

# How Movements Are Mediated

## The Case of the Hungarian Student Network in 2012–2013

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**Abstract:** This article examines media representations of statements made by the 2012 student movement in Hungary. We analyzed a total of 138 articles from two main Hungarian online journals. We found that both outlets focused strictly on the movement's specific claims about educational policy but neglected to report on the broader political-ideological claims that it made. The emphasized claims reflected the specific political agenda of each outlet, with both newspapers also framing events according to the outlook of Hungary's dominant political establishment (Fidesz). We then traced the dialogue between the Hungarian government and the student movement over time. We found that the movement was the much more active partner in this dialogue. We coded the co-occurrences of psycholinguistic markers, testing perspective-taking as a requirement for dialogue. The results indicated that the dialogue was a pretense of negotiation from the government and ended with insignificant adjustments to its original plans.

**Keywords:** media representation, minority influence, political culture, prefigurative politics, protest, social representation, student movement

At the beginning of December 2012, the Hungarian government announced strong austerity measures in the public education sector. The measures included drastic budgetary cuts, a withdrawal of HUF 43 billion (approximately \$150 million) in funds, and the reduction of the admission quotas of state-funded students. Additionally, the measures established an obligatory contract for these students, binding them to the Hungarian labor market for double the time of their



tuition (in an attempt to resist the emigration of youth from Hungary as a consequence of free labor mobility in Europe). University and high school students, along with some lecturers and teachers, answered with protests in Budapest, Pécs, Szeged, and Debrecen. On 17 December 2012, thousands of people protested in Budapest, blocking bridges and boulevards.

This protest movement rapidly grew. In a series of campus demonstrations, flash mobs, and public protests, an emergent organization known as the Student Network demanded comprehensive reforms in the education sector. Its members implemented direct democracy on their campuses, establishing student forums to discuss actions and proposals, and drawing up a collective program of demands. On 11 February 2013, the movement began a monthlong occupation of lecture halls at the Eötvös Loránd (ELTE) University (Budapest) Faculty of Humanities. As a result, the National Union of Students (HÖÖK) was called on by the government to participate in the discussions concerning the educational reform. The union's representatives obtained a partial agreement that even those faculties hit by the government's austerity measures (such as law, communication and media studies, economics, and sociology) would continue to receive state-financed students. As their actions had no further consequences, the Student Network's occupation ended on 26 March 2013 and the movement gradually dissolved.

In this article, we aim to examine the way in which the Hungarian press contributed to the shaping and outcome of these events through their political partiality. In a broader sense, the article contributes to the question of how opportunities for radically new discourses are constrained or curtailed in semi-restrictive, authoritarian political and cultural contexts.

## **The Broader Political and Ideological Context of Hungary**

The latest large-scale social change in Hungarian history was the fall of the nation's socialist regime and subsequent transition to democracy in 1989. This was unique in the sense that it involved neither armed conflict nor wide, "bottom-up," public negotiations.<sup>1</sup> According to sociological surveys at the time (Hartl 1994), Hungarians generally felt hopeful about the process and looked forward to the future. As Hungary's competitive market economy took shape in the 1990s, the transition brought with it greater hardship than had been expected. Feelings of

nostalgia emerged for the *ancien régime* as more stable, safe, and even prosperous. The overall experience of the general public was that of disappointment in transition and ambivalence toward democracy, while expectations of well-being in the future diminished (Ferge 1996). Feelings of freedom and possibility were recast as feelings of anxiety as well as feelings of existential and economic angst. There was also an emerging perception of a realistic individual threat (Stephan and Stephan 2000; Stephan et al. 2009) to the nation's tangible resources (Jetten et al. 2002). This psychological setting has contributed to the arousal of radical sociopolitical endeavors, such as right-wing extremist campaigns and protests, since the early 1990s. As the statement often attributed to Walter Benjamin goes: "Every rise of fascism bears witness to a failed revolution" (Žižek 2013).

Hungary's main governing party, Fidesz—Alliance of Young Democrats, was founded in 1988 as a liberal party in opposition to the socialist regime. The orientation of the party shifted from liberal to conservative in 1995 after disappointing results in the 1994 elections. Its name later changed to Fidesz—Hungarian Civic Alliance when the party wanted to symbolically represent its new ideological orientation. In government between 1998 and 2002, Fidesz regained power in 2010 following eight years of governance of the MSZP (Hungarian Socialist Party) and the SZDSZ (Alliance for Free Democrats). Winning 68 percent of the parliamentary seats in the 2010 elections gave Fidesz sufficient power to rewrite the constitution. This new constitution was widely criticized by the Council of Europe (Venice Commission 2011) and the European Parliament (2011) for excessive concentration of power and the removal of checks and balances in areas such as justice, electoral supervision, and the media.

In the wake of the increasing popularity of extreme right organizations (heralded by the radical Jobbik Party's admission to the Hungarian parliament in 2010),<sup>2</sup> the Fidesz government also took a sharp rightward turn, implementing several controversial measures made possible by the new constitution.<sup>3</sup> Since 2010, the Fidesz-led government has implemented many elements of Jobbik's platform, such as nationalization and the centralization of the education sector, the closure of the free market for educational textbooks, and the nationalization of the energy sector. This recent change can be viewed as a backward lurch toward authoritarianism, or as a new kind of "informational authoritarianism," as proposed by Sergei Guriev and Daniel Treisman (2015).<sup>4</sup> The move proved popular with some voters, but it has also given rise to civilian discontent.

