we consider all the cards that you classified as conflictual, would you say that it is a good thing that there exists these disagreements between mainstream parties on these topics? Or on the contrary would you prefer there be more consensus between the two main parties on these questions?"

# Appendix 5: The coding process

## I. DEFINITIONS AND GENERAL PROCESS

In this appendix I describe the coding *process* by which I analysed the verbatim transcripts of the 28 group discussions. The terms and definitions that I use are those developed in Saldaña's *Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers*, a well-accepted reference for the analysis of textual data (Saldaña, 2013). Coding in qualitative analysis may be defined as the process by which codes are associated with portions of text—a word, a sentence, or a paragraph—throughout the data. In this context, a code is generally "a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute" (Saldaña, 2013, p. 3) to the portion of data it is associated with. The same codes are used repeatedly, and different codes often used simultaneously throughout the data set. Counting these occurrences and co-occurrences allows for the identification of recurrent patterns and themes, and thus facilitate the formulation of rules, correlations and explanations emerging from the data. It also allows to identify variations in these patterns across different groups of speakers.

The coding was carried out using NVivo, a Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS). Although similar software (Atlas TI and QDA minor particularly) can be used to perform quantitative content analysis - for instance through the investigation of statistical regularities in key-word usage, grammatical constructions or word co-occurrences - this research does not rely on CAQDAS to perform coding in any automatised way. This software nevertheless performs important functions in the coding of textual data. First, it facilitates a process traditionally performed with pen and pencil by qualitative researchers: coding is not only accelerated by the use of software, it is also rendered more systematic and accessible for review. NVivo for instance would allow for the systematic removal or modification of a given code throughout the dataset, and produces a neat display when multiple codes are associated with the same unit of text. Second, once the cycles of

coding are complete, connecting codes and identifying patterns in the data is greatly facilitated by the use of such software. NVivo for instance performs 'coding queries' to identify portions of texts in which certain codes co-occur, and produces hierarchies and networks to display coding systems visually.

While the coding scheme that I applied to transcripts was inspired both by the theoretical framework for this study and the discussion guidelines for the group interviews, the development of any final set of codes is necessarily the result of both inductive and deductive strategies. In the process of coding, I thus first submitted portions of the data to several phases of what is commonly termed 'initial coding' before applying consistently a final set of codes to the entirety of the data. 'Initial coding' is a common process of textual analysis, during which "some codes will be merged together because they are conceptually similar; infrequent codes will be assessed for their utility in the overall coding scheme; and some codes that seemed like good ideas (...) may be dropped altogether" (Saldaña, 2013, p. 207). In the case of this analysis, I first developed a coding scheme on the basis of my theoretical framework, worked on a small part of the French data, and then consistently applied it to 12 of the French transcripts. The guidelines for coding were then adapted on the basis of their compatibility with the Hungarian data, also through a phase of initial, exploratory coding of a limited number of transcripts from the Hungarian fieldwork. I then applied this final coding scheme to the entirety of the data, and thus re-coded 'from scratch' the transcripts that had already been coded.

In extracting results from this coding process, I compared the occurrences and co-occurrences of different codes according to nationality (whether the groups were conducted in France or Hungary) and according to partisan affiliation (whether the groups were affiliated to the PS, the UMP, the MSzP or the Fidesz). In this way, it was possible to establish variations in patterns of speech across partisan groupings of different nationalities and political affiliation. In my three empirical chapters, I relied on these numbers and on a large number of examples from the interviews as my primary evidence. In conjunction, their analysis allowed me to highlight variations in the compliance of different partisan groupings to the standards established in Chapter 1.

## II. AN OVERVIEW OF THE STEPS OF CODING FOR EACH TRANSCRIPT

In this section I offer an overview of the steps I followed to code each transcript. I list and detail them in chronological order:

- Phase 1, Group characteristics: As a first step, I applied a series of codes to the *whole* transcript to assign a number of basic attributes to it. This included, for instance, the country in which the interview was conducted (France or Hungary), the party that my participants belonged to (PS, UMP, MSzP or Fidesz) and the type of partisan grouping concerned (for instance a local section of the party, or a group of more senior elites from the group organisations, etc.). Coding these general characteristics allowed me to identify patterns of coding and therefore of speech across different types of groups, especially according to participants' nationality and partisan affiliation.

- Phase 2, Biographical information: As a second step, I focused on the information that participants gave when they introduced themselves at the beginning of the interviews. I coded, for instance, information about the gender, occupation, or position within the party of participants. This allowed me to gather this information more easily at later stages in order to present it in the thesis itself (for this information, see Chapter 2 and Appendix 2 especially).

- Phase 3, Comments about instructions: As a third step, I focused on the ways in which my different participants reacted to the distribution of the cards, and the instructions for the discussion more generally. I coded when participants had a positive reaction to the cards, when they asked questions, and if they did, what types of questions they asked. As I outline in Chapter 3 of the thesis, these reactions were useful to understand some of my participants' issues with their own partisan identity, and thus provided indirect information on the cohesiveness of partisans' claims.

- Phase 4, Justifications for card classifications: The fourth step was the longest of all, as it concerned the bulk of each interview where participants talked about their card classifications. I applied a series of codes to each substantiated justification for the classification of a given card given by one or several participants. I define a substantiated justification as a claim made in favour of the point covered by each code that is backed-up by participants with at least one argument. Each argument or series of arguments would itself go through a series of coding steps:

- Phase 4.1, Cards or topic under discussion: Here I would simply code for the card or topic being discussed. The information collected during this step was mostly used in Chapter 3 on partisan cohesiveness.

- Phase 4.2, Assessments of conflictuality: Second, I would code for the general assessment given by one or several participants on the degree of conflictuality of the topic under discussion - for instance, whether they considered it a 'Consensual' or a 'Conflictual' topic. The information collected during this step was mostly used in Chapter 3 on partisan cohesiveness, but also in chapter 5 on partisans' approach to political disagreement and agreement.

- Phase 4.3, Justifications for assessments: Third, I would code for the justifications that partisans would offer to assess a given topic as either conflictual or consensual, and especially whether they would talk about the differences and similarities in the ideas of political parties or in their practices. The information collected during this step was mostly used in Chapter 3 on partisan cohesiveness.

- Phase 4.4, Actors emphasised: Fourth, I would code for the actors that partisans talked about when justifying the consensual or conflictual nature of a given topic: mostly their own party, mostly their opponents, or comparing the platforms of both parties. The information collected during this step was mostly used in Chapter 3 on partisan cohesiveness, but also in Chapter 4 on respect for political opponents.

- Phase 4.5, Knowledge: Fifth, if relevant, I would code for instances when participants would either refer to their ignorance of a certain topic to justify their weak ability to justify their position, and instances when participants would refer to their particular expertise in a given domain to give credential to their justification.

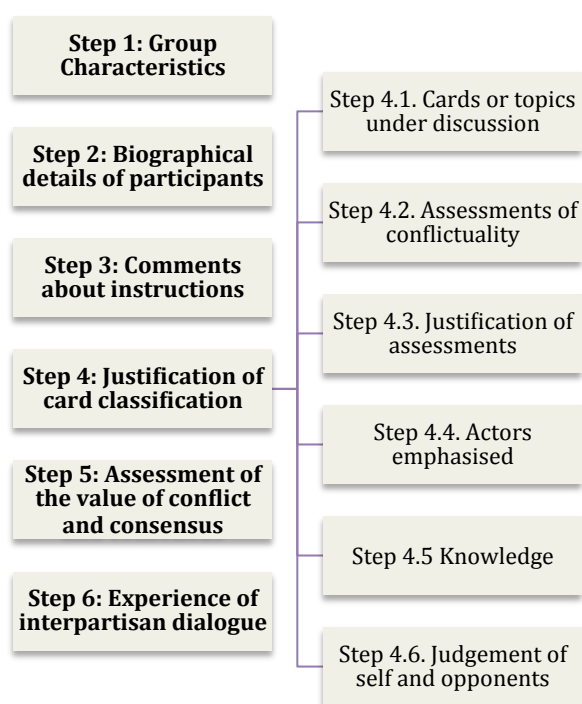
- Phase 4.6, Judgements of self and opponents: Finally, I would code for the criticisms and judgements that participants would formulate against their own party and their opponents in the process of talking about the differences and similarities between party platforms on a given issue. For instance, I would code here for instances where participants criticised the practices of opponents, their intentions, or their unwillingness to fulfil the common good. The information collected during this step was mostly used in Chapter 4 on respect for political opponents.

- Phase 5, Assessments of the value of political agreement and disagreement: As a fifth step, I would move on to the next step of the discussion, in which I would ask participants to formulate a normative judgement on the state of partisan conflictuality in their own political system. The information collected during this step was mostly used in Chapter 5, on partisan attitudes towards political agreement and disagreement.

- Phase 6, Experiences of interpartisan dialogue: Finally, I would code the last part of the discussion, in which participants would talk about their own personal

experiences of interpartisan dialogue. I coded here especially for whether participants accounted for negative or positive experiences in this context. The information collected during this step was mostly used in Chapter 5, on partisan attitudes towards political agreement and disagreement.

- Transversal codes, Key passages: This series of codes was used throughout the whole coding process, and thus throughout the six phases listed above, to highlight passages from the transcripts that I found particularly striking. These allowed me to make a pre-selection of interesting examples from which I selected the passages that were translated and integrated in the body of this dissertation.



### III. CODING GUIDELINES

#### 1. Preliminary remarks to the codebook

Below I provide the codebook used for the coding process - in other words, I provide definitions for each code that I applied. In theory, this codebook could be used by a third person to re-code my data and thus verify my coding. It could also be used to code new interviews conducted according to the same discussion guidelines. Or it could be adapted to analyse partisan cohesiveness on the basis of other types of data.

Coding requires that the social scientist *interpret* the data at hand. To apply a given code to a portion of text, one needs to make an assessment on the content of this portion of text, and thus to interpret it. My own work does not escape this general rule. Undeniably, some of my codes have required more interpretation than others. When participants would pick-up the card 'Employment and unemployment policies' and talk about it, I could easily apply the corresponding code. But even there, I needed to decide whether the participant had sufficiently developed an argument about this specific card to warrant being coded. Other codes demanded more interpretation. To distinguish, for instance, between cases where participants talked about the ideas of political parties and their practices for instance was not always straightforward. This also means that the reader can expect a small measure of inconsistency in my coding. My own interpretation of the text has most likely oscillated over the period of four months during which I conducted my final cycle of coding. If I were to re-code my data, it is plausible that I would obtain slightly different results. This would also be the case if someone else were to code my data on the basis of this codebook.

