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INTERNET WEBPAGE CAMPAIGN IN THE 2010 HUNGARIAN GENERAL ELECTIONS

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the web presence of Hungarian deputies during the 2010 General Elections. Beyond the description of the main features of MPs websites, our research aims to find out the differences in the online presence of deputies of the two main Hungarian parties (Fidesz-KDNP, MSZP[1]) and the influencing factors behind them. A content analysis of the individual campaign web sites shows that parties have decisive role in the online activity of MPs. Multivariate analysis shows that there is a connection between the existence of personal website and the type of the mandate, SMD MPs being more active in terms of having a homepage.

Keywords: electoral competition • Hungary • internet politics • political websites • personalisation

1. INTRODUCTION

Much recent interest has been focused on the impact of new information communications technologies (ICTs) such as email and the internet in campaigning. Our research aims to form statements about the online presence of Hungarian deputies during the 2010 national elections. Similar to many Western-European countries, Hungarian election campaign is ruled by political parties. This was one of the main reasons why former researches examining the evolution of Hungarian online campaigning have concentrated mostly on online communication of Hungarian parties, paying little attention to the deputies' individual initiatives (Kiss-Boda, 2005). However, the growing internet penetration, the presence of new technologies and the changes occurring in the Hungarian multi-party system might allow politicians to raise more interest in their own personality.

Our aim is to define the impact of the Hungarian mixed-member electoral system on the usage of ICT technology of Hungarian deputies and parties during the 2010 national electoral campaign. The question which we deal with is whether there are significant differences in the intensity and quality of the website updates and even in the websites themselves between the MPs elected in single member districts and those elected from the lists. Analogically we give answer to the question whether we can find differences between candidates who run in SMDs and those on lists. According to our assumption there is a difference, namely that SMD MPs

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[1] Fidesz-KDNP: the alliance of the Alliance of Young Democrats and the Christian-Democrat People's Party; MSZP: Hungarian Szocialist Party

and candidates have more personal, less party political internet communication than the others in terms of webpages, and this originates in their different understanding of representation.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Recently, there has been a growing interest in the usage of the internet communication technology of political actors. To summarise the different theoretical approaches on this issue, Andrew Chadwick (2006, 18-19.) uses the terms of technological determinism and social determinism to present two opposing approaches of scientists and intellectuals.

Technological determinism states that technological development enforces social changes; politicians have no choice than follow the patterns offered by the internet technology, otherwise they drop behind the changing social tendencies. Being impressed by this idea, several recent studies focus on the questions how political institutions use the extra facilities offered by the internet; how parties' and governments' political communication adopts new technologies and how internet users can be addressed by online communication of political actors. (Gibson–Rommele–Ward, 2004; Kitcat, 2001). Contrary to this view, social determinism considers social, principally power structural relations as influent actors on technological development. New patterns offered by internet technology adapt to an already existing environment, social status is not challenged, but reinforced by them. From this approach, internet technology by itself is unable to cause revolutionary changes, but it can help new ideas and patterns to gain ground. As internet research is getting ever sophisticated and differentiated, it finds less and less signs of revolutionary changes prognosticated by technological determinism. Without taking a clear position in the above debate, and avoiding a too optimistic or pessimistic view at the same time, our research concentrates on the existing situation and changes in the online communication of Hungarian Members of Parliament (MPs).

Considering the possible changes caused by ICT in the online communication of politicians as individual actors, Thomas Zittel (2008, 188.) outlines a hypothetical situation. In his model, a deputy informs voters regularly on a personal website about issues being on the agenda of the Parliament. Via e-mail, chat- forums and video conferences the politician keeps contact with them and tries to form the majority opinion on a collective, participative basis. This process is parallel to the usual decision making process of the Parliament and the party group. In cases when the deputies' final decision differs from the will of the majority opinion of the voters, the politician documents this fact on the personal website and tries to

explain the circumstances leading to the final decision. After having outlined this model, Zittel mentions the factors challenging its validity. First, most voters pay little attention to the legislative activity, voters communication is much less intensive during the legislative period than during elections. Second, in European democracies deputies have limited responsibility on policy issues since the relevant information are mediatised by party organisations. Third, even in the USA, where deputies concentrate on having direct contact with the voters of their district, policy issues have little importance. Zittel ends up his model by explaining that although the model is technically possible to realise, such a use of new internet communication technologies is rather utopic. However, internet has an ever growing importance in voter communication during electoral competitions, so the most interesting changes caused by ICT are expected to be identified on this domain of political activity.