Despite renewed discontent, the general attitude toward the public expression of dissent in Hungary seems passive or apathetic. Even Hungarian youth are skeptical or indifferent about politics and collective action (Gáti 2010; Szabó 2015).<sup>5</sup> Across Hungary's entire population, political activity stagnated between 2002 and 2010, after which it has steadily decreased (Szabó 2015: 70). When collective action has arisen, it has been subsequently considered extreme and radical in the public sphere.<sup>6</sup> This public attitude might have roots in specific historical and cultural traditions.

One such tradition is the set of Hungarian historical narratives that influence how the present is perceived and what patterns emerge from reconstructing the past in order to deal with present issues (Liu and Hilton 2005). János László (2012) highlights the Hungarian narrative of “we won, but ultimately we lost”: political events are seen as acts of bravery that are followed by brutal acts of retaliation. Such a notion has long been prevalent in the folk narratives of Hungarians:

After the centuries of Ottoman invasion, local and temporary victories follow each other in order to restore the country's independence. These efforts all end in defeat ultimately, the last one being 1956. There is no restoration up until the end of the 20th century, and even the transition to democracy can't be seen as one, because national agency played a meager part in its implementation . . . A repeating [Hungarian] theme for centuries has been that initial victories are followed by defeats. (László 2012: 97–98)<sup>7</sup>

This kind of tragic heroism may be one of the reasons why Hungarians view active citizenship (and especially collective activism) with skepticism. This historical narrative contributes to collective national self-victimization, which facilitates a passive stance and a perceived lack of responsibility among Hungarians when it comes to intergroup affairs (László 2014). However, we need to differentiate between collective passivity derived from system legitimation and other cultural, historical, and economic factors that contribute to social immobility, collective inertia, or different alternative expressions of the two.<sup>8</sup> In recent decades, the most powerful attempt to oppose political processes in Hungary has been the collective actions of the Student Network.<sup>9</sup> From 2011, instead of reviving the past and sustaining old reflexes, the Student Network has attempted to draw on new, wider concepts and values in order to deconstruct current social relations and introduce or “prefigure” a new kind of political consciousness. This new perspective formed the ideological basis for its concrete criticisms of Hungarian education reforms.

## Theoretical Frame

The Hungarian context can be explained by Margaret Mead's (1970, 1978) concepts of postfigurative and prefigurative cultures. Postfigurative cultures (such as the Hungarian government) organize knowledge transmission according to the values and imperatives of elders; they are past-oriented and have a strong rooting in traditional values. In contrast, prefigurative cultures are future-oriented, and the transmission of knowledge proceeds from the youth to the elders because the latter have more flexibility, greater insight, and better accuracy when it comes to their understanding of new ecological, economic, social, and technological challenges. Prefigurative cultures (such as the Student Network) propose shifts in the dominant paradigm in the wake of new empirical conditions (Boggs 1977; Mead 1970).

To achieve such paradigm shifts, less powerful minorities attempt to effectively exert influence on the social majority (Moscovici 1979). Serge Moscovici's framework of minority influence suggests that the consistency of a minority's position and the unanimity of opinion among its members will, over time, help that minority receive acknowledgment and thereby gain some influence. Charlan Jeanne Németh's (1986) subsequent research, however, reveals that having moments of flexibility—when the minority occasionally brings their views into line with those of the majority—is an effective means for the minority to gain influence. Though flexibility decreases consistency and perceived difference, it also reduces the chance of the minority being entirely discredited by the rest of the polity.

Media representations of protest tend to emphasize form over content, focusing on the “spectacular” aspects of movements. They magnify the situative factors of demonstrations and the personality of leaders and spokespersons, rather than the message that the protestors are trying to convey or the events and issues that have motivated the movement (Barker 2007). Moreover, movements usually appear in the news as problematic disruptions to the normal functioning of society, thereby obscuring the broader social problems that inspired them. This process can lead to the discrediting, marginalization, and even criminalization of social movements. This use of such discourses by the media is often functional in nature, as it helps the public justify and defend their own position in the perceived social system based on shared realities with others (Jost et al. 2004). These symbolic struggles of power (Jovchelovitch 1996) offer opportunities for dominant groups to try to justify the social system and to maintain the status quo (Jost and Banaji 1994).

Moscovici (1961) in his magnum opus, *La psychoanalyse, son image et son public*, explored how different sources of media communicate according to their position and worldview, giving rise to different forms of knowledge organization. Diffusion, propagation, and propaganda were communication styles or strategies that positioned topics in certain ways in order to achieve different desired effects on the recipient. Opinion, attitude, and stereotype were the forms of knowledge that stemmed from these communication styles respectively.<sup>10</sup> In our analysis, we focus on the role of media propagation in the formation of attitudes and the role of media propaganda in the formation of stereotypes.

During their struggles to achieve influence, minority groups may also be discredited by these media strategies, as they obstruct the influence process. Discrediting can take place either through the naturalization of contention or protest (Deschamps and Doise 1978), or through attributing a systematic error to those who participate in it (e.g., “they are being dogmatic,” “they are arguing on false premises”) (Mugny and Papastamou 1980; Ricateau 1970–1971). Naturalization consists of representing the minority in such a way as to limit and refute its position ontologically by describing its members with regard to various idiosyncratic characteristics. Naturalization has three forms: it can be biological, psychological, or socially reductive (Deschamps and Doise 1978). Biological naturalization occurs when the discrediting process focuses on biological features like sex, race, or age (e.g., “they are women” or “they are young”), while psychological naturalization (Mugny and Papastamou 1980) occurs when the discrediting process focuses on the accentuation of a psychological trait such as intelligence or empathy (i.e., “they are not very bright” or “they lack empathy”). Socially reductive naturalization occurs when the discrediting process is based on one’s (perceived or real) engagement with social groups or ideological positions (e.g., “they are socialists” or “they are nationalists”).

