

A rearrangement of cleavages or an emergent spiral of divergence¹

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ABSTRACT: The study deals with the parallel processes of domestic political bloc-formation, political homogenisation, the growing political homophily of personal networks of contacts extending over broader ones as well and the contradictory interrelationships of ideological and political polarisation in the light of a series of empirical surveys the last wave of which was a representative one in the spring of 2009. As contrasted to the convergent approach to social communication it also raises the appearance of a kind of divergence spiral in the given terrain. Besides the trends of the simplification of relations among political camps and their becoming homogenous the survey also reports on such research results which point towards the diversification of ideological and political cleavages, the surfacing of a moderate radical dimension besides the liberal-conservative axes and also towards the rearrangement of the lines of political power.

KEYWORDS: political homophily, public opinion, spiral of divergence, political networks, position generator

The growing homogeneity of voters' preferences

The European Parliamentary elections of 2009 have produced several results which have raised the question of how far one can talk about the continuation of earlier trends in respect of the political articulation of the voters or perhaps about the beginning of a new phase. Though low turnout surely cautions in the case of parliamentary elections the stakes are higher and are of greater mobilizing force and in the case of the EP elections the motivations are also not identical with the former ones, yet arguments for continuity as well as discontinuity can be listed on the basis of the results. Of the former ones first of all the continuation of the concentration of votes (and particularly its increase to above fifty per cent

for one party for the first time) and the related growth of certain trends of homogenisation should be mentioned. It holds less true for the so far existing trends of continuity and bloc-formation and of the major political cleavages. Despite concentration deserving the first place, one may speak about the falling number of votes cast for the first two parties if compared to the previous EP elections of 2004 or the recent parliamentary elections of 2006. Ever since 1990 this was the first case of such a drop, though it is true that by going beyond 80 per cent here a 'ceiling effect' has also begun to operate. Undoubtedly the unexpectedly vigorous appearance of Jobbik meant a further significant change (getting one-seventh of the votes) which carried in itself the appearance of a new ideological-political cleavage, of a radical-moderate axis. It also raises the issue of the possible rearrangement and change in the weight of the earlier cleavages.

The progress of the trend of homogenisation may result in the decrease of conflict potential from the angle of certain theoretical approaches, at least if merely the quantitative consequences of structural parameters are considered (see Blau 1994) because of the shrinking of contact surfaces as well as those of friction of major political blocs. Experience, however, either the common one or those to be described in detail in this paper do not suggest a real decrease in conflict potential. The results suggest such an internal homophilic arrangement on the one hand, and the assertion of such an ideological-political trend of polarisation which, based on a kind of mechanism of divergence spiral, may be capable of counterbalancing the above-mentioned homogenisation effect.

In the previous passage we have introduced several concepts and theoretical starting points which should, at least be touched upon in brief. This time we build on Pappi's (1977) interpretation of the extensive use of cleavages in political and social sciences which we particularly stressed already in our earlier surveys. It is based on three such components like the existence of political conflicts, its expression in the party system, and conflict potential rooted in the social structure.³ Linking these criteria to Blau's system of structural parameters mentioned above, the vigour of the individual cleavages is also determined by their linkage or branching off, by their nature of consolidation or intersection as well.

Characteristics of homogeneity and heterogeneity from the angle of relative sizes comparing the voters' camp of parties as well as the diversity or homogeneity of political articulation also deserve attention in relation to processes of concentration (from the aspect of the so-called 'effects of size') from among Blau's (1994) structural parameters. The characteristics of this indicator partly depend on the number of elements (in our case the different voters' camps) and partly on their distribution (for instance, in the case of two parties the largest heterogeneity is represented by a fifty per cent distribution; in the case of four parties it would be twenty-five per cent each.) In the latter case more elements are involved than

¹ The paper is related to empirical surveys based on representative samples comprising two decades. Its immediate basis was the survey of a 3000-member survey under the aegis of the Programme of Hungarian Elections of the Hungarian Center for Democracy Foundation (henceforward: DKMKA) in May 2009, supported by the Norwegian Financial Mechanism within the framework of the Participation and Representation project. See www.valasztaskutatas.hu for details about the programme and the project as well as of content and methodology.

² Róbert Angelusz, a key figure in Hungarian sociology, has recently passed away. We wish to commemorate his contribution to the discipline with this article, one of the last he wrote.

³ In this context it should be noted that the concept of cleavage has more rigorous or looser variants along criteria more or less agreeing with Pappi's interpretation, depending on whether all the three of the above criteria are realised while pointing in the same direction, and on how close their interrelationships are (when fewer criteria are realised, or in the case of looser connections the partition line would be a more justified term; on this see Knutsen 2006).

in the former one. One may speak about the growth of homogeneity if there is a shift from the above equal distribution towards a more uneven one. Reference has been made above to the phase of intersection and consolidation (in relation to the linkages and separation of the various cleavages).

The network can be related to Blau's theory only indirectly (through the intensity of inter-group and intra-group interactions). Lazarsfeld and Merton (1954), and later on literature on networks (see McPherson et al. 2001; or Lin 1982) contributed to the theoretical introduction and empirical elaboration of these concepts. The pair of concepts refer in their content to the relationship of intra-group communications that is among members of the group to those outside the group, how far contacts among 'those akin' dominate compared to those more distantly located. Though the study of homophily–heterophily comprises a broad spectrum of socio-demographic and cultural characteristics, recently the expanding literature on political networks itself is beginning to deal with this issue more emphatically (see Adamic–Glance 2005; or Huckfeldt 2009).⁴

The issue of communications convergence and divergence was primarily studied by Rogers and Kincaid (1981) from the side of the conditions of the network of contacts of convergent communication, but even in this framework of interpretation the possibility of a process of divergent direction also emerged when the framework of mutual understanding of the parties would start to move apart. In the more recent literature on the network of connections (such as Baldassari–Bearman 2007) the conditions of interaction for polarisation or movement towards approximation using, among others even experiments of simulation are studied. Finally, referring also to the concept of the spiral here we have in mind such a self-regulatory mechanism of positive feedback in the earlier systems theory framework, and an autopoietic one in a more recent theoretical approach (such as Luhmann 1997) which would progress, strengthening itself until a contrary impulse enters. The Noelle-Neumann (1980) approach of the spiral of silence is the direct antecedent in respect of communication, which describes that as a result of the mechanism of effects through wrong statistical perceptions the population expressing opinion is increasingly gaining advantage against the population keeping silent or communicating less intensely which can ultimately be expressed even in the rearrangement of votes. The issues studied by us do not pertain only to the relative weight of confronting camps but more to the existing communication between them, or to its gradually being pushed into the background, and the divergent feature coming to the foreground.