According to current literature, websites can have several different functions (Gibson–Ward, 2000; Norris, 1998, 1999; Rommele, 2003; Kiss–Boda, 2005). It can be a tool of *information provision*, allowing parties to disseminate information to the public about their identity and policies (i.e. their history, overall orientation, and current activities). Via *online campaigning*, parties can recruit voters. The interactive communication flow means that there are frequent opportunities for parties to push their message to voters on an individualized basis and also measure voter opinion through e-mail or opinion polls. Websites can be used for *resource generation*, especially to raise financial support and also to recruit new members. Via online *networking* parties can build and strengthen internal and external organizational links. By *promoting participation*, citizens' engagement in the political process can be increased.

The above mentioned functions allow voters to contact the politician, the party and other voters via message walls, chatrooms, e-mails or online forums. Even voters can provide information and content to the website by writing articles and comments, sending videos and photos or by taking part in online voting.

The development of politicians' websites may be influenced by many different factors, one being the parties' control over their office holders. A comparative analysis on candidates' website in the UK (Ward-Gibson, 2003) has given proof of the importance of party organisations on the online presence of candidates not only on national, but also on local level. It turned out that whilst the design sophistication of the sites varied enormously, the content of a majority of local sites followed a fairly predictable pattern. There were few significant differences between the parties. Whilst national party organisations did not force candidates or local parties into templated sites, assistance was available and a sizeable

minority followed a standardised design style. The research found that a typical site provided a brief candidate biography (92 per cent of sites), some standard policy lines drawn from the manifesto (64per cent), membership or volunteering appeals (63 per cent), press releases/news (51 per cent) and a link to the national party site (82 per cent).

A research on US Senate candidates (Druckman, Kifer, Parkin 2007) gives answers to the question what the main reasons are behind offering personalized interactive features to the voters on politicians websites. They found that *feasibility* is a major consideration, although *race competitiveness* seems to play an important role as well. The results show that personalized interaction features grew more popular over time – the odds increased by 114.8% between 2002 and 2004: candidates warmed up to this technology as it improved and became easier to use. According to the authors, there is a relationship between race competitiveness and personalized interaction features, which suggests that as races tighten, candidates are less likely to offer technologies that could interfere with the campaign's message. These candidates need, more than others, to ensure that visitors get a clear and uniform understanding of their positions and campaign themes even if that means that the site is less engaging.

Beyond giving a brief summary of former researches, Gibson (2004, 103.) explains the reasons behind regional differences in web campaigning, indicating that context also matters in shaping its content and style. Compared with other countries, US cyber campaigning is the most personalised, due to the candidate- rather than party-centred system: individualised usage for electioneering purposes inevitably predominate. For most countries in Western-Europe, particularly those where strong party systems and unitary states prevail, development in cyber campaigning has been most notable at the national level, with less activity being seen among individual candidates and local party organisations (Gibson, Nixon and Ward, 2003). Despite their being among the most "wired" nations overall, parties and candidates in Denmark, Sweden and Norway have not necessarily been trailblazers in campaigning online. Looking at Southern-Europe, studies of web campaigning in Portugal, Greece, Italy and Spain have reported a more marked resistance to the rising tide of "normalisation" in party competition on the web and the growing dominance of the major players found elsewhere. In Eastern-Europe where internet penetration levels are considerably lower than those of southern Europe, a divide already have opened up between the Parliamentary parties and those outside. However, the most meaningful internet-based political action in the region has taken place beyond the party system, on independent news websites.

There is a consensus among researchers of the issue who address the question from a comparative point of view, that the electoral system is one of the most influent factors behind the different usage of ICT by politicians and parties (Gibson et al., 2000; Gibson, Nixon and Ward, 2003, Gibson 2004). Candidate centred electoral systems (SMD) allow candidates to conduct individualised online campaign and inspire them to adopt innovative internet communicational tools, while proportional systems place parties in the centre, leaving little ground for individual initiatives. Studying the impact of the German mixed-member electoral system, Zittel (2009) found that the mode of candidacy matters to a surprising extent, because of the contamination effects between the first and the second tier of the electoral system in Germany. These contamination effects suggest that it is fair to assume that parties take the district vote in each of the single-member districts seriously, even if their candidate will not be able to win a district.