Notwithstanding the above, I am confident that my general results, and especially the general variations in partisan compliance that I have uncovered, would be verified with subsequent cycles of coding. As shown in my three empirical chapters and in Appendix 6, the variations I find between the patterns of speech of French and Hungarian participants, and between parties within a given country, are consistent across all of the indicators that I consider. The quantitative results from the coding process are also only an indication of trends that I have assessed from a qualitative point of view, drawing on representative examples from different groups of partisans in my empirical chapters. While one could find slightly different numbers, and thus certain variations between different groups to be a bit more or less pronounced with another cycle of coding, I am positive that these general trends would still hold.<sup>178</sup>

Before I detail my codebook, here are a number of guidelines that may help the reader to go through it:

- I proceed in the order of the steps described above, and thus provide definitions for each code applied according to this order.
- Most of the codes I describe here are applied when *at least one participant* makes a substantiated claim that supports the argument associated with a given code. I

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<sup>178</sup> If I were to publish this thesis in the future, I would nevertheless perform this additional cycle of coding for the sake of additional academic rigor.



define a substantiated justification as a claim made in favour of the point covered by each code that is backed-up by participants with at least one argument. When the words 'at least one participant' are associated with a code description, this means that if other participants backed-up the first speaker with the same argument, a single code would be applied to the portion of text relevant to this dialogue.

- When a given code is indented under another code, this means that the former is a 'sub-code' and the latter a 'primary' code. A 'sub-code' is defined as a "second-order tag assigned after a primary code to detail or enrich the entry, depending on the volume of data you have or specificity you may need for categorisation and data analysis" (Saldaña, 2013, p. 77). To give an example, I applied two different codes depending on whether participants criticised their opponents on their practices or on their intentions. These codes were then primary codes for a number of sub-codes, refining these categories. For instance, the code used for criticisms on intentions has two sub-codes, one applied when participants target their opponents' preoccupation with political interests, and another when participants targeted their opponents' preoccupation with personal interests. Any portion of text that is coded with a given sub-code is also coded with its primary code.

- I place the mention 'or' in front of codes or subcodes when these are exclusive of each other. On the other hand, I place the mention 'and' in front of codes or subcodes when these can be cumulative.

- In line with this last point, it should be clear to the reader that many of these codes have been applied *simultaneously* to a given portion of text. This is what allowed me, at the end of this process, to identify variations in the patterns of speech of participants according to nationality or partisan affiliations, and to extract important information related to the co-occurrences of certain codes.

## 2. The codebook

### ***Phase 1: Group characteristics***

These are the codes applied to the *whole* transcript to assign a number of basic attributes to it.

#### Phase 1.1: Country

FRANCE (Applies to the entirety of all French transcripts)

or HUNGARY (Applies to the entirety of all Hungarian transcripts)

### Phase 1.2: Position on political spectrum

LEFT (Applies to the entirety of all transcripts of group discussions involving members of a party that self-defines as being on the left in a given national context).

MSzP/Együtt (Sub-code of LEFT, Applies to the entirety of all MSzP or Együtt/PM transcripts)

PS (Sub-code of LEFT, Applies to the entirety of all PS transcripts)

or RIGHT (Applies to the entirety of all transcripts of group discussion involving members of a party that self-defines as being on the right in a given national context)

Fidesz (Sub-code of RIGHT, Applies to the entirety of all Fidesz and KDNP transcripts)

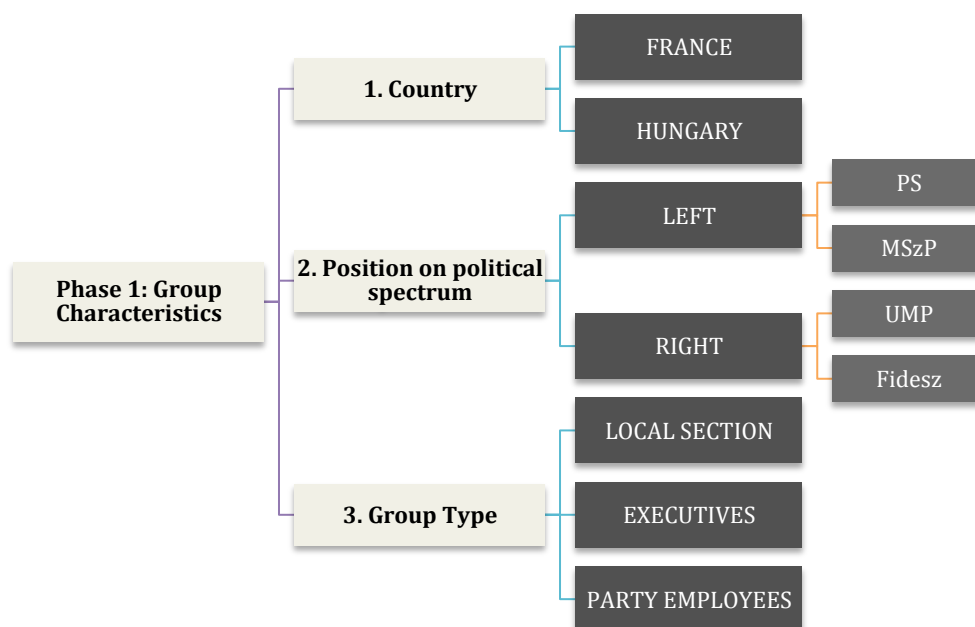
UMP (Sub-code of RIGHT, Applies to the entirety of all UMP transcripts)

### Phase 1.3: Type of group

EXECUTIVES (Applies to the entirety of all discussions happening among groups of participants who have local or national responsibilities in the youth party organisation, and know each other through this medium)

or LOCAL SECTION (Applies to the entirety of all discussions among participants that belong to the same local party or youth party section)

or PARTY EMPLOYEES (Applies to the entirety of all discussions happening among party employees that know each other through working for the party)



***Phase 2: Biographical information about participants<sup>179</sup>***

These are the codes that focus on the information that participants gave when they introduced themselves at the beginning of the interviews.

AGE (Applies to first mention by participants of their age)

and GENDER (Applies to first mention by participants of their name)

MAN (Sub-code of GENDER, Applies to all masculine names)

or WOMAN (Applies to all feminine names)

and OCCUPATION (Applies to first mention by participants of their occupation)

STUDENT (Sub-code of OCCUPATION, applies to first mention by participants of being a student)

or WORKER (Sub-code of OCCUPATION, applies to first mention by participants of being employed or self-employed)

and PARTY RESPONSIBILITY (Applies to first mention by participants of their position or level of responsibility within the party)

or GRASS-ROOT (Sub-code of PARTY RESPONSIBILITY, applies to mentions by participants that they are simple activists in the party)

or LOCAL ELITE (Sub-code of PARTY RESPONSIBILITY, applies to mentions by participants that they have local level responsibilities in the party itself or in its youth organisation)

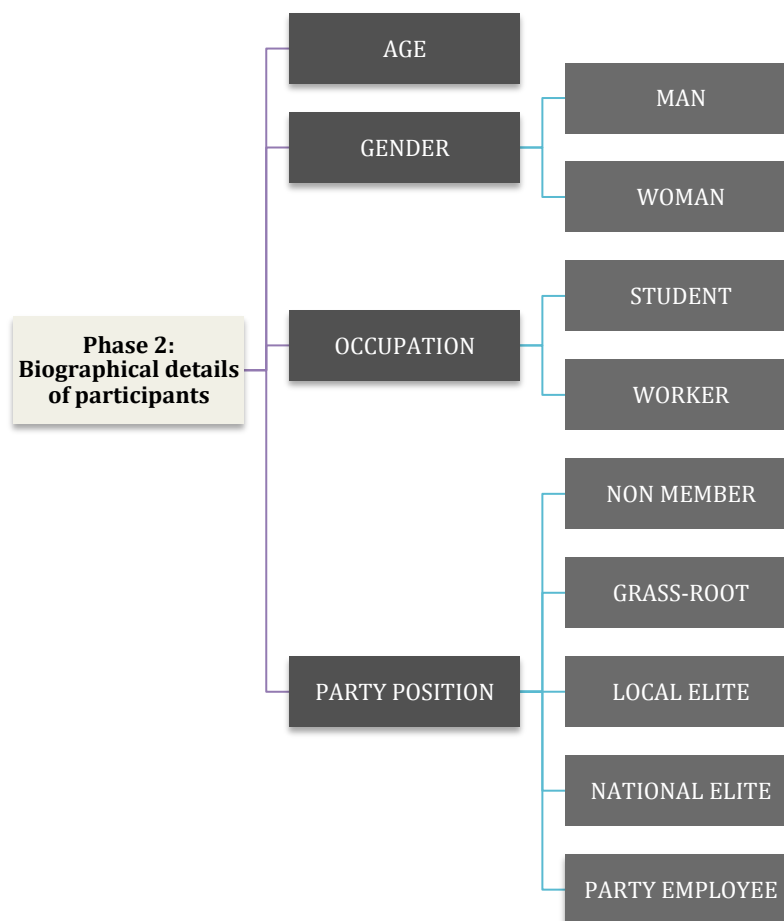
or NATIONAL ELITE (Sub-code of PARTY RESPONSIBILITY, applies to mentions by participants that they have national level responsibilities in the party itself or in its youth organisation)

NON-MEMBER (Sub-code of PARTY RESPONSIBILITY, applies to mentions by participants that they are not members of the party)

and/or PARTY EMPLOYEE (Sub-code of PARTY RESPONSIBILITY, applies to first mentions by participants of being employed by the party)

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<sup>179</sup> These codes are included in the NVivo file deposited online for the use of my thesis examiners (see Appendix 7). However, for reasons of privacy, I have removed from both the transcripts and the NVivo data the first part of the interviews in which participants introduce themselves. To this extent, the corresponding NVivo code are not attached anymore to any specific portion of text in the accessible NVivo file.