⁴ The homophily–heterophily pair of concepts applied in our research refers to the political similarity or difference of linkage within the network, similarly to the international literature on political networks. Later on we would dwell in greater detail on that in the place of an approach used earlier for characterising the political similarity or difference of personal networking contacts referring to a narrower range of contacts (of name generator); we already applied in 2009 the so-called procedure of political position generator developed during the various stages of the present series of research which was related to measuring broader range contacts (position generator). (During the course of the previous approach the issue was political similarity or difference related to certain groups of persons, whereas the latter approach refers to proximity or distance of knowledge to given political camps and supporters' circles.)

The sociological significance of the divergence spiral, put into the focus, can be interpreted not only from the aspect of public communications becoming rude and of the bad public spirit provoked by it. The deliberative discussion of public issues (see Fishkin 2007), the operation of public opinion along classical principles contain such postulates of consensus which is greatly endangered by a polarisation splitting up into a plethora of themes and to a simplification of platforms into the shades of black and white. Our paper sets out from the issue of the ideological and political cleavages and studies factors that point towards the strengthening of the trend in question as well as towards those that have a contrary effect.

Shift of gravity and polarisation along the ideological and political axes: 2003–2009

The study of identification emerging along the axis of left and right may look back to a past of about two decades, but we have been monitoring the distribution of voters in the ideological power space also along the liberal–conservative dimension for about one and a half decades. The results of the first decade were characterised by excessive weight of the left by the first axis, and the liberal one by the second one, which, by the beginning of the current decade have been somewhat balanced. A considerable interrelationship between those two dimensions could already be observed (see Angelusz–Tardos 2000; or 2005a). In the following the further changes of these trends would be analysed on the basis of the 2003 DKMKA survey entitled *Political Articulation* and of the 2009 one entitled *Participation and Representation*. In both cases the data of scales taken from different samples, including those gained by different grades of scale, such as of ten, eleven, and sometimes seven grades, have been transformed into three-grade scales to bring them down to a common denominator.⁵ In *Table 1* the joint distribution of the population by two dimensions is characterised by the matrix percentages of the respective cross-tabulations.

⁵ During the course of the various stages of the series of research, similarly to international practice, we have most frequently applied the ten-grade scale to approach the left–right, and also the liberal–conservative as well as the moderate–radical dimensions. As the individual surveys were based on several sub-samples we have also worked with scales of different grades experimentally (for instance, with the view of controlling the number of grades, or the effects of the existence or lack of the central point of a scale). The different scales had to be brought down to a 'common denominator' for purposes of the present analysis as well. During the categorisation of three divisions applied, in the case of all the three axes, grades 5 and 6 represent the centre in the case of a ten-grade scale, and lower grades stand for the 'left', whereas the higher ones for the 'right'. It was the three central (5, 6 and 7) grades in the case of an eleven-grade scale, whereas grade 4 in the case of a seven-grade one represented the centre in our categorisation. (When setting the boundaries we paid attention to the characteristic distribution of the various versions of scale; naturally the full preservation of information contained in data and the perfect equivalence of the different variants could not be guaranteed during such merger.) In this respect the results of the experimental comparison of versions go beyond the framework of the present report, but the differences experienced are not of a dimension which would significantly influence the direction and nature of the interrelationships described above.

Table 1: Distribution of voters along the left–right and liberal–conservative axes in 2003 and 2009 [reduced grades of scale, N (2003) = 3000, N (2009) = 3000, matrix percentage]*

2003		Liberal–conservative			Total
		Liberal	Centre	Conservative	
Left–Right	Left	17.2%	8.8%	7.3%	33.4%
	Centre	9.3%	16.9%	6.1%	32.4%
	Right	10.6%	8.5%	15.1%	34.2%
Total		37.1%	34.2%	28.5%	100.0%
2009		Liberal–Conservative			Total
		Liberal	Centre	Conservative	
Left–Right	Left	10.5%	6.6%	6.4%	23.5%
	Centre	5.5%	20.1%	5.1%	30.7%
	Right	10.7%	11.1%	24.0%	45.8%
Total		26.7%	37.7%	35.6%	100.0%

* Source: DKMKA MVP researches of: Political Articulation of 2003, and Participation and Representation of 2009⁶

The past six years have brought about conspicuous changes in the case of both axes. In 2003 the distribution between the left and right endpoints was more or less balanced on the left–right axis in 2003; by 2009 it changed for a proportion of 1:2. In terms of the above structural parameters heterogeneous distribution moved in a more homogeneous direction. A shift of similar direction took place on the liberal–conservative axis from liberal to conservative, though it was not accompanied by the homogenisation of the distribution as it was in the former case. It is another question to which we would return that a shift of similar direction could strengthen the interrelationship between dimensions in case this phase also fitted into the process. Ultimately the typology emerging from the joint two dimensions was rearranged in a way that the somewhat earlier excessive weight of the left–liberal combination in the opposite cells was not only reversed but the opposite side gained a numerical superiority of more than double so that it is the right–conservative dimension that represented the most frequently occurring type by the period of the most recent time of survey, practically (offering meaningful answers in both respects) with one quarter of the population.

Though the joint occurrence of the two prominent fields – the function of growth on one side and of decrease on the other – has somewhat increased and thus it strengthened consolidation in a homogeneous direction, it should be added

⁶ The survey of 2009 preceded the EP elections, partly linked to its topic. It should be added that it also was the second wave of a longitudinal survey launched in 2008, the plan of which contained three surveys in the form of panels up to the parliamentary elections of 2010. In order to supplement for the drop-outs of the panel substitution was applied for the sample up to numbers similar to the previous ones. The result of 2009 survived for the second year of the national panel survey of 3000 members launched in 2008, and are based on data of a more than 1500-member part of the sample. (It results in differences of one or two, and occasionally two to three per cent in the basic distributions compared to the total population.)

that these ‘chemically pure’ ideological and political fields continue to comprise only hardly more than one third of the population. It is not indifferent within this bracket that the proportion of ‘centre–centre’, isolating itself from both sides, has also grown, indicating that the processes involved have distanced a not insignificant part of the voters from political participation.⁷ On the other hand, it also cannot be stated that the two types of ‘sharp profile’ would cover the entire corner field at both poles, because the occurrence of the left–conservative as well as the right–liberal combinations is not insignificant, moreover, their joint proportion has not decreased significantly either.