The Hungarian electoral system is of a mixed type: it distributes 386 mandates on two principles and into three branches. The considerable role of the single member districts in the electoral results is a widely noticed feature of the Hungarian voting system. 45.6 percent of the representatives come from one of the 176 single member constituencies. In principle, according to the logic of territorial representation, voters cast their votes to persons, not parties. This fact creates a basis for arguments underpinning the importance of candidates during elections. Even so, the Hungarian political science literature does not put any emphasis on the person – even if not instead but at least besides the party. Similar to many Western-European countries, Hungarian election campaign is ruled by political parties.

Since elections are dominated by parties, former research examining the evolution of Hungarian online campaigning have concentrated mostly on Hungarian parties online communication, paying little attention to deputies individual initiatives (Kiss-Boda, 2005). Though the first Hungarian party websites appeared more than a decade ago, FIDESZ and SZDSZ[2] launched it in 1996, MSZP in 1997, MDF[3] and MIÉP[4] in 1998 (Danyi, 2002), internet became an important tool in electoral campaigns only in 2002 (Kiss – Boda 2005). From that period, parties started to share online reports about their campaign events, and voters' online activity is in steady increase since that time. Regarding the 3 months period before the campaign, the authors evaluated the content of party websites in the light of five different functions: representation of the party, informativity, and interactivity, affirmation of

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[2] Alliance of Free Democrats
[3] Forum of Hungarian Democrats
[4] Hungarian Justice and Life Party

voters and mobilisation of supporters. The results of the research were similar to the international literature, interactivity proved to be the weak point of party websites also in Hungary.

The increasing personalization of electoral competition in Hungary was even more pronounced than in many Western-European countries (Tóka2006), because here the role of the party organizations is smaller and the number of undecided voters is higher; the political market is more open and competition is fiercer. However, little is known about the features of the online activity of Hungarian deputies, since studies about online appearance of politicians concentrated only on prime ministers (Kiss 2003). Apart from an exemplificative enumeration of some deputies' online activity (Szabó-Mihályffy, 2009), neither qualitative, nor quantitative research has been conducted in Hungary, so judgements concerning the relevance of these innovations missed a comparative methodological basis.

The absence of such research is striking since macrostatistical data prove an ever growing internet usage among Hungarian voters. Though Hungary does not belong to the most wired societies in Europe,[5] national survey on Hungarian internet usage found that 51 percent of the Hungarian society use internet somewhat regularly. 90 percent of these people have internet connection at home. Approximately 60 percent of the users get online every day, 24 percent several times a week. These two groups cover almost 43 percent of the whole society. Among them, 51 percent lives in towns, 25-24 percent in the capital city and villages. Internet usage is not evenly distributed through counties. City capital districts and county Pest is overrepresented compared to other parts of the country. Our assumption is that politicians are well aware of these internet trends. Although our paper does not cover the public's response, these data are important in explaining the differences in the MPs' behaviour on the web. Different MPs expect different people to visit their sites, therefore they try to please them in different ways.

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[5] In 2005, Sweden was the most wired society (74%), while Denmark (69%) the Netherlands (66%) and Finland (62%) followed. Source: www.internetworldstats.com.

3. QUESTIONS OF THE PAPER

As noted earlier, the ever growing internet penetration and the internet usage of the public gives the relevance of the research on the web presence of the political elite. From the MPs' point of view the situation is not this sunny though. 25 percent among the regular users visit party websites – which is a surprisingly large number –, 20 percent MP webpages, but only 8.3 percent visit the webpage of the MP of the constituency he or she resides in. During the campaign, 24 percent of the whole population get informed on the internet, but not necessarily on party and candidate websites. Still, this does not eliminate the relevance of the topic, because there is a good chance that this is going to change in the near future.

The main question of our research is how MPs did perform in taking advantage of this new kind of information channel. First, we have to take a look at the homepages, how they look like, what features they have, and more importantly, who have homepages among the Members of Parliament. The first aim of this paper is to answer these questions.