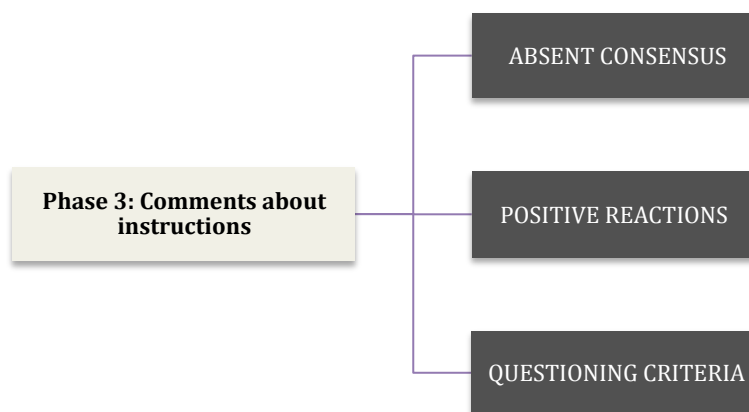
### ***Phase 3: Comments about instructions***

These are the codes that focus on the ways in which my different participants reacted to the distribution of the cards, and the instructions for the discussion more generally.

NO CONSENSUAL CARDS (Applied when at least one participant questions the instructions by emphasising that they are not able to find consensual topics among those discussed)

and/or POSITIVE REACTION (Applied when at least one participant has a positive reaction to the instructions, either through complimenting the author about the card game idea, or making jokes about it)

and/or QUESTIONING CRITERIA (Applied when at least one participant asks questions about the criteria according to which they are supposed to classify the cards. In these cases, participants would generally suggest two possible logics of classification. For instance, one according to their own beliefs concerning what the opposition between Left and Right should be, and the other according to the position defended officially by political parties in the public sphere. Or one according to the ideals or values that political parties defend, the other according to their practices)



### ***Phase 4: Justifications for card classifications***

These are the codes applied to the bulk of each interview, where participants talked about their card classifications. I applied a series of codes to each substantiated justification for the classification of a given card given by one or several participants. Each argument or series of arguments would itself go through a series of coding steps.

#### **Phase 4.1: Cards or topics under discussion**

These are the codes applied that describe the cards or topic being discussed.

#### ***Equivalent cards in France and Hungary***

**PUBLIC SERVICE** (Applied when at least one participant gives a substantiated justification for their classification of the card 'Reform and maintenance of the public service')

**EU** (Applied when at least one participant gives a substantiated justification for their classification of the card 'Relations to the European Union')

**MINORITIES** (Applied when at least one participant gives a substantiated justification for their classification of the card 'National and/or Religious Minorities')

**JUSTICE AND SECURITY** (Applied when at least one participant gives a substantiated justification for their classification of the card 'Justice and Security')

**EMPLOYMENT POLICY** (Applied when at least one participant gives a substantiated justification for their classification of the card 'The fight against unemployment and employment policy')

**PUBLIC MORALITY** (Applied when at least one participant gives a substantiated justification for their classification of the card 'Public Morality')

**INDUSTRIAL POLICY** (Applied when at least one participant gives a substantiated justification for their classification of the card 'Industrial policy, agricultural policy and protectionism')

FISCAL POLICY (Applied when at least one participant gives a substantiated justification for their classification of the card 'Fiscal policy, social policy and redistribution of wealth')

PUBLIC FINANCE (Applied when at least one participant gives a substantiated justification for their classification of the card 'Financing the public debt and deficit - improving accounts')

ECOLOGY (Applied when at least one participant gives a substantiated justification for their classification of the card 'Ecology - Green politics')

*Cards particular to the French fieldwork*

GENDER (Applied when at least one participant gives a substantiated justification for their classification of the card 'Sexual Minorities and societal change')

IMMIGRATION (Applied when at least one participant gives a substantiated justification for their classification of the card 'Legal and Illegal immigration').

*Cards particular to the Hungarian fieldwork*

INSTITUTIONS (Applied when at least one participant gives a substantiated justification for their classification of the card 'Institutional Reform')

NATION IN POLITICS (Applied when at least one participant gives a substantiated justification for their classification of the card 'The Nation in politics')

*Common topics that came up in discussions but were not on the cards*

CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT (Applied when at least one participant talks about the question of citizen and youth political engagement)

GENERATION (Applied when at least one participant talks about the question of generations or generational change)

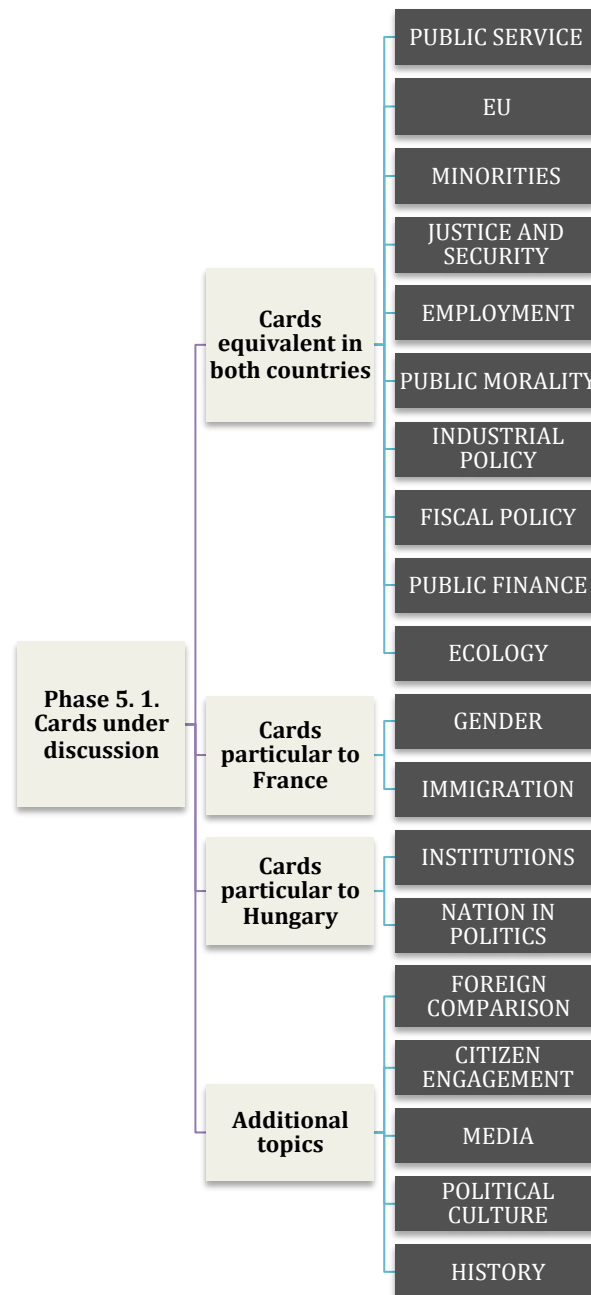
MEDIA (Applied when at least one participant talks about the question of the role of the media in politics)

POLITICAL CULTURE (Applied when at least one participant talks about the question of national political culture)

FOREIGN COMPARISON (Applied when at least one participant talks about political, economic or social developments in other countries as a point of comparison to their own).

HISTORY (Applied when at least one participant talks about the question of the country's history)

OTHER PARTIES (Applied when at least one participant talks about other parties than the two mainstream parties)



#### Phase 4.2. Assessments of conflictuality

The following codes correspond to the judgements participants make as to the conflictual or consensual nature of the cards that were distributed to them. Any of these codes are therefore necessarily simultaneously coded with one of the Topic Code listed in Phase 4. 1.

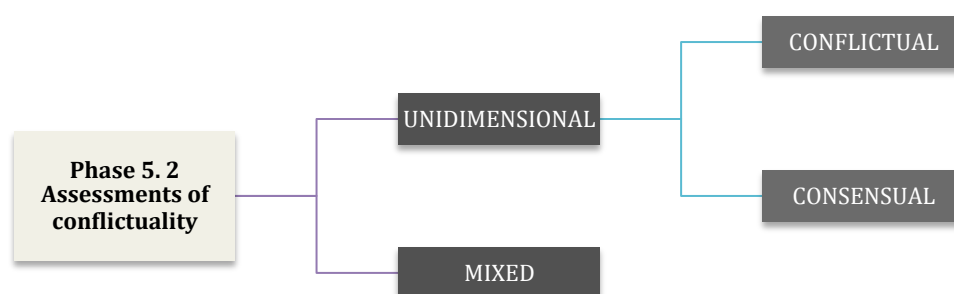
**UNIDIMENSIONAL** (Applied when at least one participant develops a categorical argument to classify a given card as a topic of partisan disagreement or partisan agreement. By this I mean that they insist only on either the differences, or the similarities, between the platforms of political parties on this given topic)

**CONFLICTUAL** (Sub-code of UNIDIMENSIONAL, applied when at least one participant develops a categorical argument to justify why they consider a

given topic as conflictual; or insist solely on what differentiates his party's positions from the position of his opponents on a given topic)

or CONSENSUAL (Sub-code of UNIDIMENSIONAL, applied when at least one participant develops a categorical argument to justify why they consider a given topic as consensual; or insist solely on the similarities between his party's positions and the position of opponents on a given topic)

or MIXED (Applied when at least one participant develops a nuanced argument about their classification of a specific card. By this I mean that they recognise both elements of consensus and conflict on given topic; or insist both on similarities and differences between the position of their own party and the position of their opponents on a given topic)



#### Phase 4.3. Justifications for assessments

The following codes correspond to the basis on which participants justify their assessment of the conflictual or consensual nature of a given topic. Depending on the type of assessment made (see 4.2), they are simultaneously coded with a given topic code listed in 4.1 above, and simultaneously coded with the codes CONFLICTUAL, CONSENSUAL or MIXED.