A new development of the recent period is a more resolute appearance of radical political forces, and its most spectacular manifestation was the performance of Jobbik at the EP elections of 2009, and in addition to the two axes above the line of the moderate–radical was becoming topical. For the first time this new dimension was applied among the scales of measurement in the first wave of the 2008 longitudinal series of research of Participation and Representation, and it was repeated in the survey of 2009.

Table 2: Distribution of voters along the left–right and moderate–radical axes taken jointly in 2009 (compound grades of scale, N = 3000, matrix percentage)*

2009		Moderate–radical			Total
		Moderate	Centre	Radical	
Left–Right (3 grades)	Left	16.7%	4.9%	1.8%	23.4%
	Centre	15.2%	14.2%	1.5%	30.9%
	Right	26.1%	11.4%	8.3%	45.7%
Total		58.0%	30.5%	11.6%	100.0%

* Source: DKMKA Hungarian Research into Elections Programme, research in the Participation and Representation of 2009

Table 2 shows that while the former two dimensions, despite all shifts, distributed the voters relatively evenly this is far less characteristic of the moderate–radical axis. Though compared to the first survey of 2008, the proportion of those placing themselves at the radical court has grown a bit (by about 2 per cent), yet only one radical was against every fifth of moderate identification in 2009. This proportion is even higher in the left-side court (about ten to one), and one radical identification falls on about every third moderate on the side of the right-wing voters.

The points mentioned in the above Table partly indicate linkages among dimensions and partly the numerical clotting. Thus, in keeping with the medium strong linkage with the left–right dimension the occurrence of the radical side is higher than expected among the rightist voters and lower among the leftist ones, whereas

⁷ One manifestation of it is that while almost one third of the electorate belonged to the uncertain group (not voting, not mentioning parties, refusing the question) according to data of the 2009 survey, the type of the ‘centre–centre’ mentioned here reached as much as half of the respondents.

the occurrence of the moderate side is characterised by the opposite trend. All in all, deriving from mere quantities, it is the right–moderate combination of the nine types included in the Table which is the most frequent one: its proportion above one quarter is much higher compared to any other type on the basis of these two dimensions. The high proportion of moderates, including the majority of the population, which can be regarded high compared even to the occurrence of the right as well as the conservative sides can be regarded as an element bridging over the main political cleavages if for nothing else for its mere dimension.

It is, however, not only the relationship (its consolidation expressed by the terminology of Blau mentioned earlier) of the moderate–radical axis with the left–right dimension considered as the main political–ideological cleavage which may account for interest but also with the liberal–conservative dimension. We have analysed the nature of the coexistence of the three axes with the help of factor analysis the results of which are summarised in *Table 3*. The main component appearing alone with the eigenvalue above 1 reflects the interrelationship which could be expected on the basis of images so far obtained, by linking left-wing, conservative and radical poles on the one hand, and left-wing, liberal and moderate ones on the other.⁸

Table 3: Linkage of the three ideological–political dimensions of identification in 2009 (main component analysis, not rotated variant)

How would you indicate your own political stand?	Component
	1
Left wing/right wing (10 grades)	0.797
Liberal/conservative (10 grades)	0.698
Moderate/radical (10 grades)	0.455

The linkage of the three axes and its internal organisation suggests such a trend of consolidation based on the piling up of cleavages upon one another where, as expected, the primary role is played by the left–right axis. We cannot be lost in the web of the scholarly and common interpretation of this dimension and the concepts located at its poles within the framework of the present writing, which is not free even from a constant change of meaning, at any rate, it is clearly outlined that the left and liberal, as well as the right and conservative fields have got very close to each other during the recent past on the domestic ideological–political palette (which is also indicated by the usage of ‘leftliberal’ or simply ‘leftlib’ referring to the former pair in informal political slang). Though the linkage value of the moderate–radical axis appearing as the third element is significantly lower compared to the former ones, which is not surprising if one keeps in mind the not at all trivial nature of the parallel of conservatism and radicalism, the weight of the

⁸ Later on we would write about the second factor approximating the own value of 1 in another context.

factor appearing here is not insignificant either and it shows the dominant nature of linkage of the direction mentioned above within the entire population.

The linkage between the left–right and the liberal–conservative axes is not new, but its extent has changed during the past one and half decades. In the interest of comparison in time this time the analysis included in *Table 4* contains data of the ten-grade variants in each case (or the sub-samples applying them).

Table 4: Growing strength of connection between the left–right and the liberal–conservative dimensions [Pearson-correlation; N = 1000 (1994); 3000 (1998); 1500 (2003); 2000 (2009)]

April 1994	February–March 1998	November 2003	April–June 2009
0.19	0.18	0.27	0.33

Source: 1994 MTA–ELTE–KKCS, 1998 Szonda Ipsos, 2003 DKMKA Political Articulation, 2009 DKMKA Participation and Representation research

Does the growing strength of inter-axis consolidations also mean that location in the various dimensions would become more persistent and stable in time? Though the above data would suggest this yet it is not taken for granted, particularly if one has rearrangements kept in mind, the shifts from the left to the right, from the liberal towards the conservative direction, which also means that certain persons have changed their direction. Of course, in principle only shifts by grade are possible that would not necessarily result in a significant moderation of persistence. All these are theoretical possibilities; the panel construct of our present research also offers an opportunity for an empirical study of the issue. Part (about half) of those questioned in 2008 was also ready to answer to similar questions in 2009. In *Table 1* of the *Appendix* that correlation matrix is given which evolved on the basis of the values of each of the three dimensions pertaining to the panel members of the 2008 and 2009 surveys (here too the original values of scale were transformed into a five-grade one).⁹

The analyses referred to have indicated different degrees of persistence in respect of the three dimensions. While self-classification in the case of the left–right scale proved to be rather enduring if the one-year period is considered between 2008 and 2009 according to the 0.56 value of the respective correlation, it is more moderate in the case of the two other dimensions (it was 0.28 for the liberal–conservative, and 0.22 for the moderate–radical ones), yet the connection between the answers of the two years was still significant. The continuity of respondents’ profile which can be considered truly massive in the case of the left–right dimension is definitely related to the vigorous linkage of the dimension to the domestic spectrum of parties and to its certainly longer-term stability as

⁹ Partly the different number of sub-samples taken as bases, and partly certain differences between the basic methods (grades of the scale), as well as the above-mentioned transformation to the five-grade scale and last but not the least the different circles of persons involved (extending over the entire sample or over the panel sample) also play some role in that there is a lower interrelationship between the left–right and liberal axes for 2009 figuring in *Table 2* of the *Appendix* compared to *Table 4* of the main text (0.25 as against 0.33).

well.¹⁰ Actually all leading governmental and opposition forces could be distinguished along the left–right scale and the self-definitions of the parties involved have also not been far from this. The same pertains less to the two other axes, though they have definitely played a role in the political self-definition of some smaller parties (such as SZDSZ, or MDF with more or less stress on it, and to some extent in the case of MIÉP and recently of Jobbik). If this more moderate political embeddedness is considered even the experienced medium (between correlation values of 0.2 and 0.3) persistence of answers cannot be neglected either.