## **The Student Network’s Goals and Values**

The Hungarian Student Network movement, or Hallgatói Hálózat (HaHa), had its origins in the wave of social movements that formed in Europe and the United States in 2011–2012. The movement’s core ideological contention was that direct action without any mandate or traditional form of representation was politically legitimate. In this way, the Student Network operated in the tradition of movements such as the Occupy movement and other European student movements such as

the student occupations at the University of Zagreb, Croatia, in 2009. The students occupied the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in 2009 for thirty-five days. The occupations spread to other cities as well including Zadar, where access to the entire university was blocked. The occupiers created *The Occupation Cookbook* (2009), which circulated among Hungarian students as well. At one point in 2013, some Croatian occupiers even visited the Student Network protestors at the University of Pécs in Hungary.

HaHa denied that only elected representatives or state officials wielded the exclusive power to shape political decisions, instead upholding the right for communities to formulate collective opinions and take direct action. HaHa, and other movements like it, aimed to counter the alienation of politics from social reality. HaHa's mobilization against the new education law created not only an image of their desired higher education system but also a new perspective that was intertwined with its concrete policy objectives: the values and identity of the movement itself.

Through an analysis of the proclamations and official self-definitions and manifestos of the movement, we will be able to perceive this double effect. We analyzed the six points established by Student Network Budapest, the thirteen points established by Student Network Pécs, the Charter of the Student Network, and the online "handbook" published by the movement. The movement's policy demands and politico-philosophical ideals about how to act politically were both clearly present in their proclamations. Furthermore, HaHa's concrete educational policy objectives can be categorized into five core areas.

The first of these concerned institutional autonomy. Students sought to remove the process of financial supervision overseen by the Ministry of Education's appointed chancellors. The second area concerned issues relating to educational access and availability. The movement called for reestablished acceptance quotas at prereform levels, criticizing the arbitrary governmental redistribution of scholarship quotas among universities and faculties. The third area involved the desire to defend the principle of educational equity: students stressed the need to fund underprivileged individuals in higher education. The fourth area was the movement's harsh criticism of the newly enforced student contracts. It vigorously defended the principle of free movement of labor in the European Union. The contracts obliged students to work in Hungary as a "repayment" for their education. Students contended that instead of issuing these restrictive contracts, the government should instead create domestic jobs and opportunities for university graduates. Finally, the fifth area concerned the issue of funding. The movement called

for the immediate rolling back of government funding cuts, compensation for the funds withdrawn in the past, and the guarantee that the government will provide sufficient, consecutive, and transparent funding to maintain higher education. The Student Network was not entirely adverse to tuition fees, but it stressed that tuition should only be a partial source of higher education funding. It demanded that funding be allocated so as to provide fair wages and that proper working conditions be provided for educators. In their view, these steps would ensure a high-quality education for students.

The Student Network was not concerned solely with education policy. It articulated some very specific political and philosophical ideas as a part of its organizational identity. These ideas were explicitly expressed in their public-facing communications, their self-definitional statements, and their general movement activities. In our analysis, we identified five content dimensions.

First among these were autonomous self-organization and self-advocacy. As a grassroots organization, HaHa sought to provide a safe space for its members to advocate their positions and express their opinions. In order to move the discussions with the government forward, the network considered all nonviolent tools of public resistance available to it, most notable of which was the peaceful occupation of university campuses.

Second, the network defended the role of the university as symbolic space. They believed that the university context had an important symbolic impact on individuals and society. In this way, the use and occupation of the university's space became a central tool among the movement's political repertoire, reinterpreting the university campus as not only a service-provider but also as an effective symbolic and social space.

Third, the Student Network upheld principles of active citizenship based on direct democracy. It claimed that a democratic political culture could not function without the active, reflexive participation of its citizens. In the students' opinion, democratic citizens had the right to the sovereign expression of opinion in public matters. The movement envisioned a massive change in political culture and sought to establish the principle of subsidiarity, which recognized, among other things, the importance of localized decision making and of decentralization.

Fourth, the movement also firmly defended its party neutrality (i.e., its independence from official politics). It was organized to be open to everyone, regardless of their party preference, but it refused strict cooperation with, or representation within, political parties.

Fifth, the movement had specific qualities with regard to how it was structured. The network was nonhierarchical, favored local autonomous organization, and served as more of an ethical, social, and political collective than as a traditional top-down organization.

The student movement had a twofold identity. Besides its educational demands, it committed itself to the realization of a new kind of regime-critical, sociopolitical activism. It served as a prefigurative community for the creation of new kinds of social structures and political practices. Having established these five content dimensions, we analyzed how they were mediated and transmitted to the wider public.

## **Research Questions and Sample**

Here, we present two analyses of the media representation of the movement in popular Hungarian newspapers' online editions. We were interested in how new political ideas and new political content were constructed through these channels. Two of the most popular political outlets were selected: the left-wing Népszabadság (NOL) and the right-wing, loyalist Magyar Nemzet (MNO).

NOL started out as the official outlet of the MSZMP Party, the only party that existed during the socialist regime. After 1989, it became an outlet of the MSZP Party, which was the democratic successor to the MSZMP Party. In the last decade, it operated as an independent leftist newspaper and has been the highest circulating political daily in Hungary, until it was forced to close by its new right-wing-sympathizing owner in 2017. By contrast, MNO belonged to a socialist social organization known as Hazafias Népfront. Shortly before 1989, it emerged as a reformist communist newspaper, representing the internal opposition in Hungary's political one-party system. After 1989, it grew to become the most popular conservative newspaper in Hungary and the second most popular daily political newspaper after NOL. In 2012–2013, this outlet represented the Fidesz government, but its proprietor has more recently shifted toward a more oppositional stance.