##### *a. Justifying unidimensional assessments*

IDEAS (Co-coded with CONFLICTUAL or CONSENSUAL, applied when at least one participant develops an argument to classify a given card as a topic of partisan disagreement or partisan agreement, insisting mostly on the differences or similarities in the *ideas* of rival parties to justify their assessment)

WORLDVIEWS (Sub-code of IDEAS, applied when at least one participant develops an argument to classify a given card as a topic of partisan disagreement or partisan agreement, insisting mostly on the more abstract principles, values and normative commitments that bring partisans together or sets them apart on this given topic)

DIAGNOSIS/OBJECTIVES (Sub-code of IDEAS, applied when at least one participant develops an argument to classify a given card as a topic of partisan disagreement or partisan agreement, insisting mostly on the differences or similarities in the types of problems that parties are likely to identify as needing to be solved, or the types of objectives that parties wish to achieve through policy)

PRACTICES (Co-coded with CONFLICTUAL or CONSENSUAL, applied when at least one participant develops an argument to classify a given card as a topic of partisan



disagreement or partisan agreement, insisting mostly on the differences or similarities in the practices and policies of rival parties to justify their assessment)

SPECIFIC (Sub-code of PRACTICES, applied when at least one participant develops an argument to classify a given card as a topic of partisan disagreement or partisan agreement, insisting mostly on the differences or similarities in the specific practices of political parties to justify their assessment - for instance specific policies, laws, political decisions, speeches, etc)

GENERAL (Sub-code of PRACTICES, applied when at least one participant develops an argument to classify a given card as a topic of partisan disagreement or partisan agreement, insisting mostly on the differences or similarities in the general practices of political parties to justify their assessment - for instance the types of policies, discourses, or ways of doing things of parties)

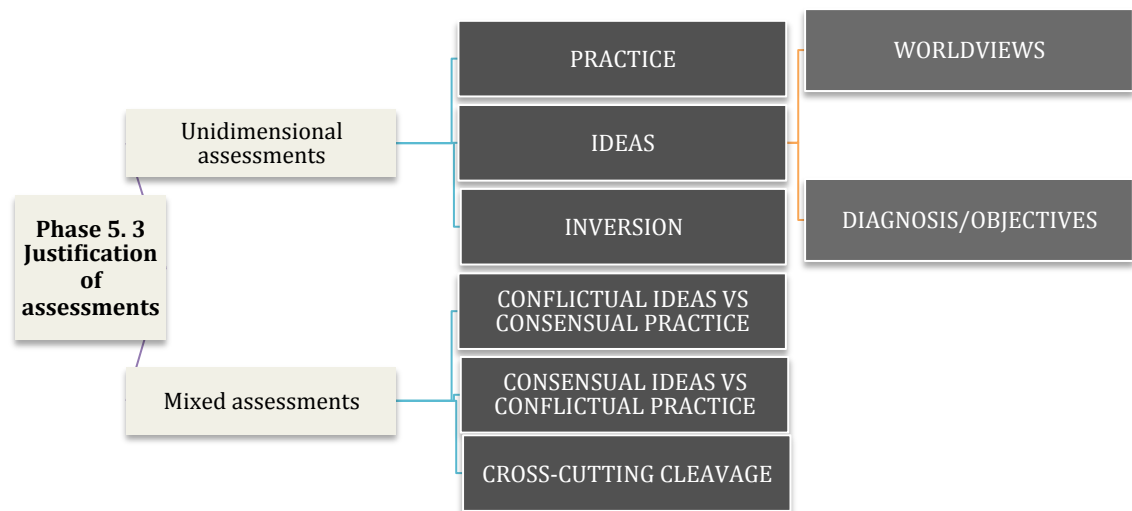
INVERSION (Co-coded with CONFLICTUAL, when at least one participant develops an argument to classify a given card as a topic of partisan disagreement, insisting on the reversal by mainstream parties of traditional, Left-Right platforms on a given question)

#### *b. Justifying mixed assessments*

CONFLICTUAL IDEAS VS CONSENSUAL PRACTICE (Co-coded with MIXED, applied when, in expressing a qualified judgement as described above, at least one participant insists that there exists on a given topic both differences in the ideas that parties defend, and similarities in the political practice and policies that parties put in place)

or CONSENSUAL IDEAS VS. CONFLICTUAL PRACTICE (Co-coded with MIXED, applied when, in expressing a qualified judgement as described above, at least one participant insists that there exists on a given topic both similarities in the ideas that parties defend, and differences in the political practices and policies that parties put in place)

or CROSS-CUTTING DISAGREEMENT (Co-coded with MIXED, applied when, in expressing a qualified judgement as described above, at least one participant insists that parties are internally divided on a given question, or that political oppositions on a given question do not strictly respect traditional lines of inter-party debate)



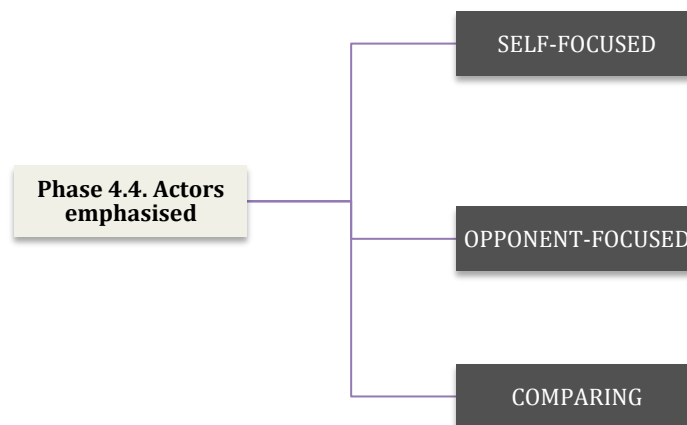
#### Phase 4.4. Actors emphasised

The following codes correspond to the actors participants emphasise when they justify the conflictual or consensual nature of the cards that were distributed to them. Any of these codes are therefore generally simultaneously applied with some of the codes listed in 4.1 to 4.3.

SELF-FOCUSED (Applied when at least one participant mainly talks about their own party's ideas or practices when justifying the conflictual or consensual nature of a given topic)

or OPPONENT-FOCUSED (Applied when at least one participant mainly talks about their own opponents' ideas or practices when justifying the conflictual or consensual nature of a given topic)

or COMPARISON (Applied when at least one participant develops a comparison between their opponents' ideas or practices and their own when justifying the conflictual or consensual nature of a given topic)

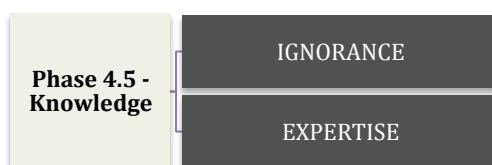


#### Phase 4.5. Knowledge

These are the codes that I applied when participants talked about their own ignorance or expertise about a certain topic when discussing it. These codes were thus simultaneous to many of those described above from 4.1 to 4.4.

IGNORANCE (Applied when at least one participant justifies the fact they do little to no justification for their assessment of the conflictual or consensual nature of the topic they are referring to by the fact that they are too ignorant, or lack expertise, about the topic itself)

EXPERTISE (Applied when at least one participant justifies his ability to talk about a given topic, or about the ability of another participant to talk about a given topic, by the fact that they have specific expertise on this same topic - because of their job, diploma, etc.)



#### Phase 4.6. Judgements of self and opponents

These are the codes applied to the judgements that participants made concerning their own party and their opponents. Because these judgements were made in the process of talking about the differences and similarities between party platforms on the twelve issues discussed, these codes are generally simultaneously applied with some of the codes listed in 4.1 to 4.5.

CRITICISM OF OPPONENTS (Applied when at least one participant casts a negative judgement on their political opponents)

FLAWED PRACTICES (Sub-code of CRITICISM OF OPPONENTS, applied when at least one participant casts a negative judgement on their political opponents by emphasising flaws in their practices)

INCOHERENCE (Sub-code of FLAWED PRACTICES, applied when at least one participant casts a negative judgement on their political opponents by emphasising incoherencies in their practices)

INEFFICIENCY (Sub-code of FLAWED PRACTICES, applied when at least one participant casts a negative judgement on their political opponents by emphasising the inefficient nature of their practices, or their lack of realism)

LACK OF POLITICAL WILL (Sub-code of FLAWED PRACTICES, applied when at least one participant casts a negative judgement on their political opponents by emphasising their lack of political will or vision)

IRRESPONSABILITY (Sub-code of FLAWED PRACTICES, applied when at least one participant casts a negative judgement on their political opponents by emphasising their irresponsibility, lack of professionalism or carelessness)

and/or ILL INTENTIONS (Sub-code of CRITICISM OF OPPONENTS, applied when at least one participant casts a negative judgement on their political opponents by denouncing the lack of integrity of opponents' motivations)

POLITICAL INTERESTS (Sub-code of ILL INTENTIONS, applied when at least one participant casts a negative judgement on their political opponents by denouncing the lack of integrity of opponents' motivations, emphasising especially their tendency to favour certain groups in society to the detriment of others for electoral purposes, or to be driven solely by the desire to be elected or to please their electorate)

PERSONAL INTERESTS (Sub-code of ILL INTENTIONS, applied when at least one participant casts a negative judgement on their political opponents by denouncing the lack of integrity in opponents' motivations, denouncing especially their quest for material gain or the fact that their opponents are driven solely by the desire to further their personal power. Accusations of corruption, nepotism and clientelism fall under this code)