Our earlier researches have called attention to the emerging trends of polarisation along the ideological and political axes as one of the basic manifestations of the syndrome of bloc-formation. The relevant self-classifications already indicated grouping towards poles that were rather rare in international context already according to the 2003 survey.¹¹ Though it is true that shifting towards the poles in comparison to 2003, in the sense of the above indicated shift towards the right wing was a one-sided process (moreover, the proportion of those placing themselves on the extreme left grades did even drop to some extent). All in all, it is not the aggregate weight of the poles that has grown further but the one and a half-decade decrease of self-classification under the centre has been continuing unbroken as shown by the ten-grade scale applied in this case. Though the above mentioned international comparison was based on an eleven-grade scale, the most recent domestic polarisation value, where the proportion of self-classifications regarding proximity to the poles was already one and a half times above those positions in the middle of the scale, it may very well be a rarity even in international comparison.

Table 5: Distribution of positions occupied on the left–right scale in 1994, in 1998, in 2003 and in 2009 (growth of polarisation N = 1000; 3000; 1500; 2000 – ten-grade scale, in percentage of meaningful respondents)

Left–right, 10-grade	Apr. 1994	Feb.–March 1998	Nov. 2003	Apr.–June 2009
Left pole (1+2)	9	9	17	13
3+4	26	23	16	15
Centre (5+6)	47	45	33	23
7+8	13	16	19	26
Right pole (9+10)	5	8	13	24
Total	100	100	100	100
Poles together	14	17	31	37
Missing self-classification	15	27	20	16
Polarisation (pole/centre) index	0,31	0,39	0,93	1,61

* Source: 1994 MTA–ELTE–KKCS, 1998 Szonda Ipsos, 2003 DKMKA Political Articulation, 2009 DKMKA Participation and Representation research

¹⁰ To this see Enyedi (2004); and Fábíán (2005).

¹¹ According to the international comparison based on the eleven-grade variant of the left–right scale, covering more than twenty, mostly European countries the polarisation index based on self-classifications on the extreme and central grades of the scale indicated higher values only in the case of four countries compared to the domestic data already in 2003 (see Angelusz–Tardos 2005a). All in all, a more vigorous polarisation could be found in the case of the so-called new democracies, but the Israeli data were also outstanding in this respect.

When interpreting the results of *Table 5*, it should be added that opposing platforms becoming more marked is not a negative phenomenon by itself, and in the initial phase of the formative period of the plural political setup it could even contribute to the accommodation of clearer political relations, a kind of division of labour based on the confrontation of government and opposition in public thinking.¹² In all probability it could also contribute to the emergence of higher polarisation values in the so-called ‘new democracies’ which were observed in the previous decade. If, however the expressions of positions of outlook on scales shift to extremities in comparison to normal distribution it means that chances of convergent communication tuned to each other would greatly decrease, at least in the ideological and political spheres, and actually even an important precondition of a somewhat uniform semantic universe, of democratic communication would melt away.

Shrinking of contacts between blocs, the growing strength of political homophily

Our surveys conducted during the past decade have shed light on a dual trend in the contacts among the various political camps. As far as the so-called strong-bond, nearby contacts are concerned there a definite homophilic tendency asserted itself, and it only acquired more strength with the passage of time. Party affiliation has proved to be a stronger selector even than school education, age and gender. Though some homophily of contacts asserted itself even in the case of looser acquaintances or weaker bonding, it was far less exclusive than in the former case. Our survey of 2009 placed this latter aspect into the focus with the further developed technique of the so-called position generator questioning¹³. Its simpler variant was already present at the time of the 2003 DKMKA survey, but the newer version was not only directed towards personal relations of the supporters of various parties but also to whether there were closer ties among them. Basic results show on the one hand that the influence of homogenisation of the past decade asserted itself vigorously in this respect too, an overwhelming majority of contacts were concentrated around the two big parties, whereas in comparison to the previous period when the references in question occurred almost in equal proportion, it indicated the strengthening of the position of Fidesz in this aspect as well. But it is true that the one of MSZP did not fall to such a proportion as it would directly result from current public opinion surveys.

At this point it may not be in vain to dwell upon the analysis of what was said above, for the basic results themselves are not without interest either from the angle of the actual position of the various political forces. As persons studied by network surveys are by and large clear about the political position of their partners in their network of contacts, during personal questioning people appearing uncertain when questions pertain to direct party preference or in media where there is mistrust even

¹² To this see Tóka (2003–4).

¹³ See its various implementations in Lin–Erickson (2008).

against the question, these familiar assessments occasionally may offer a realistic picture of the characteristic political affiliations. Undoubtedly that element of cognitive distortion has a contrary effect namely that actual change is often realised by some phase of delay in the perception of others, just as it is also a function of the size and developmental track of parties which factor makes itself felt and how.