The second – and most important – concern of the paper is to reveal whether there are any differences between MPs elected on the different tiers of the election system. MPs elected on different levels, have different motivations as representatives which comes from their different concept of representation. Result from a research[6] carried out in spring 2009 show that MPs elected in single member districts care significantly more for the citizens and/or the local area.

Our question is whether this difference in the concept of representation appears on the MPs' websites? This appearance can be either visual or contextual. By visual we mean that the MP tries to distinguish himself from his party, which we identify as personalization in terms of the skin of the webpage. Contextual differences concern the quality and quantity of the original posts. Avoiding tautologies, we do not investigate whether local MPs care for local issues, but we ask the question whether their web presence – regarding the websites – is particularly active or not. Do they try to maintain a more direct and vivid relationship with their voters? Do they recognize the potential that lies with the internet in reaching down to the citizens and thereby increasing the level of personalization? It comes from the nature of the question that we are only concerned with MPs who had an active webpage before campaign.

The campaign situation is more complex in terms that not only membership shapes the webpages and the activities of the MP but candidacy as well. Analysing the features of the campaign we define the population as those who have websites during campaign. Note, that

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[6] Participation and Representation; http://www.partirep.eu/

the two groups are not necessarily the same, as we will show. In the second case we expect more list MPs to engage themselves in internet webpage activities, typically those who run in SMDs.

Finally we investigate the differences between parties regarding the existence of homepages, the activities on them, the hypothetical multiplication in their numbers during campaign and their most important features. As our concern lies with MPs, the analysis in this respect touches the two main parties[7]. Based on our daily experience we expect Fidesz to be more active, as they are already engaged in several types of internet activities, like blogging and facebooking.

4. DATA

The data comes from the research addressing internet communication technologies during campaign, conducted by the Centre for Elite Research at Corvinus University of Budapest. The project aims to fill in the gap in the Hungarian literature, or at least reveal the potential that lies in this field of political science.

Apart from the international research, we did not carry out fieldwork in a sense that we did not meet with politicians, MPs and party staff or activists. Although we see its advantages, we considered this approach as not objective enough. Therefore we also scheduled to meet with several campaign chiefs in the months to come, but the interviews to be carried out are just supplemental tools to broaden our knowledge about campaigning. Our main goal was not to reveal the intentions of the politicians regarding their presence on the internet, but to see how they actually succeed in this new realm of campaigning. The best tool for this is to code the websites of MPs and candidates from several aspects, according to more than 90 variables.

Our aim was to build a dataset that is suitable to reveal longitudinal trends and cross-sectional relationships as well. Using the cross-sectional data we will be able to compare the subjects at a certain stage of the campaign. Longitudinal data enables the comparison of the campaign and off-campaign periods. In order to reach this goal we started data collection in November 2009 and finished in April 2010. The campaign period officially started on Jan 19th 2010 with the announcement of the president of the state. .

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[7] Please note that when we write about the two main parties, we talk about Fidesz and MSZP, based on their parliamentary positions in spring 2010, not their support among the electorate.

Following Thomas Zittel's hypothesis (Zittel, 2009), we supposed that the organizational strength of political parties is a decisive factor of the online presence of politicians as individuals. According to this hypothesis, if parties are strong in their abilities to structure the behavior of voters and candidates through positive and negative incentives, individualized online campaigns should be less frequent and less intensive. During the research, we tried to be aware of the differences among the five Hungarian parties present in the Parliament, and have coded the existing websites of all the Hungarian MPs. The organizational strength of the parties proved to be an extremely influent factor of the online presence of Hungarian MPs during the 2010 elections. However, there is a lack in the Hungarian legal system concerning parties' obligations to publish data concerning their organisational and financial state, so it is not possible to use reliable data on this issue. In order to avoid guessing, we decided to leave out independent MPs and the MPs of two minor parties (SZDSZ, MDF), and to concentrate on the deputies of the two dominant parties, FIDESZ-KDNP and MSZP, which had approximately the same organizational strength and amount of resources (Juhász, 2007).

As for race competitiveness, the 2010 general elections were characterised by the huge advantage of Fidesz-KDNP measured by the leading research institutes, making the campaign the shortest and most peaceful one ever. Election campaign did not have as important role as during the precedent elections, it was predictable that Fidesz-KDNP is about to win the elections, and oddly, the government party MSZP did not seem to make considerable effort either. Therefore it is safe to say that when we started our research, in November 2009, the campaign was not yet on.