Our first analysis concerned the frequency with which the different objectives of the aforementioned five self-declaratory content dimensions were mentioned. Our second analysis compared online articles according to the propensity of each outlet to depict either the movement or the government as participating in a dialogue with one another.

We drew our sample from every single online article published by these two major newspapers between 1 December 2012 and 31 March 2013.

The analyzed time frame covers the beginning of the protests, which started on 10 December, and the first media reports on the movement, which began on 6 December, until the end of the first major wave of demonstrations at the end of March. The breaking point of this wave was a partial agreement that was made between the government and the National Union of Students (HÖÖK), the official representative organization of students in Hungary. This intersected with the end of the movement's occupation of Eötvös Loránd (ELTE) University in Budapest, which lasted from 11 February to 26 March. From the start of April, demonstrations became smaller and media coverage moved on to other topics such as scandals involving student councils and the large-scale "retiring" of professors.

A sample of 138 articles contained the key term HaHa,<sup>11</sup> this being the most specific term related to the topic.<sup>12</sup> This sample consisted of 69 articles from MNO (number of words = 25,149) and 69 articles from NOL (number of words = 39,749). Articles were analyzed using Atlas-Ti and SPSS research software.

## **Empirical Analyses**

### ***Study I: The Representation of the Student Network in the Media***

#### *Hypotheses and Method*

Our aim was to explore how outlets with different political leanings communicated information about the student movement. Our initial hypotheses were that (1) the progovernment MNO would reject and discredit the movement's general demands; and (2) it would be even more hostile to the system-critical aspects of the movement (i.e., its politico-philosophical objectives). We also expected that (3) the opposition NOL articles would take a more integrative view of the movement, positively presenting both aspects of the movement (i.e., its educational policy and politico-ideological dimensions) in tandem.

Our analysis was conducted with the Atlas-Ti using manual coding. Content dimensions were derived from the contents of the student movement's own documents (divided into educational policy objectives and politico-philosophical ideals). The directionality of interactions (who talks or acts to/toward/against whom) and the appearance of discrediting strategies were also coded. The specific coding categories can be found in the Appendix.

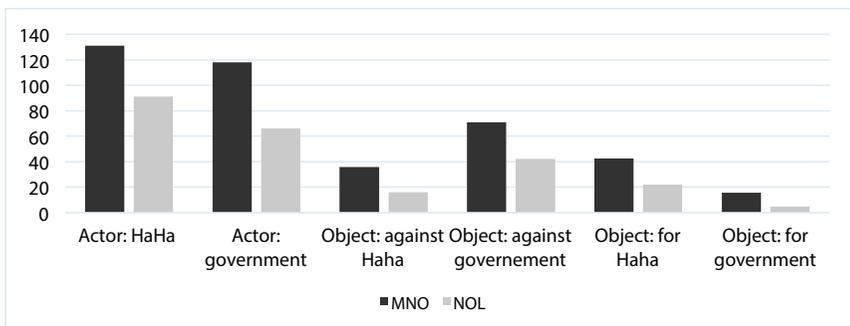
Another content dimension under analysis was the discrediting of the Student Network. Four different strategies of discrediting were coded. In the articles, either a systematic error is attributed to minority arguments, or the minority is subject to biological, psychological, or socially reductive naturalization (Deschamps and Doise 1978).

Two independent assessors coded the articles according to these categories. The two assessors had 93 percent intercoder reliability. The 7 percent of non-agreed cases were discussed with all four authors of this article, with decisions concerning these divergences made after discussion and subsequent consensus. The results show frequencies and weighted absolute values. Weighting was conducted according to the absolute amount of words in the two amalgamated texts (MNO and NOL) because we reasoned that the quantitative emergence of an issue in a text depends on the volume of the corpus itself.<sup>13</sup>

### Results

By having examined the coded actions, we were able to see that the right-wing MNO presented more government actions than did NOL ( $U = 1,966$ ;  $p = .027$ ).<sup>14</sup> In both newspapers, the Student Network is more often mentioned as an actor in events than the government ( $U = 6,986$ ;  $p = .001$ ). Although there was no considerable difference regarding the object of speech (articles for and against HaHa or Gov.), the “threatening” actions (demonstrations, declarations) taken against the government appear in significantly greater proportion across both outlets ( $U = 8,099$ ;  $p = .005$ ) than do the demeaning statements or actions spoken or taken against the students.<sup>15</sup>

**Figure 1:** The Subject and Object of Agency in the Articles  
(Weighted Absolute Frequencies in the Two Journals)



Looking deeply into the coded quotations, we noted that the actions against HaHa in the MNO articles are often depicted as originating from independent sources or from authorities with organizational relationships to the students (i.e., university management), rather than from representatives of the government:

The Dean of the Faculty of Humanities, ELTE, has condemned the actions of the Student Network. (MNO, 11 February 2013)

Fidelitas [youth organization of Fidesz] claims that HaHa is only a political agent cloaked in an advocacy group. (MNO, 11 February 2013)

In the case of NOL, “actions against HaHa” were commonly framed as a direct rejection of the students by the governing party:

It became clear that the government will not give way to the protesters. (NOL, 12 December 2012)

This way, the Student Network, which organized the demonstrations, was intentionally left out of the negotiations. (NOL, 12 December 2012)

Not surprisingly, the Student Network is shown with an explicitly antigovernment attitude across both publications. The codes of HaHa as actor highly correlates with the actions against the government ( $r = .685$ ;  $p < .001$ ). This is more pronounced in MNO ( $r = .716$ ;  $p = .001$ ) than in NOL ( $r = .598$ ;  $p < .001$ ).