Table 6: The new variant of the political position generator¹⁴ for the study of the party affiliation of the circle of acquaintances in the 2009 DKMKA MVP Participation and Representation survey¹⁵ (in percentage of those giving meaningful answers to the question)¹⁶

	Close contact (too)	Only looser contact	Has contacts only from another party	Total
Having contacts with the Supporters of Fidesz	74.3	16.3	9.4	100
Having contacts with the Supporters of MSZP	59.6	20.4	20.0	100
Having contacts with the Supporters of SZDSZ	16.2	12.3	71.5	100
Having contacts with the Supporters of MDF	15.2	10.6	74.2	100
Having contacts with the Supporters of Jobbik	11.4	8.2	80.4	100
Having contacts with the Supporters of KDNP	9.6	6.7	83.7	100
Having contacts with the Supporters of MIÉP	7.7	6.9	85.4	100
Having contacts with the Supporters of Workers' Party	3.8	3.6	92.6	100
Having contacts with LMP	1.1	0.7	98.2	100

The basic distributions visible in *Table 6* already indicate the trend that the extent of the network of acquaintances is largely the function of the strength and expansion of the various parties, in many respects based on an earlier position (partly also in relation to the above-mentioned factor of helplessness).¹⁷ It is also visible, and *Table 2* of the *Appendix* offers an even clearer picture that the weight of the various parties also determines the extent to what proportion there are people among those having contacts of acquaintance who would report also on close contacts. Thus contacts qualified as of friendly nature are more around the strong, and less around the weaker parties.

14 The traditional position generator network technique of Lin-Dumin approaches a broader circle of contacts belonging to the ego's network, covering weak bondage, looser contacts as well, through occupational acquaintances, though recently other types of position generators have also appeared besides occupation among the variants of the procedure (see Lin-Erickson 2008).

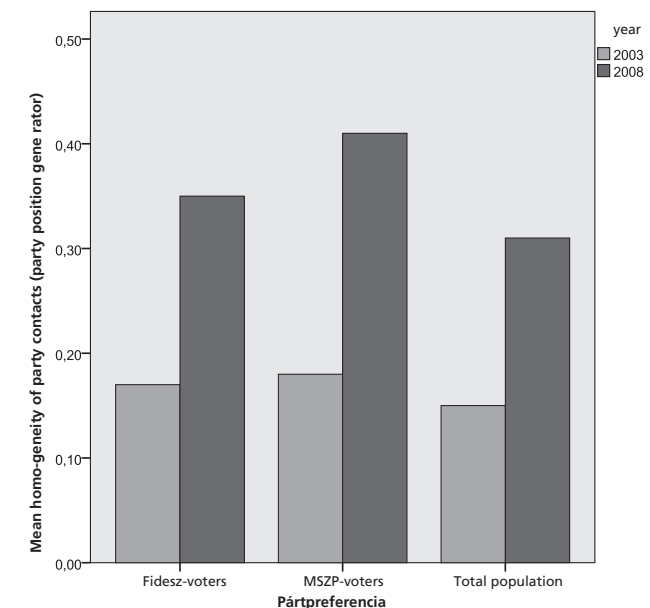
15 The question applied here was as follows: Some parties have more and others have less supporters, though it varies from place to place how many of their advocates can be met. Now I wish to ask you about your experiences. For example from among the supporters of which parties do you have personal acquaintances? Please, make your choice from ANSWER SHEET No. 32. AFTER HAVING ANSWERED: And from among which ones do you have closer acquaintances, friends, perhaps relatives and even family members? PERSONALLY KNOWS: GREETING RELATIONS, THEY KNOW EACH OTHER BY NAME. SUPPORTER: ABOUT WHOM THE RESPONDENT THINKS THAT HE/SHE VOTED FOR THE GIVEN PARTY AT THE RECENT ELECTIONS AND/OR WOULD VOTE NOW FOR THE GIVEN PARTY.

16 Thirty-nine per cent of respondents did not mention even one party from among the supporters of which he could own up more or less as acquaintances and personal contacts. They mostly come from a stratum of the electorate that is indifferent towards politics and has more moderate inclination to vote, they are people who remain outside political processes to a large extent because of this rare communication.

17 Thus it is obvious that the number of acquaintances would be higher in the case of parties of larger support, and it is less in the case of the smaller ones, though this interrelationship is not mechanical (for instance, there is a kind of helplessness effect, partly as a result of the fact that the perception of contacts is not up to date, in addition the partners themselves are uncertain about the modification of their party affiliation and its final confirmation).

To some extent the above results have already forecast the assertion of the homophilic trend through the interrelationship between the ranking of popularity and contacts. Surely research results also offer an opportunity for more direct analysis. The next study is already based on those complex indexes which are based on the ensemble of the various party contacts. The basis of classification was linkage to the various political blocs, practically to governmental or opposition parties for 2003 as well as for 2008. In this respect the situation in 2003 was clearer since MSZP and SZDSZ were coalition partners in the government as well as in local governments, and their merger could not be particularly challenged. By 2009 this tie has weakened yet we still have not considered grouping on this basis unjustified despite a certain ambivalence of the situation. This problem emerged not only on the left and liberal but also on the right and conservative sides, yet we applied a grouping on the opposition side which was similar to the earlier one. (It should be noted to the interpretation of the next results that the drop in the political coherence of blocs could, in theory, contribute to a more heterogeneous nature of the investigated political contacts).¹⁸ In the interest of easier comprehension the next Figure emphasizes the voters of the two big parties compared to the total population, and we limit the survey to homogenous political contacts within the connections.

Figure 1: Growth of the proportion of those having political contacts (belonging to the same political bloc) within the voters' camp of the bigger political parties and within the entire population between 2003 and 2009 (based on the party contacts of a broader circle of acquaintances, in percentage)



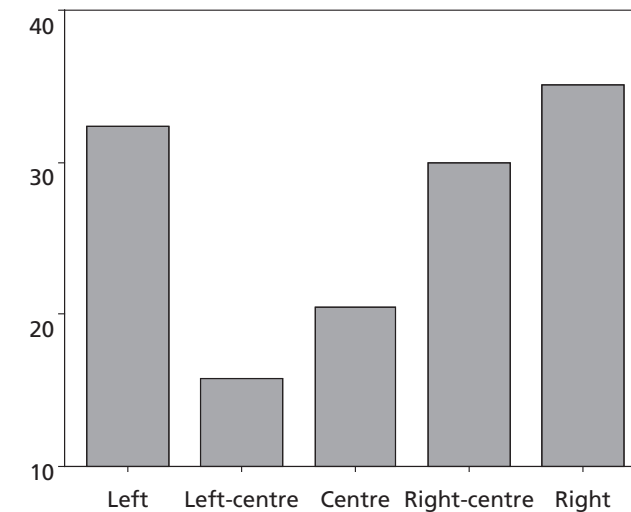
18 The index we have been working with in the analysis in question is based on the party affiliation of partners in acquaintance (alter) where the party position of persons questioned (ego) does not play any direct role. Therefore one can speak about homogeneity/heterogeneity of (party) contacts in respect of this group as contrasted to the pair of homophily/heterophily concepts related to ego-alter considerations.