At the beginning of the data collection process, we fixed the exact dates as endpoints of the periods. After this, we coded the periods according to a carefully constructed codebook. Technically, we saved every website with a suitable software and stored it in a common mainframe so every team member could have access. This way we could avoid the scheduling problems of a quite large team. Everyone worked on the stored versions, representing the updated pages at the previously defined dates. With this method, we conducted five rounds of coding with a changing number of websites.

The next step was to define the subjects, and that raised some serious practical problems. The reason for this was that at the time of the beginning of the project, the lists of SMD and list candidates were not public yet. Therefore in the first round we only coded the MPs, hoping that a considerable percentage will run for membership to Parliament again. We also added several politicians of extra parliamentary parties who were presumed to be present in the electoral competition, and whose parties had a considerable chance to present a national
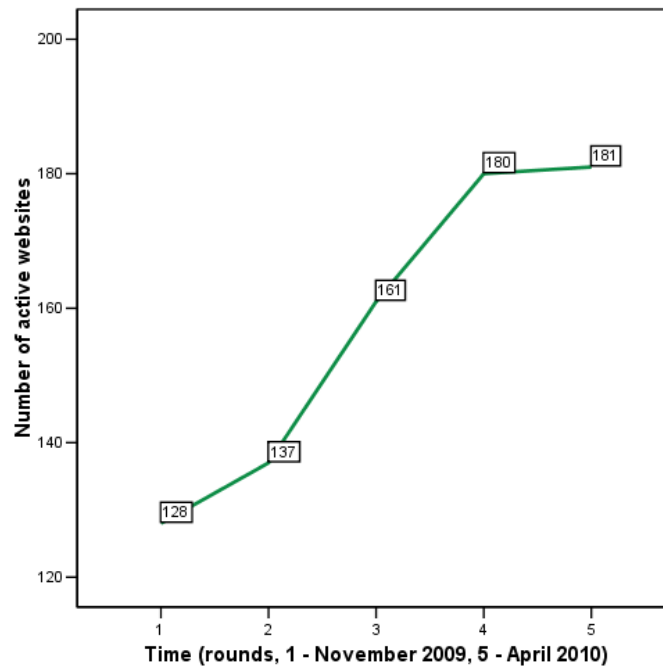
list. These were just speculations, but it turned out that they were mostly correct. In every round as lists and the names of the candidates went public, more and more names were added to our list of candidates. This way in the first round, we had about 160 sites to be coded, and 330 in the fifth[8].

The codebook was created following two separate logical approaches. One part of the questionnaire dealt with the homepage itself (layout, icons etc.), the other with the quantity and quality of the original posts. Original posts were the ones that originated from the subject himself (or his team). The necessity to this distinction is that many posts from the main national party homepage appear automatically on the candidates' websites. This also means that the owner (candidate) does not have control over a certain amount of posts appearing on his personal site. We did not code these 'alien' posts. The codebook addressed the following issues: (a) the website in general (interactivity, forum, news, speeches, contact details, last update), (b) the personal content of the website (photos, family, hobby), (c) symbolic message (indication on the party), (d) links, (e) the content of the original posts, (f) addressing any social group, (g) campaigning on the website.

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[8] Note that this is not the number of candidates, but the number of candidates with website.

5. RESULTS

As noted earlier we did not work with a constant number of homepages, but we also followed the changes in their numbers. New websites appeared on the internet, and old ones ceased. Graph 1 shows the dynamics of the active webpages.

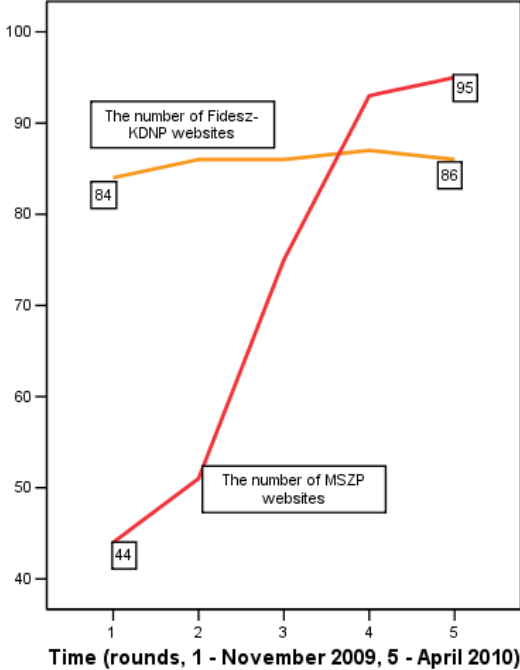Graph 1. The change in the number of active homepages through time