Following the announcement of the quota in higher education, there were multiple protests nationwide against the government measures. (MNO, 18 December 2012)

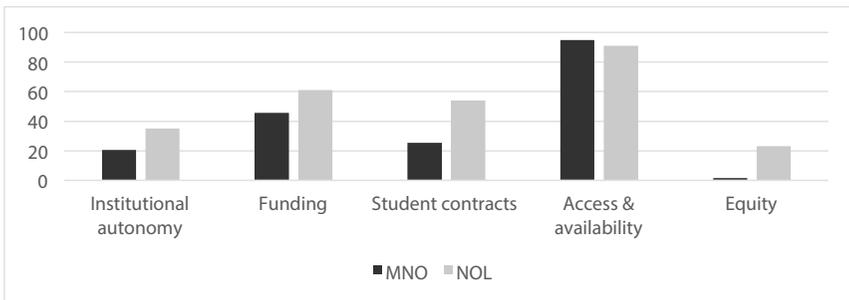
Fidesz [governing party] headquarters was targeted by the students. (MNO, 20 February 2013)

While the protesters are depicted as aggressive and threatening, the government’s attitude is portrayed by MNO as calm, open to solutions, and positively disposed toward the Student Network. There is a correlation between the frequency of the mentioning of the government as an actor and its nonthreatening gestures toward the students and, in particular, toward the student representatives ( $r = .667$ ;  $p = .001$ ). This kind of communication is illustrated in the following quotation: “Prime Minister Viktor Orbán wrote a letter to David Nagy, the head of the National Union of Students in which he calls for negotiation with the students” (MNO, 18 December 2012).

Among all of the content codes based on the Student Network's self-definitional statements, students' educational policy demands, in particular those involving access and availability, appear in the highest frequency across both newspapers. This became the only issue that the government was willing to negotiate on by the end of January 2013. The question of funding was the second-most emphasized demand according to the newspapers. This shows us that educational questions, whether reported on by a right- or left-leaning paper, were essentially reduced to an economic problem in public discourse.

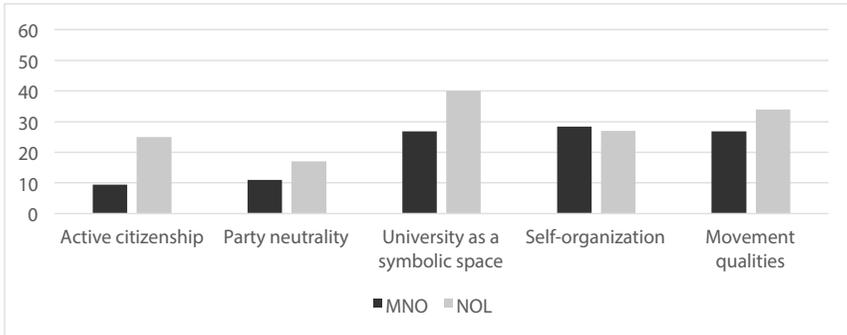
The cases of institutional autonomy or the student contracts appeared in MNO briefly and only in relation to economic issues. The access of the underprivileged to higher education, as a pledge of social mobility, was almost absent from the progovernment outlet. While all of these issues, except access, were more emphasized in the pro-opposition outlet (NOL) (autonomy:  $U = 1,898$ ;  $p = .005$ ; funding:  $U = 1,609$ ;  $p = .001$ ; equity:  $U = 1,800$ ;  $p = .001$ ), the more visible difference concerned the issue of student contracts ( $U = 1,458$ ;  $p < .001$ ) (see Figure 2).

**Figure 2:** Absolute Appearance of the HaHa's Educational Policy Objectives in MNO and NOL (Weighted Absolute Frequencies of the Content Codes)



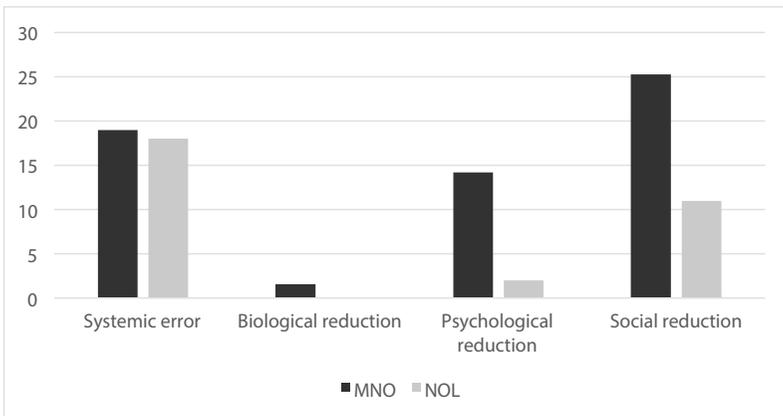
The politico-philosophical ideas propagated and implemented by the student movement were overall less represented than the educational objectives ( $U = 263,567$ ;  $p = .001$ ). Notions describing the movement's qualities ( $U = 1,831$ ;  $p = .001$ ) and the university as a symbolic space—and its occupation ( $U = 1,925$ ;  $p = .011$ )—appeared in greater proportion, along with notions describing active citizenship ( $U = 2,115$ ;  $p = .053$ ), in the left-wing NOL articles. The outlets do not differ in underrepresenting the notions of self-organization and party neutrality. These two codes could be seen as representations of the political independence or autonomy of the movement, and we find it symptomatic that these contents are muted by both journals.