One of the basic findings of our earlier surveys was that in contrast to the basically homophilic nature of the narrower network of contacts the heterophilic features are more vigorous in the political composition of the broader circle of acquaintances. Referring again to the index applied here, the proportion of those whose political contacts were homogenous from the given aspect did not yet reach 20 per cent of the total population in 2003. This proportion, being almost doubled, grew to 30 per cent by 2009, which more or less corresponds to the already presented trend of political homogenisation. But it is less natural on the basis of structural parameters, including Blau's principle of size effects that the occurrence of the politically homogenous (decisively homophilic) ensembles of contacts has also grown within the shrinking camp of the MSZP. (According to the principle of the effect of size, assuming a certain minimum density of contacts and based merely on chance, the smaller a group is the more likely is the chance of contacts with members of other groups.) It is also not taken for granted merely on the basis of the trend mentioned above (and the related change of the extent of the effect of size) that the occurrence of homogenous political contacts has grown to such a significant extent within the entire population.¹⁹

The above results refer to the existence of such mechanisms which effect a distancing in the interaction of political blocs but not only on the micro level of contacts but also on mezzo levels. The phenomenon is primarily interpreted by the growing strength of political rivalry and the related ideological and political polarisation. Polarisation on the one hand results in distancing from another camp, namely divergence, and the growing strength of reliance on internal contacts and the growing homogeneity of contacts. The next Figure depicts this trend in a cross section, giving prominence to the left–right dimension among the ideological and political axes.

¹⁹ It is not simple to assess exactly the change of size effect deriving from political homogenisation as it is also a function of the parties and the (changing) number of the contacts related to them besides the relative size of the political camps. Assuming one contact and two parties per head, and also assuming in one fictitious case a fifty-fifty distribution and a two thirds–one third one in a second case among the voters' camps (which is not far from the present case) the random occurrence of homogeneous contacts would be 50 per cent in the first case, whereas it would grow roughly to 55 per cent in the second case (therefore change deriving merely from this effect of composition would be smaller than experience empirically in this case).

Figure 2: Concentration of the homogeneity of contacts at the ideological and political poles

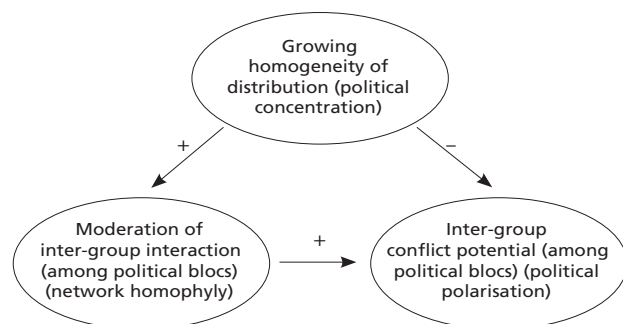


What the most general lesson from the angle of our logic is that the homophily of contacts asserts itself more vigorously at the ideological poles than in the central fields, and this aspect becomes particularly significant in the light of results speaking about growing polarisation. To put it differently: ideological and political distance is also becoming distance of contacts; in addition to the formal element of the effect of size this trend lends a motive of content to the growing strength of homophily. At the same time the difference between the left-centre and the right-centre segments once again can be explained with the effect of size: as the number of possible partners has fallen within the left camp and has grown in the right one, the mere chances of contacts are effective in a more moderate direction of contact homogeneity in the former side and a more vigorous one in the latter one. The fact that such an effect of composition practically does not assert itself compared to the right-wing pole suggests a rather strong tendency towards contact homophily and the closure of contacts. It also explains the above mentioned phenomenon in many respects, namely that the homogeneity of political contacts has become more vigorous in the case of the MSZP even in comparison to the voters' camp of Fidesz. (In addition the condition unfolding also from the contexts of panels definitely played a role in that the homogeneity of political contacts was less vigorous among people floating away from MSZP than among those remaining with it.)

The logic so far followed is simplified into a scheme in the next Figure. Here the interrelationships of the three main nodes are outlined; they are the growing political and ideological concentration, a growing closure of contacts (political homophily), and growing polarisation as an element of conflict potential (to be expounded to some extent). Part of the indications is obvious on the basis of the considerations of principle (and empirical results): the concentration of political platforms is effective in the direction of the homogeneity of contacts, while politi-

cal homophily and polarisation are mutually strengthening trends. As far as the third indication is concerned, political concentration (through the moderation of the surfaces of conflict as it is once again worded among Blau's theses of the structural parameters, see Blau [1994]) would in principle moderate the general conflict potential in society, and the attached negative sign actually refers to this theoretical interrelationship.

Figure 3: The dual mechanism of effects of growing political homogeneity



The schematic figure refers to contradiction between the two mechanisms of effect. In theory the growth of homogeneity and the tendency of concentration (according to Blau's relevant theses [1994]) would reduce conflict potential deriving from the confrontation of political blocs. The fact that it is rather its opposite that has emerged according to empirical data can be related to a different direction of political confrontation through growing homophily pointing to polarisation as its indirect effect.

Continuing the series of paradoxes it is also worth paying attention to the interrelationship which can be experienced between the phenomenon of political homophily and the intensity of political interest or political activity. Here once again a theoretical and a practical trend are confronted to each other. Though the complexity of political contacts and their diverse nature in the direction of various political platforms correlate positively with the intensity of interest as well as with the level of political participation (as earlier empirical experience had also pointed in this direction),²⁰ yet our more recent research experience, as it is also indicated by *Table 7*, points in a different direction on the basis of the dimension of contact homogeneity and heterogeneity.

²⁰ To this see Angelusz–Tardos (2005b).

Table 7: The relationship of network diversity²¹ to the intensity of political interest in 2009 (in percentage, and based on the standardised residuals)

		How much are you interested in politics?					Total
		Not at all interested	Not interested	Yes and no	Interested	Much interested	
Cluster of political homogeneity	Homogeneous	22,1%	26,1%	32,7%	33,8%	45,9%	30,4%
		-4,0	-1,9	1,6	1,8	3,4	
	Mixed	25,9%	30,0%	29,5%	34,2%	35,7%	30,3%
		-2,1	-0,1	-0,6	2,1	1,2	
	Without contacts	52,1%	43,8%	37,8%	32,1%	18,4%	39,3%
		5,8	1,9	-1,0	-3,7	-4,4	
Total		100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

While based on experience, it is less surprising that political indifference is primarily concentrated in the population without contacts it is much less so that it is people having homogeneous political contacts that report on the highest level of interest. Apparently it is 'the orthodoxy of contacts' involved in our case which contains that additional involvement which could counterbalance generally grown disillusionment and turning away from politics during the past period which is also testified by all the relevant researches. A similar tendency is seen in relation to inclinations to participate in the elections (in *Table 3* of the *Appendix*) as well. Apparently under conditions of broad political apathy referred to it is the syndrome of polarisation and homophily as well as the one pointing towards divergent communication which offer a certain chance of political mobilisation itself getting more difficult to the political actors.