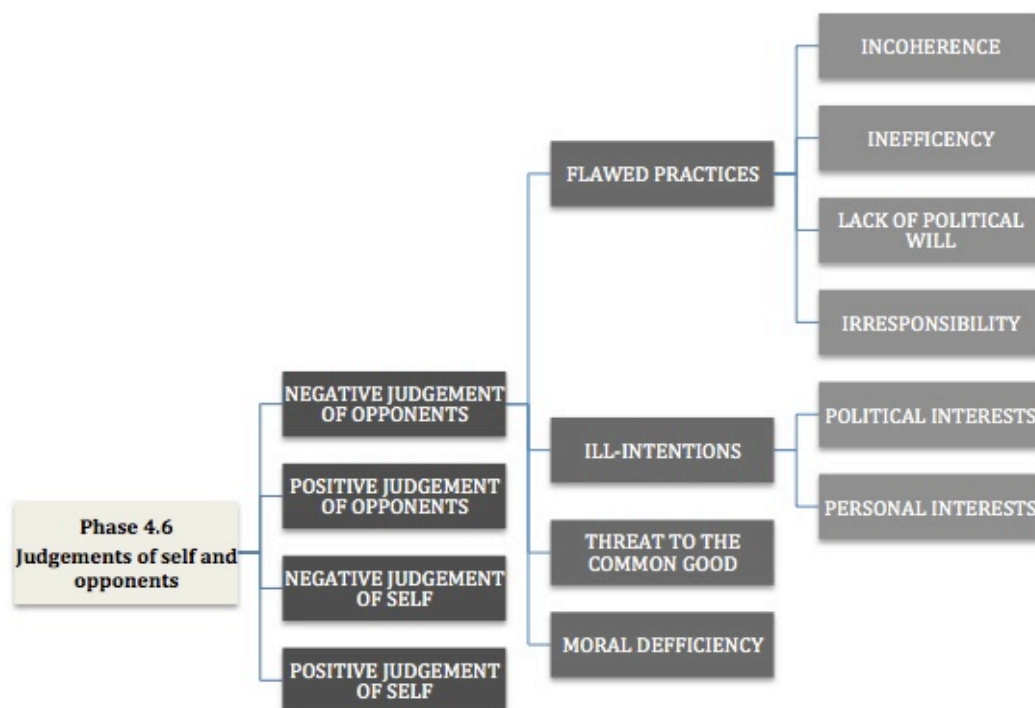
and/or THREAT TO THE COMMON GOOD (Sub-code of CRITICISM OF OPPONENTS, applied when at least one participant casts a negative judgement on their political opponents by denouncing the harmful or threatening nature of their opponents or their opponents' practices with regard to the common good)

and/or MORAL DEFFICIENCY (Sub-code of NEGATIVE JUDGEMENT OF OPPONENT, applied when at least one participant attributes 'immorality', 'amorality' or 'evil' as a defining characteristic of the personality of political opponents)

PRAISE OF OPPONENTS (Applied when at least one participant casts a positive judgement on their political opponents)

SELF-CRITICISM (Applied when at least one participant casts a negative judgement on their own party)

SELF-PRAISE (Applied when at least one participant casts a positive judgement on their own party)

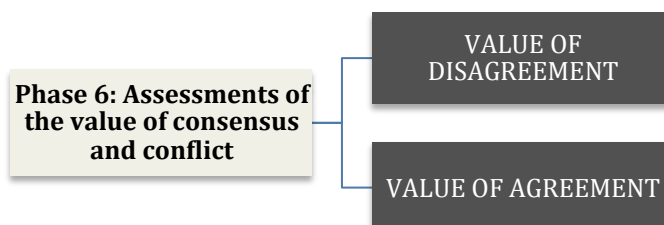


### ***Phase 5: Assessments of the value of conflict and consensus***

The following codes relate to the part in the discussion following the justification by participants of their card classification. Here I would ask participants to formulate a normative judgement on the state of partisan conflictuality in their own political system.

VALUE OF DISAGREEMENT (Applied when at least one participant develops a substantiated argument emphasising the positive value of disagreement between political parties, or the negative value of excessive agreement between political parties)

VALUE OF AGREEMENT (Applied when at least one participant develops a substantiated argument emphasising the positive value of agreement between political parties, or the negative value of excessive disagreement between political parties).

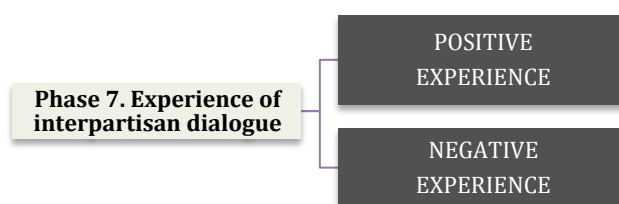


### ***Phase 6: Experiences of interpartisan dialogue***

This series of codes applied to the last part of the discussion, in which participants would talk about their own personal experiences of interpartisan dialogue.

POSITIVE or NEUTRAL EXPERIENCE (Applied when a participant accounts in positive or neutral terms for one of their personal experiences of interpartisan dialogue)

NEGATIVE EXPERIENCE (Applied when a participant accounts in negative terms for one of their personal experiences of interpartisan dialogue)



### ***Transversal codes: Key passages***

This series of codes was used to highlight passages from the transcripts that I found particularly striking. These allowed me to make a pre-selection of interesting examples from which I selected the passages that were translated and integrated in the body of this dissertation.

KEY FIDESZ (Applied when I found particularly interesting passages in Fidesz transcripts for future use)

KEY MSzP (Applied when I found particularly interesting passages in MSzP transcripts for future use)

KEY PS (Applied when I found particularly interesting passages in PS transcripts for future use)

KEY UMP (Applied when I found particularly interesting passages in UMP transcripts for future use)

## Appendix 6: Cross-country comparison of the coding-based evidence

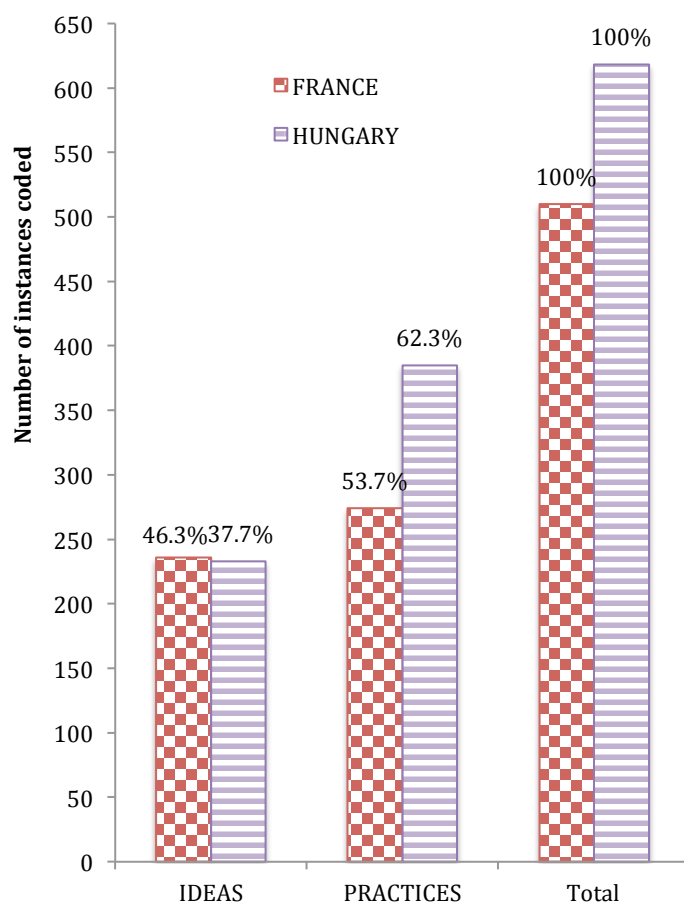
In this appendix I present in a comparative fashion the coding-based evidence for both French and Hungarian patterns of speech. It confirms the general variations that I have shown to exist between French and Hungarian patterns of speech: French participants uphold the standards of cohesiveness and commitment to political pluralism better than Hungarian participants, and this on all of the criteria considered in my empirical chapters.

### I. THE COHESIVENESS OF PARTISAN CLAIMS

In the following sections I examine in a comparative fashion the extent to which the discourse of French and Hungarian participants complies with the three criteria of partisan cohesiveness: the normative criterion, the executive criterion and the criterion of differentiation.

#### 1. The normative criterion

As emphasised in Chapter 1, the first criteria to evaluate whether partisans uphold the standard of cohesiveness is the extent to which they put forward visions of the common good that citizens can aspire to. One indicator that my data allows to consider is participants' relative emphasis on either the ideas or the actions of political parties when they accounted for partisan agreements or disagreements on the twelve cards under discussion. As Figure 37 indicates, French participants draw on practice-related and ideational dimensions of party platforms in a rather balanced way: 53.7% and 46.3% total assessments respectively. Hungarian participants, on the other hand, tend to describe partisan positions more in terms of the types of political practices parties advocate or perform than in terms of their ideas: 62.3% and 37.7% of total assessments respectively.

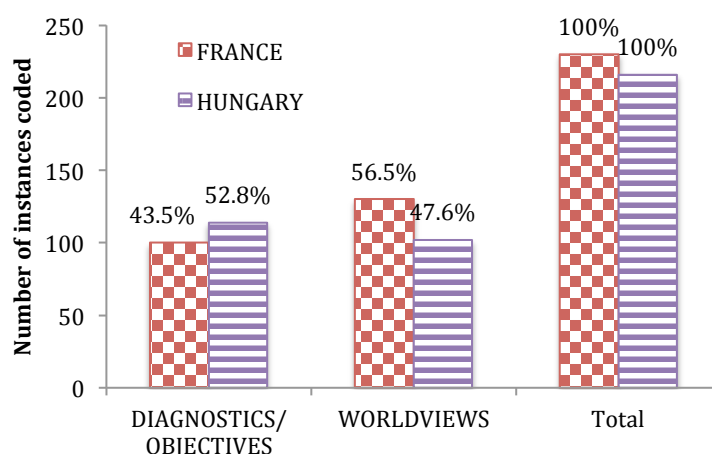


**Figure 37: Dimensions of partisan platforms emphasised by French and Hungarian participants to justify their card classification**

*N.B: See the note under Figure 5 for an explanation of how to read this figure*



The coding category IDEAS was further refined to take into account levels of abstraction of the ideas participants evoked. The code WORLDVIEWS was used where participants referred to more abstract principles, values and normative commitments that motivate parties. On the other hand, I associated the code DIAGNOSTICS/OBJECTIVES when participants referred to the types of problems parties were likely to identify as needing remedy through policy, or the types of objectives parties wished to achieve through policy. As shown in Figure 38, when talking about the ideas of political parties, French participants evoke more often the abstract principles and values that underlie policy proposals than they do assessments of problems to be solved by government or political objectives (56.5% and 43.5% of total assessments respectively). Hungarian participants displayed the opposite tendency, with a lesser share of idea-related arguments referring to abstract principles as compared to more concrete, policy-related ideas (52.8% and 47.6% of total assessments respectively).



**Figure 38: Ideational dimensions of partisan platforms emphasised by French and Hungarian participants to justify their card classification**

*N.B: See the note under Figure 5 for an explanation of how to read this figure*

## 2. The executive criterion

Another condition for parties to fulfil the standard of cohesiveness is that they link their normative ideals to concrete practices of government. This section considers two indicators for this criterion in the coding data.