**Figure 3:** The Absolute Frequency of the Student Network’s Politico-philosophical Ideas in the Two Outlets (MNO and NOL)



This can be an indicator that these channels are representatives of consolidated political structures and ideologies and that they try to anchor the movement and its objectives to settled political concepts and relations. It is also possible that neither political “side” has an interest in promoting radically new approaches to political philosophy. Concerning the discrediting strategies used by the outlets as features of political rhetoric acting against minority influence, we found that they were used more often in the articles of MNO ( $U = 1,949; p = .022$ ).

**Figure 4:** Frequency of Discrediting Strategies Used by the Two Outlets (MNO and NOL)



It is possible that the oppositional, critical attitude of NOL was fitter for propagating a direct antigovernment agenda, although it did not represent the movement's broader critique of the political system either. As a result, it rather exerted open but friendly disagreement and used discrediting strategies less often than  right-wing counterpart. Most prominently, MNO often linked the Student Network to the official opposition parties or other agents, discrediting them as mere "puppets" of political conspiracy (socially reductive naturalization:  $U = 1,953$ ;  $p = .017$ ):

Certain personalities of the liberal left can be linked to the movement (MNO, 2 February 2013)

HaHa-Soros<sup>16</sup> conducts operations from the background, and Bajnai<sup>17</sup> is a talking partner (MNO, 11 February 2013)

The results show some differences among the two sources analyzed. These differences concern the activity of the government, the different demands made, both educational and ideological, and the discrediting strategies used. However, there were also some similarities between them. What appears is a tendency for the progovernment MNO to report more activity-related codes than NOL, and for NOL to report in general more objective-related codes (both educational policy and politico-philosophical demands) than MNO. It seems that MNO focused more on what was happening in the representational field of dissent, speaking about actions and counteractions, while NOL tended to focus on the demands of the Student Network. Both outlets presented the actions of HaHa more than those of the government, recognizing the dissent as an action. And both of them represent less the politico-ideological demands than the strictly educational-policy-relevant ones. Finally, among the politico-ideological issues that are reported on, both outlets neglect those which refer to the autonomy of the movement (i.e., party neutrality and self-organization).

 The strategies of discrediting appear more in the articles of the right-wing MNO newspaper than among those of the left-leaning NOL. It seems that the two media outlets use similar perspectives, represent mainly the financially controversial aspects of the new educational law, and underrepresent the politico-philosophical ideas of the Student Movement as abstract issues that do not fit into the political agenda of the Hungarian political parties.

## ***Study II: Dialogue between the Movement and the Government before and during Negotiations***

### *Hypothesis and Method*

In our second analysis, the outlets' representation of the dialogic interactions between the student movement and the government were examined. We searched for specific linguistic markers that represented the propensity for dialogue between the two parties.

We constructed four amalgamated texts, which we divided by source and actor (MNO-government, MNO-HaHa, NOL-government, NOL-HaHa); we queried them for linguistic markers: either self-referential statements by a group (US), or those that referred to the other group and their actions (OTHER). The frequency of these statements was measured within each amalgamated text. A measure of the relative word frequency was made by dividing our results by the overall word count of each text and then multiplying that result by a constant (10,000).

We coded agents of speech, imperatives, actions, and cognitive states (see Table 1). We assumed that a major use of cognitive states both for

**Table 1:** Coding System of Study II

<b>Personal pronoun</b>	<b>Agent of speech</b>	<b>Government/HaHa</b>	
	<b>Object of speech</b>	<b>Us</b> (perspective of the speaker)	<b>Other</b> (referring to the other)
<b>Verb</b>	<b>Cognitive</b>	The speaker refers to their own mental states or processes: “we (HaHa) do not trust the government” “(we) the government must think that”	The speaker refers to the other group's mental states or processes: “the government (they) must think that...” “the students (they) do not understand . . .”
	<b>Activity</b>	The speaker speaks about own action: “the HaHa (we) is going to the streets” “the government (we) fulfilled the assumed obligations”	The speaker talks about the other's action: “the government (they) destroys the . . .”
	<b>Imperative</b>	<i>The speaker calls on the other to implement an action:</i> “we demand the government to revoke . . .” “we request the representatives of the students to . . .”	

the self and the other represents an opening to dialogue. According to Vincze and colleagues (2013), “linguistic expression of inner mental states is a narrative instrument that facilitates to receive the perspective of the actors and their group through empathy.” The speaker can either refer to their own mental state or that of the other. Self-reference shows one’s subjective position, while referring to others’ inner states can signify perspective-taking. And imperatives, as confrontative statements and rigid positions, are expressions of reluctance to engage in dialogue.

We divided the time line into two parts. The first part—December 2012—was characterized by the rise of a spontaneous protest by the students, with the government offering negotiable compromises only about the access to state-financed university places (quotas). This first, spontaneous wave of demonstrations were interrupted by the exam period and the winter holidays, during which a partial agreement was made between HÖÖK and the government (21 January). Between January and March 2013, negotiations were continued with the HÖÖK representatives, and the grassroots Student Network was excluded from the negotiation process. HaHa had hoped to be recognized as a participant in this process, but this never materialized. Our hypothesis was that a comparison between the articles from 2012 and those from 2013 would reveal the unwillingness of the government to participate in dialogue and the desire of the student movement to be heard.