It is clear that the coming campaign accelerated the growth in the number of MP's websites. While in November 2009 37 percent of the MPs under investigation[9] had a working website, in April 2010 this proportion was 52 percent. The 4th round was coded before the first round of the elections, the 5th between the two rounds. Therefore the 4th and 5th coding rounds show the real campaign situation. Campaign officially started just before the 3rd round, this might explain the sudden jump in the number of pages after the 2nd turn. But as mentioned earlier actual campaign begun later. Because of this fact, there was a notable increase of the number of MP's websites, and that is why we refer as real campaign situation only to the last two turns.

The number of Fidesz-KDNP homepages did not change from the 1st round to the last one, while the number of MSZP pages doubled. This might suggest two things. First, that contrary to the socialists, Fidesz-KDNP MP's did not really care about the campaign on the internet in

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[9] MP's of MSZP and Fidesz-KDNP. Note that Fidesz and KDNP did not form a joint PPG neither in 2006 nor in 2010, but they are basically one party. At the 2010 elections the two party had joint lists and candidates.
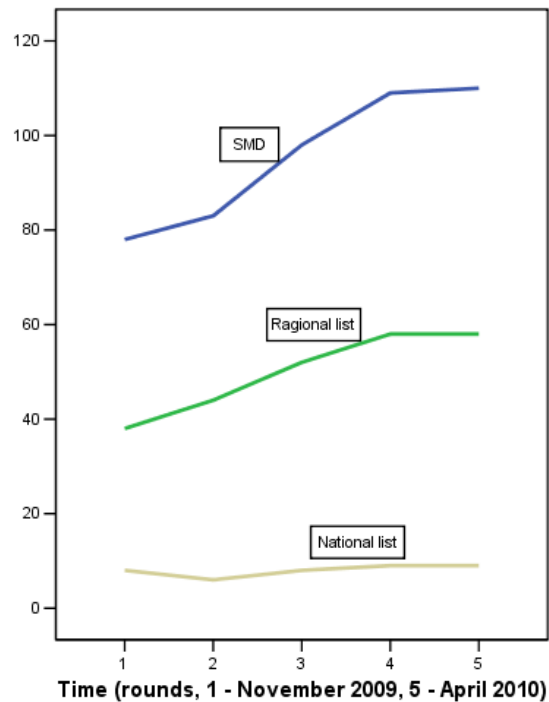
terms of increasing the number of the websites. Second, they did, but they have been active in terms of managing a homepage even before campaign started, so they did not consider internet as a primarily campaign tool, it was already part of their practice as representatives. We will come back this issue later in this section.

Graph 2 indicates the enormous increase in the number of sites is caused by an invasion of the internet by the socialist party.

Graph 2 The change in the number of active homepages of the two parties through time

Let us now turn to the question which MPs have websites, and what features the pages have. In November 2009 53 percent of the Fidesz-KDNP MPs had a working website, while only 23 percent of the MSZP representatives. In the first round we found a significant relationship between the parliamentary party group and having a website (Cramer's V = 0.305, p<0.001). This relatively strong relationship started to weaken as socialist websites appeared, but remained significant until the 4th turn. In the last round more than 50 percent of the MSZP representatives managed to have their own website, approaching Fidesz-KDNP's 54 percent. As to the connection between the existence of the website and the type of the mandate, it is safe to say that there is a permanent relationship described by the SMD MPs being more active in terms of having a homepage. This association seems to even get stronger while approaching the campaign period. Cramer's V increases from 0.223 to 0.331 monotonously through the examined period (p<0.001 for all the relations). Graph 3 explains why the strength of the association grows.