Emerging new cleavages and the chance of a widening playground

In the chapters above so far such trends and mechanisms were mentioned in which apparently every interrelationship seems to move towards a single outcome on the basis of the mainstream processes, namely towards a syndrome hallmarked by concepts of concentration, homogenisation, polarisation and divergence. Based on *Figure 3* and continuing it in thinking political homophily and the ideological and political polarisation caused by it have continued to strengthen political homogenisation and homophily in a new circle of feedback as elements of a kind of divergence spiral. At the same time in our analyses so far done we have also disregarded certain more hidden effects and consequences in order to emphasize the above train of thought which was partly justified by the marked element and time-wise strengthening of dual bloc formation. It is not only that theoretical

²¹ The three types of the cluster typology of network diversity are the following: homophilic that is acquaintances only within the same political bloc even in a broader circle of contacts; mixed that is the occurrence of contacts of different political hues; without contacts concerning parties.

limitation according to which there is a kind of ceiling effect regarding the expansion of homogenisation in time, and not only that there is a feature of more of content that according to several experiences the resisting force of the 'core minority' retreating towards the poles is bigger from the outset towards further 'shifts'. One may also keep in mind the results and their more specified context so far less underlined in the analyses which also suggest explicitly or implicitly that one may face even the appearance of organisational elements different from the above ones, cutting through them and of some new organisational elements. In all probability they can be related also to the dynamics of homogenisation itself and to the increasing internal heterogeneity of a growing number of the elements under the surface. In this logic one may immediately mention a certain diversification of the ideological and political cleavages among the phenomena approached by the study, where in addition to the dominant left–right axis and the liberal–conservative one, not insignificant even earlier, the moderate–radical dimension as a new factor has emerged from below the surface during the recent years as it was also indicated by the results of the EP elections. Already the distribution of positions occupied on the axes has indicated the growing emphasis on several dimensions in the face of homogeneity, and all this is even more clearly indicated by such a supplement to the factor analysis presented (in *Table 3*) where a further factor is also considered next to the leading component though already at a lower own value²².

Table 8: A more complex structural outline of the ideological and political cleavages in 2009 (main component analysis, not rotated variant)

How would you indicate your own political position?	Component	
	1	2
Left wing/right wing 10 grades	0,797	-0,047
Liberal/conservative 10 grades	0,698	-0,500
Moderate/radical 10 grades	0,455	0,849

While the contents of the first factor visible on *Table 8* do not represent any novelty after all that was said, the two second axes, the liberal–conservative and the moderate–radical dimensions are linked differently from the usual one on the second factor (here already it is the liberal pole which relates to the radical one and the conservative pole to the moderate side).²³ Looking at it historically actually these latter combinations are not without antecedents either, but they were pushed to the edge of the palette by the force of the mainstream movements. Thus it is not only the liberal–radical connection that has appeared earlier (and

²² The second own value referred to was 0.96.

²³ As it is shown by *Table 4* of the *Appendix* the joint consideration of the (panel) figures of 2008 and 2009 confirms this structural image.

not even in isolation, for instance, within the voters' base of SZDSZ),²⁴ but, with an opposite sign the moderate emphasis could be characteristic also in the case of several conservative voters which by now have become of secondary strength compared to the right–radical relation (as it is emphasized by the first factor). It is only an opportunity of interpretation going beyond data that a social group in general opposed to the establishment, and even perhaps possessing anarchistic features can also be found at the radical side, mostly within the younger age groups today.

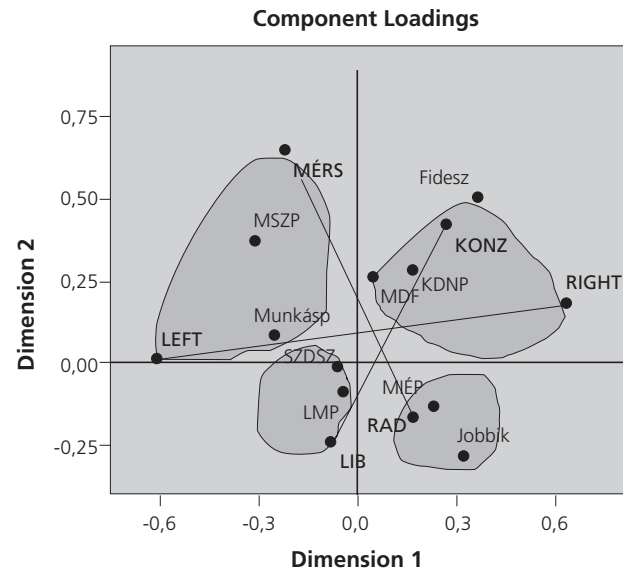
The fact that the two other axes besides the left–right dimension also possess autonomous structuring force in the current political palette can be supported by some empirical data, too. *Table 5* of the *Appendix* publishes those data which, also on the basis of party contacts presented earlier link the characteristic milieu of the contacts of acquaintances of the different parties to the three dimensions. The image thus obtained confirms that there is need for all the three axes to outlining the characteristic profile of each party. Thus, progressing alphabetically as given in the Table, while it is the right pole of the left–right dimension and the conservative pole of the liberal–conservative one which represent a common denominator in the electorate of Fidesz and Jobbik the moderate–radical axis already represents a line of separation between them. The characteristic values of MSZP emerge towards the left final point on the left–right axis, and towards the moderate end point on the moderate–radical axis, that of the SZDSZ25 is located towards the liberal direction where the electorate of MSZP (at the time of the 2009 survey) was located near the zero point (actually alone among the parties considered, though faintly the LMP as well). The voters' milieu of MDF of a less marked image on the other axes (having changed its image in many respects compared to its earlier one) is also distinguished by the moderate–radical axis (towards the moderate side).