### *Results*

We analyzed the time line of the propensity to dialogue in the two newspapers, dividing coded materials between those that appeared in the articles from 2012 and those that appeared in the articles from 2013. For this analysis, we combined codes for reference to the self (us, our action, our cognitive state) and reference to the other (they, their action, their cognitive state). We found that the two outlets differed in their presentation of dialogue during these periods. The progovernment MNO decreased its portrayal of the government’s disposition to dialogue over time, both in terms of subjectivity (GovUs) and perspective taking (GovOther). By contrast, it increased its portrayal of the Student Network’s disposition to dialogue, mainly via self-references, when an actor is referring to their own actions or intentions. The predicted interaction among newspaper, time, and actor (HaHa and Gov.) was significant ( $F(1, 10) = 5,949, p = 0.035, \eta^2 = .373$ ).<sup>18</sup>

In the left-wing newspaper, NOL, all references to the other (propensity to dialogue) decreased over time both for the Student Network and

**Table 2:** Self- and Other-References of the Two Actors in the Newspapers over Time (Data Shows Relative Frequencies)

	MNO		NOL	
	2012	2013	2012	2013
HaHa refers to Gov. ( <i>HaHa_Other</i> )	4.9	6.2	17.1	6.6
HaHa refers to Self ( <i>HaHa_Us</i> )	5.2	18.13	11.2	9.8
Gov. refers to HaHa ( <i>Gov_Other</i> )	17.2	11.6	13.4	7.5
Gov refers to Self ( <i>Gov_Us</i> )	17	12.9	15.7	12.7
HaHa imperatives	2.1	4.4	6	0.7
Gov. imperatives	1.7	3.5	0.4	2.7

for the government (Table 2). Even though demonstrations, dissent, and university occupations still persisted in 2013, both papers scaled back their reporting on the actors involved in these activities. In 2012, both outlets tended to give voice to self-referencing and other-referencing statements of the actors. In 2013, this tendency diminished while more self-referencing started to occur in both newspapers from both parties (see Table 2).

If we look at the reports of imperatives by both outlets, in 2012 MNO reported on imperatives fewer times than did NOL, in effect smoothing over any sense of conflict. Both outlets increased their reporting of imperatives by 2013, except those expressed by the Student Network in the left-wing newspaper (NOL). This data might also suggest that each newspaper presents the two parties or actors as less inclined to dialogue over time.

In summary, both newspapers tended to present a dialogue (self-other references) between the parties at the beginning of the protest in 2012, but this tendency had decreased by 2013, being replaced by apparent one-way communication by each party.

From the data presented above, the image of an unsatisfactory (non) dialogue emerges. There is an overall discrepancy in referring to the other and to their actions. It might appear that there is no effective communication going on. The distribution of contents over time shows how the government withdrew from the dialogue and instead took on an

imperative position. In turn, HaHa became more self-focused and less dissenting. The right-wing MNO and left-wing NOL did substantially differ in their depictions of the student movement. The MNO showed balanced government communication and presented HaHa as unable to negotiate. The NOL placed slightly more emphasis on the students' perspective, displayed more activity on their side, and emphasized their demands, but it only emphasized dialogue in its December 2012 articles.

## **Discussion**

As in the seminal work of Moscovici (1961), the differing worldviews (in this case political commitments) of news channels lead to different communicational patterns. The loyalist right-wing newspaper opposes the movement, and therefore attempts to discredit it, presenting it as incompetent, threatening, and illegal. This form of communication (propaganda) leads to the creation of stereotypes. The left-wing newspaper, on the other hand, tries to identify the movement with its own aims, emphasizing certain similarities between their positions and neglecting those which are threatening to its own position within the political establishment. This communication pattern is propagation, and leads to the formation of attitudes. Propagation may be less homogenizing than propaganda, but the main purpose is still to uphold the authority of the source—in this case, the established opposition—and to present the movement as a “good example” of the cause. Presenting the Student Network as a participant in or a supporter of left-wing parties (discrediting with systematic error and naturalization—mainly socially reductive naturalization), is convenient for those on the left. The apparent support given the left-wing outlet, with propagation and a kind of incorporation of the Student Network within its own political interests, contributes to the movement and the maintenance of the status quo.

In line with our results, we argue that the Student Network (HaHa) represented a new form of political consciousness in Hungary that can be defined as a prefigurative political movement. By definition (Boggs 1977; Yates 2014), prefigurative politics is a form of direct action where sociopolitical goals are expressed through the means of the movement's actions as well as the structure and function of the movement itself. We argue that the self-declarative statements of the movement were twofold in nature: the content of the Student Network's message (educational policy demands) and its form (the perspective represented by

its politico-philosophical ideals) were intertwined. HaHa was both a protest movement against concrete educational reforms and an attempt at an abstract deconstruction of the Hungarian political system (Arató 2014). In the communication between the government and the movement about the education reforms, the student movement needed to establish its identity in the public sphere as a political actor, but instead of being able to share its core principles, instead its legitimacy as a political actor became the object of media dispute.

We found that the prefigurative, politico-philosophical contents of the Student Network were less present in both outlets than were the educational policy demands. MNO focused more on the actions and reactions in terms of cultural and political dissent, while NOL focused more on the educational policy demands, framing them from the perspective of an established opposition party within the nation's dominant political culture. We would reason that the neglect of contents visualized by our data (such as autonomy and party neutrality) were a consequence of their divergence from the newspapers' political interests, because these issues questioned the dominant cultural and social systems in which these outlets were invested.

The Student Network's willingness to compromise and their flexibility—often assumed to be efficacious factors contributing to minority influence (Németh 1986)—offered space for the distortion of the original goals and values of the movement, as its identity became subordinated or reframed in the dialogue with a more powerful entity. Prefigurative politics can only be successful if those who practice it can penetrate the existing order. In this article, we have shown that this order—the majority discourse as expressed by political power (both by the government and the established opposition through their associated channels of communication)—defines and restricts the possible means of interaction. The terms of negotiation—and what is negotiable—are publicly defined (admission quotas, tuition fees), while other issues are muted and discredited (equity, party neutrality, autonomy). Through this process of confrontation, the substantive contrasts between the political culture of the Student Network and that of the Hungarian state dissolve, and the prefigurative political culture is left to disintegrate.