*'Mixed' arguments*

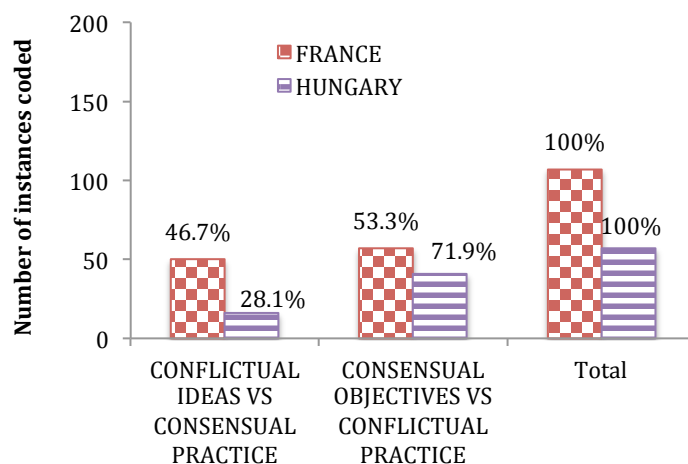
The executive criterion requires that partisans identify their party's policy choices as deriving from a certain idea of the common good, and as a means to reach normative goals. To make this connection and establish these links, it is first necessary that partisans view the ideas and practice related dimensions of party platforms as distinct. I thus consider here instances when participants make this distinction between the ideas and practices of political parties explicit. One such indication comes with some of participants judgements on the conflictual nature of a given topic. Indeed, in some cases, participants qualified their judgement by emphasising different degrees of partisan disagreement according to those aspects of partisan platforms considered: their ideas or their practices.

While these judgements were broadly coded as MIXED (as opposed to CONFLICTUAL or CONSENSUAL), two further sub-codes are relevant here. First, I coded the assessments of participants 'CONSENSUAL IDEAS VS. CONFLICTUAL PRACTICE' when they established commonalities between parties on the basis of their ideas and distinguished them on the basis of their actions. Second, I coded the assessments of participants CONFLICTUAL IDEAS VS CONSENSUAL PRACTICE when they established commonalities between parties on the basis of their actions and distinguish them on the basis of their ideas.<sup>180</sup>

As Figure 39 shows, these types of arguments are on average used close to twice more often by French participants than they are by Hungarian ones (107 against 57 instances coded respectively). Differences are even starker if one considered solely the code CONFLICTUAL IDEAS VS. CONSENSUAL PRACTICE, used over three times more often in French groups (50 against 16 instances coded respectively).

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<sup>180</sup> A third, sub-category of 'Mixed' assessments was labelled CROSS-CUTTING CLEAVAGES, when participants identified topics on which parties were internally divided. This category is however less relevant to the 'executive' criteria here.



**Figure 39: Arguments used by French and Hungarian participants in their 'Mixed' assessments of partisan disagreement**

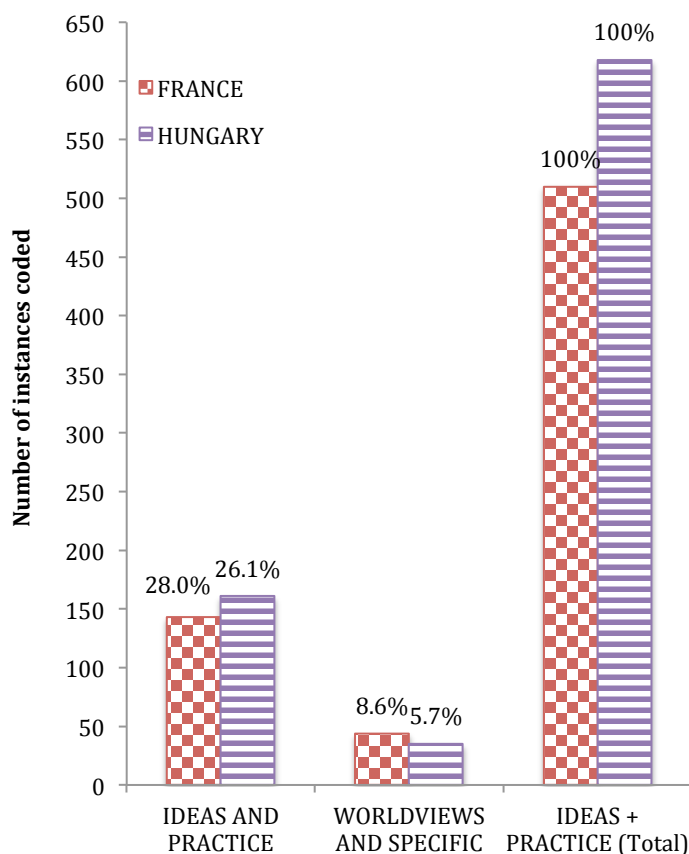
*N.B: See the note under Figure 5 for an explanation of how to read this figure*

#### *Co-occurrences of ideas- and practice- related codes*

Another indicator is the extent to which participants draw on *both* parties ideas and their actions when accounting for partisan disagreements on a specific topic. For this purpose, I identified co-occurrences of the codes 'IDEAS' and 'PRACTICE' (referred to as IDEAS AND PRACTICES in Figure 40), and co-occurrences of the codes 'WORLDVIEWS' and 'SPECIFIC'<sup>181</sup> (referred to as WORLDVIEWS AND SPECIFIC in Figure 40). If we consider the share of the codes 'IDEAS' and 'ACTIONS' co-occurring on the total number of instances coded either IDEAS or PRACTICE (referred to as IDEAS and/or PRACTICES in Figure 40), these are on average slightly more present in transcripts of French groups than they are in Hungarian ones (28.0% and 26.1% respectively). This is also the case for the co-occurrence of the codes 'WORLDVIEWS' and 'SPECIFIC' (8.6% and 5.7% respectively).

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<sup>181</sup> SPECIFIC is one of the sub-codes of PRACTICE, and refers to instances when participants evoked the specific policy proposals, policies, laws, or decisions or political parties. It differs to this extent from the subcode GENERAL, another subcode of PRACTICES, which refers to instances where participants evoked the ways parties more generally address a given problem, the types of measures, instruments and methods they rely on.



**Figure 40: Co-occurrence of ideas- and practice-related codes in French and Hungarian transcripts**

*N.B: See the note under Figure 5 for an explanation of how to read this figure*

### 3. The criterion of differentiation

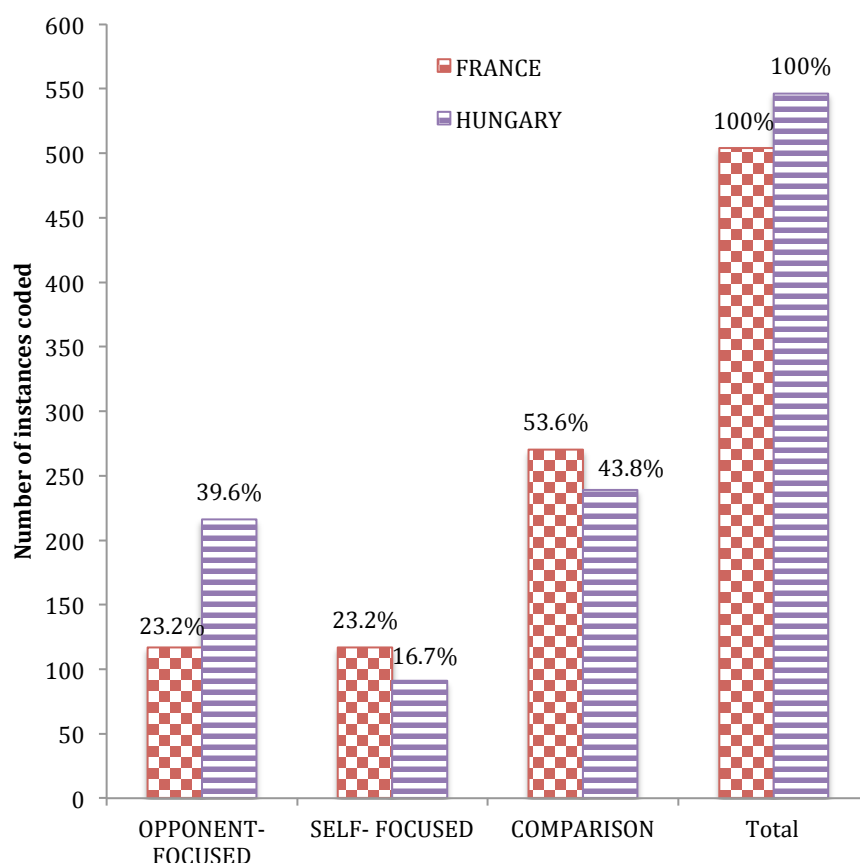
Finally, partisans should be able to differentiate their platforms from those of their opponents in order to meet the standard of cohesiveness. In the following sections I consider several indicators to compare French and Hungarian patterns of discourse on this measure.

#### *Comparison*

The most straightforward indicator for differentiation is the extent to which partisans adopt a comparative perspective when accounting for partisan agreements or disagreements. Indeed, when participants compared party platforms, they were also more likely to make explicit the points of convergence or divergence between political parties, and thus to detail what exactly differentiates or draws together political parties on a given topic.

As Figure 41 demonstrates, French participants are, overall, more likely to both adopt a comparative perspective than their Hungarian counterparts (53.6% and 43.8%

of total assessments respectively). While the other two types of assessments are equally distributed between self-focused and opponent focused assessments in France (both at 23.2% of total assessments), Hungarian participants are on average far more likely to focus on their opponents than they are to focus on themselves (39.6% and 16.7% respectively).



**Figure 41: Actors emphasised by French and Hungarian participants in the course of justifying their card classification**

*N.B: See the note under Figure 5 for an explanation of how to read this figure*

#### *Avowals of ignorance and reliance on expert knowledge*

Another indicator for partisan differentiation—or rather of its lack—comes with participants admitting that they do not know the position of their own party or of their opponents on a given question (instances coded IGNORANCE). Indeed, this also means that participants cannot say in what ways their own platform differs from that of their opponents. A related indication is the extent to which partisans refer to their expertise in a given subject to legitimate their discourse (instances coded EXPERTISE). This indicates that knowing about partisan differences in a certain policy area is not seen to belong to the 'common knowledge' of partisans. More generally, both types of

evidence indicate that being able to speak about what differentiates and draws together political parties is not a matter of course for partisans. As table 6 indicates, only in Hungarian groups did I witness explicit avowals of ignorance - an average of once per group, or participants stressing their own expertise. French participants did not use these kinds of arguments.