The graphic solution which locates the parties in the political and ideological space and which is based on a multidimensional analysis of the voters' milieu which considers the known party contacts of the voters of individual parties parallel to the three political-ideological axes (in a two-dimensional space in this case) offers an even more spectacular picture.

²⁴ Positive values are linked on the basis of (past or present) party preference to SZDSZ on the second factor.

²⁵ It should be noted that the survey was made in the late spring of 2009, at the time of the SZDSZ presidency of Gábor Fodor for the circumstances of SZDSZ.

Figure 4 Party milieus distinguished on the basis of political contacts in the political space represented jointly with the three political–ideological axes (Optimal Scaling, OVERALS)²⁶



While it stretches jointly the first dimension basically along the left–right, it does the second one along the liberal–conservative and the moderate–radical axes. In addition to the two (vertical and horizontal) axes of the construct the three straight lines of axes (linking the opposite end points) drawn into the Figure indicates the political–ideological ‘cardinal points’ of the two-dimensional space. The delineation of the individual zones by party milieus in space contains relatively more subjective elements. More than two bloc formations can be found in this more differentiated drawing, at least the two big blocs are doubled according to the liberal–conservative and moderate–radical axes. If their basic profile is expressed by the end points defining their borders a left–moderate (MSZP with the Workers’ Party at its margin), a left–liberal (LMP and SZDSZ), a right–moderate (Fidesz, KDNP with MDF at its margin) and a right–radical (Jobbk, MIÉP) zone is delineated.

It is already an issue of the next period, and not the least of the general elections to be held in 2010, whether the transformation of the political palette would point towards a further simplification of the bloc structure, or perhaps rather towards differentiation. And similarly, it is also what comes next would answer to the question whether all this would strengthen the divergent trends of daily

political communication or would create once again a greater opportunity for the convergent directions of communication.

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²⁶ OVERALS is such a flexible procedure of analysis contained by the relatively new programme packages of SPSS which has no rigid specifications for the measurement levels of variables, or of their linear or non-linear nature, it does not isolate dependent and independent variables, and it is capable of managing several ensembles of variables at the same time within the broader module of Optimal Scaling. Due to these special features it can be simultaneously considered a qualitative as well as quantitative procedure (similarly to correspondence analysis which can also be classified under the same family).

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Appendix

Tables

Table F.1 Interrelationships among the three ideological-political identification axes in the circle of the members of the MVP survey of 2008 and 2009 (transformation to a five-grade scale, n = 1368, Pearson R correlation values and significance levels)

		Left-right 2008		Left-right 2009		Lib.-cons. 2009	
Liberal-conservative 2008	corr.	0.309					
	sign.	0.000	Lib.-cons. 2008				
Moderate-radical 2008	corr.	0.144	-0.001				
	sign.	0.000	0.974	Mod.-rad. 2008			
Left-right 2009	corr.	0.564	0.174	0.115			
	sign.	0.000	0.000	0.000	Left-right 2009		
Liberal-conservative 2009	corr.	0.163	0.277	-0.001	0.248		
	sign.	0.000	0.000	0.959	0.000	Lib.-cons. 2009	
Moderate-radical 2009	corr.	0.156	0.014	0.221	0.207	0.000	
	sign.	0.000	0.638	0.000	0.000	0.991	

** The correlation is significant at 0.01 level.

Table F.2 Occurrence of closer and looser contacts with voters of the different parties (in 2009, in percentage of people having such contacts)

	Closer contact (too)	Only looser contact	Total
Fidesz	82	18	100
MSZP	74	26	100
SZDSZ	57	43	100
MDF	59	41	100
Jobbik	58	42	100
KDNP	59	41	100
MIÉP	53	47	100
Workers' Party	51	49	100

Table F.3 Interrelationship of network intensity with inclination to participate in the elections in 2009 (in percentage of the "this Sunday question", and on the basis of the standardised residuals)

		Had the parliamentary elections been held this Sunday, would you go to vote?				Total
		Would surely go to vote	Would surely go to vote	Would surely go to vote	Would surely go to vote	
Cluster of political homogeneity	Homogenous	38,4%	22,9%	13,6%	20,1%	30,5%
		8,6	-3,6	-4,6	-4,3	
	Mixed	29,6%	31,1%	34,7%	29,9%	30,2%
		-0,7	0,4	1,2	-0,1	
	Without contact	32,0%	46,0%	51,7%	50,0%	39,3%
		-7,5	3,0	3,2	4,2	
Total		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Table F.4 Factor structure of the three dimensions based on the consideration of the aggregate data of 2008 and 2008 (not rotated analysis of main components)

	Component	
	1	2
BALJOB58	0,759	-0,042
LIBKON58	0,495	-0,481
MÉRRAD58	0,335	0,595
BALJOB59	0,753	0,044
LIBKON59	0,442	-0,429
MÉRRAD59	0,362	0,626

Where BALJOB stands for Left-right, LIBCON for Liberal-Conservative, and MERRAD for Moderate-radical.

Table F.5: Interrelationships of ideological–political dimensions and party milieus in 2009 (political position generator, ideological–political scales transformed to five-grade scales, N = 2000, Pearson R correlation values and significance levels)

Occurring within closer or broader spheres of contacts		Left–right	Liberal–conservative	Moderate–radical
Supporters of Fidesz	corr.	0,158(**)	0,142(**)	–0,071(**)
	sign.	0,000	0,000	0,003
Supporters of Jobbik	corr.	0,162(**)	0,079(**)	0,202(**)
	sign.	0,000	0,001	0,000
Supporters of KDNP	corr.	0,068(**)	0,083(**)	–0,010
	sign.	0,004	0,000	0,682
Supporters of LMP	corr.	–0,038	–0,047(*)	0,005
	sign.	0,106	0,047	0,823
Supporters of MDF	corr.	0,014	–0,006	–0,065(**)
	sign.	0,546	0,792	0,006
Supporters of MIÉP	corr.	0,078(**)	–0,039	0,079(**)
	sign.	0,001	0,101	0,001
Supporters of MSZP	corr.	–0,191(**)	0,001	–0,105(**)
	sign.	0,000	0,954	0,000
Supporters of Workers' Party	corr.	–0,084(**)	0,023	0,035
	sign.	0,000	0,336	0,143
Supporters of SZDSZ	corr.	–0,067(**)	–0,104(**)	–0,019
	sign.	0,005	0,000	0,411

* min. 0,5 sign.