We see the events that took place at the end of 2012 as Hungarian society's first step, in a broader process of social learning, toward developing a more conscious, reflexive political culture (Hirsch 1990). Longitudinal research shows a promising trend among Hungary's youth: a rise in participation in nongovernmental organizations (from 7 percent

to 10 percent) and student organizations (from 11 percent to 14 percent) between 2013 and 2015. While the student movement has seemingly appeared dormant since March 2013, it has served as a precursor to subsequent dissent, collective action, and major protests against other unpopular government measures, such as the taxation of internet usage, the construction of a new nuclear plant, nuclear waste storage, and the attempt to close Central European University in Budapest.

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## Notes

1. Some democratic, pacifist, and reform movements preceded the events. One of the earliest is the Dialogue for Peace movement (Dialogus Békemozgalom) in 1982 and 1983 involving college students and professors. The actual negotiations with the state party began in 1989, and were initiated by the Opposition Roundtable (Ellenzéki Kerekasztal), which consisted of individuals who would later become members of political groups and parties in the first free elections. Among them was a young and charismatic law graduate and activist, Viktor Orbán, who was the leader of the Alliance of Young Democrats (Fidesz).
2. Jobbik political communication was that of a nationalist, extreme right party. Its campaigns had various Nazi and fascist elements (Erős 2014).
3. Including, but not limited to, overtaking and centralizing major media outlets, centralizing education, reducing social allowances, and exiling homeless people from the cities.
4. Later, the regime was labeled as an illiberal democracy by Prime Minister Viktor Orbán himself.
5. According to longitudinal results (2011–2015) from the Active Youth in Hungary Research Group, the proportion of young people expressing indifference to the political system (33 percent) remained the same while participation in collective actions decreased (from 31 percent to 20 percent) over time (Oross and Szabó 2013; Szabó and Oross 2012; Szabó et al. 2015).
6. In 2014, István Böszörményi, a local sculptor, poured flour over a sculpture of the poet Sándor Weöres at its inauguration, protesting the corruption surrounding newly erected public artworks all over the country. He was subsequently tried and convicted for truculence by a Hungarian court.
7. This is our translation from the original Hungarian publication. For English references on the same topic, see the work of László (2008: 173–174; 2014: 94), which contains this passage in a slightly different translation.
8. Regarding the social embeddedness of the different forms of collective action or lack thereof, we can find some parallels between the Hungarian and the South-Italian context. See, for example, Franco Cassano's (2011) study of the "southern" categories of thought in Italy: autonomy, slowness, and moderation.
9. Most of the movement's members were born around 1988 to 1990—and were the first generation to grow up in a democratic society. The student movement can be interpreted as part of a learning process: its members learned the new forms and patterns of democratic functions that had been absent in prior generations.
10. Diffusion was found to be characteristic of popular/educational journals, propagation appeared in religious journals (comparing psychoanalysis to confession), and propaganda was the strategy of Marxist newspapers (refuting psychoanalysis on ideological grounds)
11. An abbreviation of Hallgatói Hálózat (Student Network), which was the common and consensual name of the movement.

12. The term Student Network would have turned up at every instance of the expressions Student and Network.
13. Our aim was—even if the difference in word count did in itself turn out to be an informative value—to compare the two hypertexts with their respective word volumes. Weights were calculated by multiplying the coded absolute frequencies in the MNO articles by the proportion (1.5805) of the NOL hypertext word count ( $N = 39,749$ ) to the MNO hypertext word count ( $N = 25,149$ ).
14. As the homogeneity of variance of the coded frequencies is not equal in the two outlets according to Levene's test ( $F = 13,572$ ;  $p = .001$ ), we used the Mann-Whitney U test ( $U$ ), which is a nonparametric alternative of the independent samples t-test for measuring statistical differences between means.
15. For example: "The secretary of education finds it unacceptable that some hotheaded agitators restrict the right of other students to do x."
16. George Soros, founder of the Open Society Foundation supporting several nongovernmental organizations and civilian initiatives in Hungary. Accused of political manipulation on multiple occasions by the Fidesz government, Soros had once funded Fidesz itself, among other organizations that had emerged during the transition period.
17. Gordon Bajnai, former leader of the Socialist Party.
18. We used the actors (HaHa or Gov.) as between-subject factors and newspaper and time period as within-subject factors. The dependent variables were the code frequencies in the given time frames and in the given newspapers.

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## Appendix: Coding System of Study I

<b>Supercode</b>	<b>Subcode</b>
<b>Subject of Action (the actor)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Student Network (HaHa)</li> <li>• Government</li> </ul>
<b>Object of Action</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Against Student Network (HaHa)</li> <li>• Against Government</li> <li>• Pro-Student Network (HaHa)</li> <li>• Pro-Government</li> </ul>
<b>Educational Policy</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Institutional autonomy: revoking Ministry-appointed chancellors</li> <li>• Access and availability: security and provision of availability</li> <li>• Equity: underprivileged groups' social mobility and access to education</li> <li>• Student contracts: abolishing contractual obligations</li> <li>• Funding: Provision of satisfactory funding for higher education</li> </ul>
<b>Politico- Philosophical Ideals</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Active citizenship</li> <li>• Self-organization and self-advocacy</li> <li>• Movement qualities</li> <li>• Party neutrality</li> <li>• University as a symbolic space</li> </ul>
<b>Discrediting</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Systematic error</li> <li>• Naturalization:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Biological</li> <li>◦ Psychological</li> <li>◦ Socially reductive</li> </ul> </li> </ul>