	EXPERTISE	IGNORANCE or LACK OF OPINION
<b>HUNGARY</b>	6	14
<b>MSzP-Egyutt</b>	5	5
<b>Fidesz-KDNP</b>	1	9

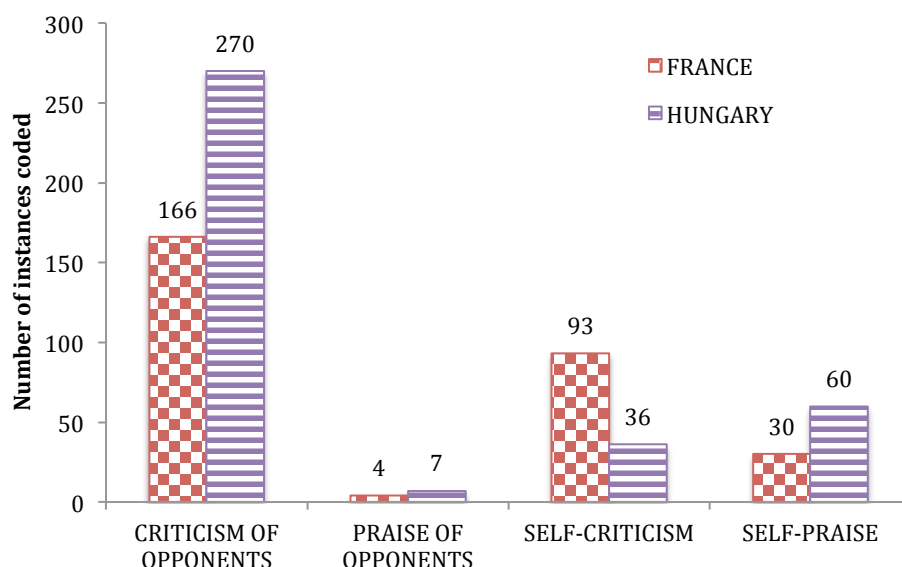
*Table 6: References by Hungarian participants to their political ignorance or expertise*

## II. PLURALISM IN PARTISAN ATTITUDES TOWARDS POLITICAL OPPONENTS

In Chapter 4 I demonstrated that the attitudes of French participants towards political opponents are more respectful than Hungarian ones. This section will offer a more precise picture of the extent to which this is the case. I proceed in line with the order of the theoretical framework, starting with the types of criticisms addressed to opponents, following with the extent to which participants recognise the principled nature of their opponents, and finishing with the relation participants establish between their opponents and the common good.

### 1. Types of criticism: intentions and practices

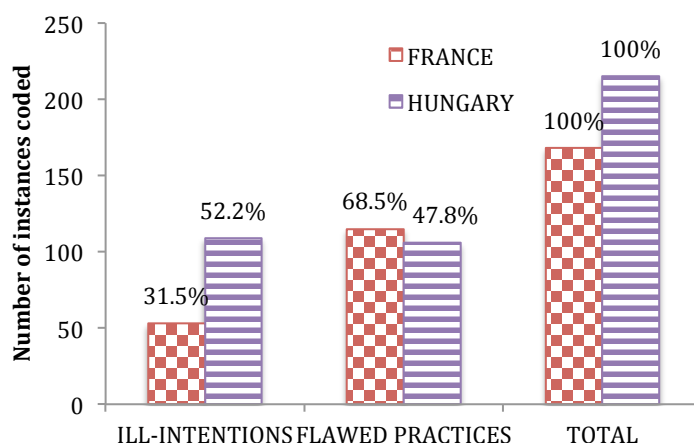
Starting with the overall degree of praise and criticism that participants address to either their opponents or their own party, Figure 42 reveals stark differences between French and Hungarian groups. Hungarian participants criticise their opponents over 30% more than French ones and indulge in self-praise twice more often. French participants are, on the other hand, close to three times more likely to indulge in self-criticism than their Hungarian counterparts.



**Figure 42: Praise and criticism by French and Hungarian participants of their own party and their opponents**

*N.B: See the note under Figure 5 for an explanation of how to read this figure*

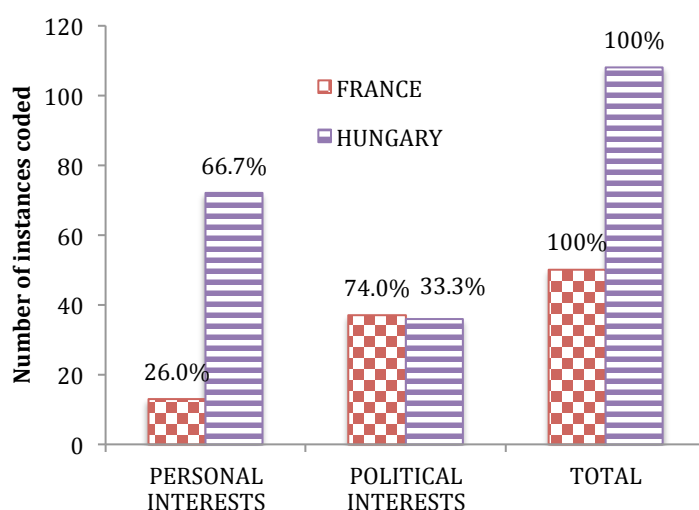
While being self-critical may be seen as part of a partisan's "negative capacity", the degree of criticism towards opponents is no straightforward indication of pluralist or anti-pluralist attitudes. A more relevant sign is the extent to which partisans focus on the intentions or practices of their opponents to criticise them. As Figure 43 indicates, there is a close to equal distribution between both types of criticisms in Hungarian groups, with 52.2% of these dedicated to intentions, and 47.8% to practices. French participants, on the other hand, are over two times more likely to criticise the practices of their opponents as compared to their intentions.



**Figure 43: Criticisms by French and Hungarian participants of their opponents' intentions and practices**

*N.B: See the note under Figure 5 for an explanation of how to read this figure*

If one further considers the criticisms of opponents focused on the intentions of opponents, it is also noteworthy that the accusations made in Hungarian groups are of a more serious nature than in French ones (see Figure 44 below). Indeed, only 26% of these among French participants focus on the personal motivations of opponents, for instance their quest for material interest or personal influence. French participants tend to focus instead on the political motivations of their opponents, accusing them in most cases of adopting certain policies or making certain discourse out of pure concern for electoral support. While such accusations imply that opponents are more concerned with re-election than with the good of the community overall, it is also more morally justifiable for a politician to seek re-election - which he may still do out of belief in his own program - than it is for him to seek his own personal advancement. The proportion is reversed in the case of Hungarian groups, with two thirds of such criticisms denouncing the personal motivations of opponents, and the remaining third focusing on their political motivations.



**Figure 44: Types of criticisms by French and Hungarian participants of their opponents' intentions**

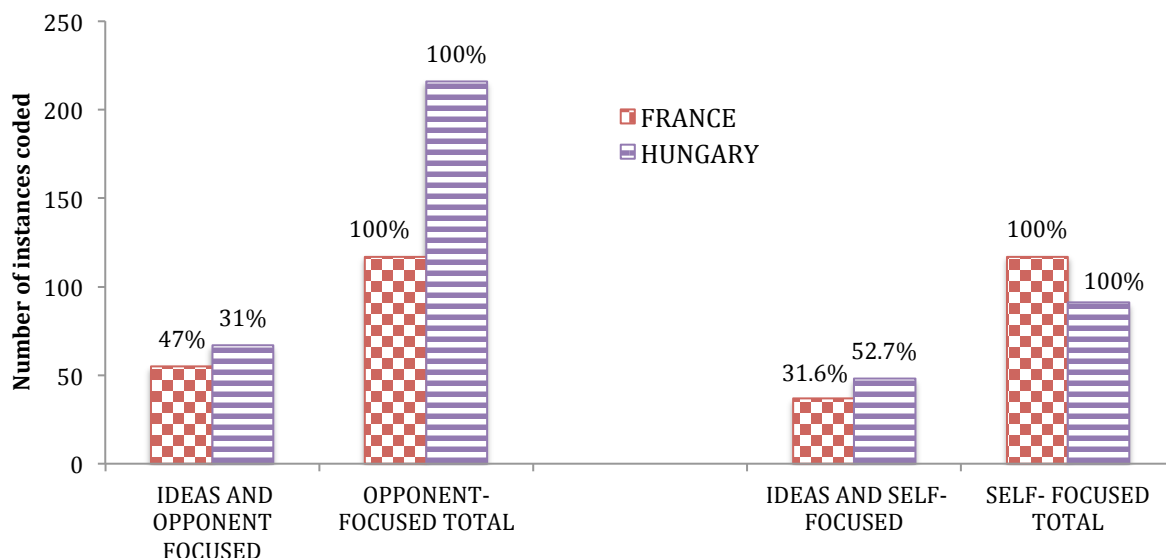
*N.B: See the note under Figure 5 for an explanation of how to read this figure*

## 2. The principled nature of opponents

If one examines the extent to which participants recognise the principled nature of their opponents, French participants appear more likely to do so than Hungarian participants (see Figure 45). Indeed, in 47% of the cases where they talk about their opponents they also evoke their ideas. This is even more than when they talk about their own platforms, in which case they only evoke the principles they defend in 31.6% of the cases. This proportion is reversed in the case of Hungarian participants: when



they evoke their opponents they talk about their ideas in only 31% of the cases, against 52.7% of the cases when they are talking about their own platforms.