120

100   SMD

80

60   Ragional list

40

20   National list

0

1   2   3   4   5

Time (rounds, 1 - November 2009, 5 - April 2010)

Graph 3 Number of MPs having websites in terms of the type of their mandate

The gap between the numbers of webpages of SMD and list representatives widens. The absolute and the relative difference between the first value and the last are higher in the group of SMD MPs than in both list groups. Obviously, this means that the larger proportion of socialist members who created website – or for whom a website was created by the party – between November 2009 and April 2010 was part of the single member group.

Before we take a closer look at the webpages of the different MPs let us note here that the personalization does not start at the quality and quantity of the posts. The strong relationship between the type of the mandate and the existence of the homepage indicates that having a website in itself can be an indicator of this ambition. This conclusion is not straightforward though. As we witnessed during campaign, dozens of socialist websites were created on a uniform basis. One might suspect these pages coming from the party centre fulfilling a central decision that requires every SMD MP (and candidate for that matter) to have an own website. Therefore creating a website might not be the tool of personalization but just adapting to a trend.

Turning to the webpages themselves, first we take a closer look at the most characteristic features. The population of the analysis will be the group of MPs who had a working webpage at the actual campaign, so in April 2010. Table 1 shows the general features of the Fidesz-KDNP and the MSZP websites.

We distinguished two different types of websites. Some of the pages were created on a uniform basis; we call these 'uniform websites'. This means that the party centre delivers a skin and a stream of party news, and MPs can personalize. The other type we call 'customized websites' which differ from uniform ones in terms of visual characteristics and contents. These websites present a certain kind of initiative from the representatives' side to differentiate themselves from the party. Regarding the whole population under investigation, 52.2 percent of the MPs try to appear with a unique, customised webpages. This ambition appears in the structure of the URL as well. For example, the uniform Fidesz-KDNP URL is *www.name.fidesz.hu,* the customised one is *www.name.hu*.

According to our data (see table 1), 62.1 percent of the socialist websites were created on a unique, individual basis, while this proportion regarding Fidesz-KDNP is 41.9. The pattern considering the interactive opportunity of the user to take action is quite blurred. 52.3 percent of the Fidesz-KDNP sites offer the chance to comment the posts, while only 4.3 percent of the MSZP pages do this. Direct conclusion of this is the feature of interactivity. The picture looks different if we talk about the users' opportunity to vote in certain questions. Here the socialists score higher with 76.6 percent of their webpages giving the chance to express opinion by voting. It seems that the two different ways of channelling the voters' views are somewhat surrogate to each other. The only main difference between the two is that voting on certain issues is more structured, but – regarding the topics – more restrictive at the same time.

In terms of personal information given away on the websites it is interesting to see how even the proportions are. We did not find any significant relationship between these variables and party affiliation. Socialist representatives are slightly more open to publish personal information. 75.5 percent of them published personal photos, 36.2 percent mentioned the family or posted a photo of them apart from the context of the biography. 26.6 percent of MSZP MPs revealed their hobbies in front of the public. Fidesz-KDNP members seem to be a bit shyer than that, but as noted before, not significantly shyer.

Socialists also seem to put applications to their websites to entertain the visitors (69.1 percent) They have shared jigsaws, quizzes and jokes. This was true even in case of leading politicians of the party: the former minister of home defence put a game on his site in which the player had to rescue the victims of a flood with a helicopter. We found features like that only in case of 12.8 percent of Fidesz-KDNP members.

TABLE 1:The features of the websites

Party	Type of homepage %	Link from the main party site %	Comments %	Interactivity %	Mailing list %	Forum %	Voting %	Join the party %	Photos %	Family %	Hobby %	Entertainment %	Party symbols %
MSZP	62.1	49.5	4.3	2.1	4.7	5.3	76.6	3.5	75.5	36.2	26.6	12.8	75.5
Fidesz-KDNP	49.1	64	52.3	12.8	71.3	5.8	4.7	0	66.3	31.4	23.3	69.1	86
Overall	52.2	56.4	27.1	7.2	39.2	5.5	42	1.7	70.7	33.7	24.9	42	80.1

The variable 'party symbols' refers to signs informing and helping the visitor to identify which party the deputy belongs to. The results are somewhat surprising. We expected much higher percentage of webpages to be identified unambiguously. In 11.1 percent of the cases we did not find any indication of party affiliation; and 8.3 percent we coded as 'ambiguous'. This might show a greater level of personalization than we expected.