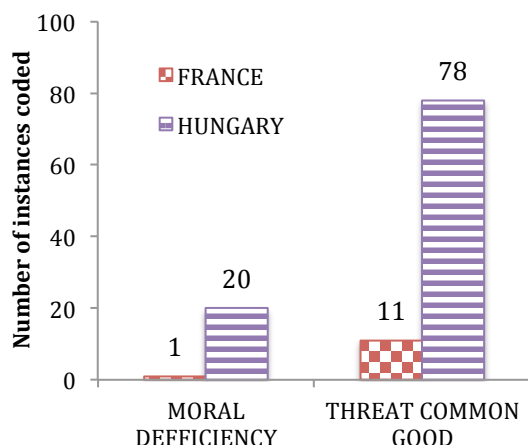
**Figure 45: References by French and Hungarian participants to the ideas of their opponents and of their own party**

*N.B: See the note under Figure 5 for an explanation of how to read this figure*

Instances where participants explicitly negated the principled-nature of their opponents were not specifically coded for. It is nevertheless clear from the qualitative analysis of the transcripts that this was quite a common discursive strategy among Hungarian participants, and one that was only very seldom used in French groups.

### 3. Opponents and the common good

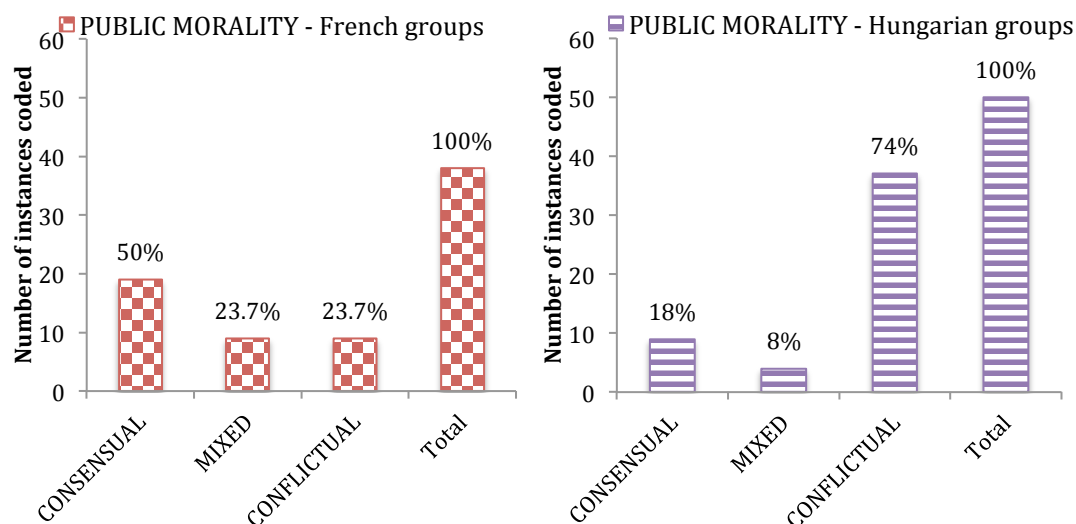
Finally, we can compare the extent to which participants in France and Hungary directly question their opponents' ability to reach the common good, either through accusing them of a form of amorality or immorality, or through criticising them for intentionally undermining basic principles or common interests that form part of the common good at large. As Figure 46 below indicates, Hungarian participants use the first type of argument 20 times more often than French participants, and the second type of argument close to eight times more frequently.



**Figure 46: Criticisms by French and Hungarian participants of their opponents' ability to further the common good**

*N.B: See the note under Figure 5 for an explanation of how to read this figure*

Another indicator on this criterion is the extent to which the card 'PUBLIC MORALITY' was considered to be a conflictual or consensual topic. Indeed, this provides an indication of the extent to which the question of morality was politicised in the groups under study, whether this is a topic on which participants sought to picture their own party as virtuous and their opponents as deprived of moral scruple. As shown in Figure 47, French participants classified this card as consensual in half of the cases, against a 22.4% average of consensual card classification overall. This is also one of the topics they were least likely to classify as conflictual: they did so in only 23.7% of cases, against a 51.8% average of conflictual card classifications. Hungarian participants on the other hand classified this card as conflictual in 74% of the cases, slightly above an average for all cards of 72.1%. They saw the topic as consensual in 18% of the cases, only slightly above the 16.1% average for all card classifications.



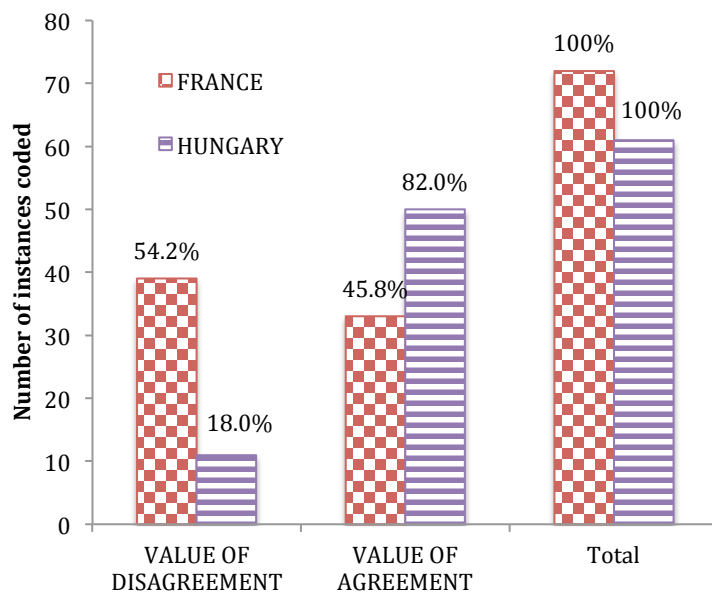
**Figure 47: Assessments by French and Hungarian participants of partisan disagreement on the card PUBLIC MORALITY**

*N.B: See the note under Figure 5 for an explanation of how to read this figure*

### III. PLURALISM IN PARTISAN ATTITUDES TOWARDS POLITICAL AGREEMENT AND DISAGREEMENT

The evidence presented in Chapter 5 already indicates the more favourable attitude of French participants towards political disagreement as compared to Hungarian participants. The coding data presented here confirms this general idea. I first present the general balance of French and Hungarian partisans' normative judgements on partisan agreement and disagreement, and then compare their experiences of interpartisan dialogue.

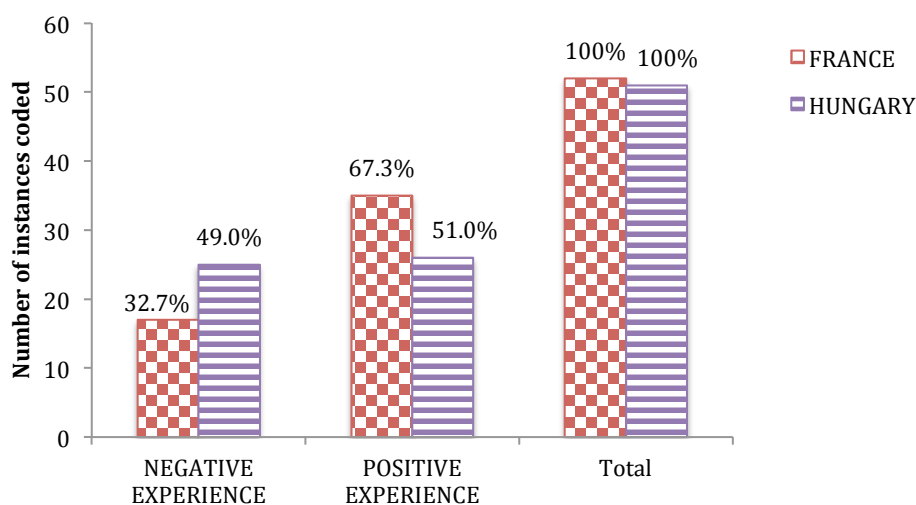
As shown in Figure 48, French participants are close to four times more likely to either praise political disagreement or criticise political agreement than are Hungarian participants below in the last section of the interviews. On the other hand, Hungarian participants are about 30% more likely to either value political agreement or criticise political disagreement. Crucially, these differences are only partly an indication of the ethical disposition of partisans. As shown above, Hungarian participants' critical attitude towards the polarisation of their own party system may be seen as a positive sign in itself. The data nevertheless also reflects the greater capacity of French participants to recognise the value of political disagreement.



**Figure 48: Value associated by French and Hungarian participants to political disagreement and agreement**

*N.B: See the note under Figure 5 for an explanation of how to read this figure*

This picture is also reinforced by the different ways in which French and Hungarian participants experience interpartisan dialogue. As shown in Figure 49, over two-thirds of the experiences recounted by French participants are positive or described in neutral terms. Many of these accounts include statements that participants have benefited from these exchanges, and on the value of exchanging with citizens with different convictions more generally. In contrast, close to half of the experiences Hungarian participants account for are negative, and many of these accounts include blaming opponents for the difficult nature of these exchanges.



**Figure 49: References by French and Hungarian participants to their positive or negative personal experiences of interpartisan dialogue**

## Appendix 7: Access to data

I have set up a password protected website to offer examiners access to the transcripts of my interviews, the final NVivo file with my coding data and a PDF version of this thesis manuscript. My advisors will provide the examiners with the link, username and password.

N.B: I have collected this data under the condition that all personal information concerning my participants would be kept anonymous, and that the interviews would be used solely for the purpose of my research. For this reason:

1 - Access to this data will not be offered in the final version of this thesis, deposited in the LSE Library.

2 - Neither the transcripts, nor the NVivo file contain the first part of each interview, in which I asked questions to my participants about their personal trajectory, age, occupation, and position within the political party.

3 - Point 2 above entails that while the codes that I used to code this personal information have remained in the NVivo file (see Phase 2 of coding process, Appendix 5), these codes do not refer to any specific portion of data anymore.

4 - Point 2 above also entails that the coding results in the NVivo data file may be slightly different than those indicated in this thesis. Indeed, the first part of the discussion in which participants would introduce themselves would sometimes also give way to political discussions, and in some cases, to me associating some of the codes used in this thesis to the discourse of participants. Because this section of the interviews is now gone, these instances coded will also not show up in coding queries.

5 - I do not include in this digital appendix the recordings of the discussions. Although I could have removed the first part of these recordings in line with point 2 above, participants do occasionally address each other by name. If my examiners would require access to one or several recordings they can contact either of my supervisors who will let me know. Names in the recordings could be blurred out for this purpose.

6 - No use of this data by a third party can be made without prior authorisation from the participants to this study, and myself.