Regarding the average number of posts per month no significant difference between the two parties was found (Fidesz-KDNP 8.12, MSZP 5.39 posts per month). But it is more interesting whether there is a difference between the number of posts before and during campaign in terms of parties. According to our results there is no statistically significant connection between party membership and the number of posts per month in the pre-campaign period (Fidesz-KDNP 6.5, MSZP 4.2). But during campaign, it is: Fidesz-KDNP members posted significantly more than the socialist ones (difference: $9.86 - 6.79$). This means that they tend to use their homepages in a somewhat more goal oriented way in terms of the quantity of the posts. Here we have to note that the average number of posts is relatively higher in the group of socialists during the campaign period: 1.8 times more post were published in average, while in case of Fidesz-KDNP this number is 2.44. At the beginning of this section we made an assumption about Fidesz-KDNP members not considering internet pages primarily as a campaign tool, but part of their existence as representatives. This might be correct when we talk about the fact whether an MP has a homepage or not. The sudden increase in the number of websites on the socialist's side could be an indication of that. But when comparing the activities of those who had websites in November 2009 and April 2010 as well, the case seems to be rather the other way around. For socialist MPs campaign appears to be business as usual, while Fidesz-KDNP members increased the number of their posts more spectacularly. The difference between parties is not significant though but it certainly invalidates our previous assumption at least it blurs its universality.

Turning to the question of the personalization of the websites, we divided the population into three groups. The first group is the group of SMD members, second is the list members' group who run in SMDs, the third contains all the others. This grouping was necessary in order to control the type of the mandate, but also for candidacy, because not only SMD members have the incentive to personalize but SMD candidates as well, regardless what type of mandate they hold at the moment. The results have to be interpreted carefully by the reason of the low n in the third group. Low n could be the indication of the websites being tools for personalization. There are only 14 out of 157 members who hold a list type mandate and are

not running in single member districts. Oddly there is no significant relationship between the skin of the webpage – whether it is uniform or not – and the group membership. In terms of the opportunity to vote in certain issues we found that webpages managed by MPs who have SMD ties – regardless of whether SMD MPs or candidates – have this option in a significantly higher proportion. We also found that those who put posted photos on their websites form a majority in every group, but significantly higher number of SMD MPs did so. The same is true for mentioning the family and posting about hobbies. Nevertheless, it would be too early to state that personalization depends on membership, based only on the 'personal life' variables. If we examine their relationships with the type of the mandate only –dropping candidacy –, we find no significant differences between SMD and list members, except the case of personal photos. Therefore it seems candidacy to drive the personalization ambitions, not membership.

6. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Internet communication technology became a necessary element of Hungarian deputies' practice. However the fact that only the half of MPs websites are customised points to the decisive role of party organisations in the field of MPs' online presence. Parties have influence on MPs' use of the websites: while for the MPs of Fidesz-KDNP using a website is part of their existence as representatives, socialists deputies concentrate on their online activity during the campaign. The dynamic growth in the number of deputies websites is due to the fact that for most MPs websites serve as a campaign tools.

Research on how and why Hungarian politicians use web technology will undoubtedly continue. With the emergence of new Hungarian parties (Jobbik[10] and LMP[11]) during the 2010 elections, online political activity has undergone a great development, especially in case of the use of web 2.0 tools. Having a great share of young voters support, these new parties concentrated much effort to develop their online presence: they created party and candidate websites, online newspapers, a great number of blogs, and they started to spread out their messages in the social media. The use web 2.0 technology by Hungarian politicians is a very poorly studied area (Szabó-Mihályffy, 2009) and opens a wide field of research for Hungarian political science.

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[10] For a Better Hungary
[11] Politics Can Be Different

Since the new parties mentioned above managed to enter the Parliament in 2010, the intensification of their web presence is to expect. This might put an existing scientific debate into the Hungarian context: is ICT technology able to level the electoral playing field? Seen the Hungarian parties online activity, can we assume that ICTs might disproportionately benefit fringe and minor parties, thus assisting the growth of anti-establishment parties (as stated by Corrado and Firestone, 1997; Morris, 2000; Rash, 1997)? Or is it true that despite the minor parties' enthusiasm, major parties tend to dominate the internet both in terms of quantity and quality of websites (see Gibson, 2004; Gibson-Margolis Resnick-Ward, 2003)? Future research may help us to see the matter more clearly.

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