

# Spatial Distribution of Political Parties in Hungary 1990-2006

József Mészáros, Norbert Solymosi, Ferenc Speiser

Dep. of Sociology, Budapest Univ. of Technology and Economics,

Dep. of Biomathematics, Univ. of Veterinary Science

Dep. of Automation, Univ. of Veszprem

## Abstract

In this analysis, we demonstrate that Hungary, though a small country in size (smaller than most states in the USA), shows significant spatial clustering. We demonstrate the clustering process, and illustrate it in figures and maps, using data from the first free election and subsequent elections, together with statistical indicators. On the basis of this spatial clustering, we demonstrate how – the stability of the voting blocs notwithstanding – one political party that had previously been associated with a different political bloc has been able, in a relatively short period of time, to occupy the vacant space on the ‘right’ and to integrate the voters of the right-wing bloc. The process is described with the help of data from elections and opinion polls.

*Keywords: Hungary, territorial distribution, spatial autocorrelation*

## Introduction

Seeking to avoid the error of overgeneralization, our study looks at one particular phenomenon in Hungary. On the subject of the roles played in recent years by the political parties of the former Soviet satellite states, the literature is inconsistent, and we find numerous contradictions (even within the work of the same author: for example, in Lewis (2001), the preface and page 20 contradict each other). There have also been different views expressed as to the stability of the electorate: often it is loyalty to a party that is examined, rather than the stability of an electoral bloc (Gallegher *et al.* 2006; Kreuzer and Pettai 2003). Opinions also differ about the effect of socio-demographic factors on the choice of party to support (Miller *et al.* 2000; Berglund *et al.* 2004; Gijsberts and Nieuwbeerta 2000). The system of parties and the behaviour of electors are described in detail in books by Mair (1997) and H. P. Kitschelt *et al.* (1999). The social role of the post-communist parties in the system of parties is outlined by Bozóki and Ishiyama (2002).

Our study attempts to show the way the Hungarian political blocs have become embedded, and to use that information to describe the process by which the right-wing political field has, while maintaining its essentially stable base, come to be occupied by a new player.

After more than forty years of one-party dictatorship, Hungary held a multi-party general election in 1990; in line with the Constitution, this has been followed by fresh elections every four years since: in 1994, 1998, 2002 and 2006. All the elections may be considered a success, primarily because each produced a result that allowed the formation of a stable government: there has been no need to call mid-term elections, and each general election has guaranteed seats in Parliament for the opposition, and therefore a place for it to make its voice heard.

The five elections have thus demonstrated the stability of the representative system created in 1989–90 – something that cannot necessarily be said of the other countries freed from communist dictatorship. This stability, however, does not extend to the support enjoyed by the individual parties: the Hungarian Democratic Forum (MDF), winner in 1990, had become a pale ghost of its former self by 1998; from its slender toehold in Parliament in 1990, Federation of Young Democrats (FIDESZ) had, by 1998, become the strongest party; likewise, the

Hungarian Socialist Party (MSZP), heir to the former communist party, also enjoyed a spectacular increase in popularity.

The fluctuating support for the parties observed over the first three elections exceeded the normal ups and downs in the fortunes of parties in Western parliamentary systems; but this is hardly surprising, given that, for forty years, Hungary had no parliamentary democracy. In Western democracies, the organizational ‘grassroots’ structure of parties plays an important role in ensuring stability; but this currently exists only in rudimentary form in Hungary, and did not exist at all during the two elections after the Second World War. We can really only speak of an established organizational structure in the period between the two wars and before 1914. In those years, however, the then parliamentarianism, with its open voting system and meddling by the incumbent government in the decision of the voters, was far removed from what we think of as democracy.

Nonetheless, this peculiar form of parliamentarianism was a means by which the voters realized that alternatives, however restricted, did exist in politics. To some extent, it prepared them to make use of the opportunity they were offered to express their preferences. The memories of the past might be revived; the memories of former generations – living on quietly in the mindsets of families and local communities – might be reactivated.

In our study, we shall examine the spatial distribution of the parties that emerged, together with the spatial consequences of the transformation of the parties. We do not, however, seek to examine the causes behind the transformation of the parties – a subject that would require a separate study in itself.

## **The Electoral System in Hungary**

Act XXXIV of 1989 on parliamentary election applies a mixed system of electorates: 176 seats are to be won in individual constituencies 152 seats on 20 regional (county, capital) lists, and 58 seats from a national list. The Hungarian election system calls for two votes: voters cast one vote on a candidate of the individual constituency and may choose from the regional party lists by the other vote. In individual constituencies the recommendation of at least 750 voters is required for candidacy. A political party may set up a regional list if it has candidates in one-quarter of the individual constituencies but in at least two constituency. At least seven regional lists are required for a national list. 5 percent of the total valid votes cast nationwide on the party lists is required for a party to get into the National Assembly (Mészáros 1995).

The current parliamentary electoral system is primarily based on representation of spatial units. Eighty-five per cent of elected representatives are sent to Parliament by a geographically limited constituency or by a county as a whole. Only a fraction enters on the basis of the so-called national list. As for the distribution of seats, the system favours those parties that have greater relative support and allots them a large number of mandates, enough for stable governance – even in cases where a particular party gains only a third of all the votes. This occurs at the expense of smaller parties, which, understandably, object to the system, inconsistent as it is with the principle of proportional representation. The advantage enjoyed by the major parties and the disadvantage suffered by the minor parties are further exaggerated by the so-called ‘five per cent threshold’: parties with less than five per cent of the vote will have no representatives from the national or county lists, and can only entertain the hope that some of their candidates might achieve a majority of votes in their constituencies. This, of course,

can happen, and the outcome of the election locally could be at variance with the general trend if the candidate enjoys extreme local popular support, if the constituency has peculiar traditions, or if the candidate manages to set up an adequate local grassroots organization and to mobilize his or her supporters.

## **Political Parties**

The party system in Hungary took shape between 1988 and 1999. Its spontaneity is still being disputed. Some parties emerged that attempted to revive the traditions of the era prior to the transformation in 1949, while others were founded from scratch. Some of these parties changed their political profile significantly in the course of the transition. As a consequence of their divergent historical evolution, the ex-communist countries use the language of political discourse differently from the countries of Western Europe: for example, although the traditional left–right dichotomy is used in the region, it has different connotations. The majority of the so-called left-wing parties are successors to the parties that ruled between 1949 and 1990 (the Czech Republic being the sole exception). These parties, then, can be characterized by their links to the past. They are also associated with the new bourgeoisie, both in terms of what their policy platforms offer and personally, through their leaders. The so-called right-wing parties define themselves by their opposition to the successor parties of the former regime. In their political manifestos, they attempt to identify with the middle classes, and they are strongly associated with religious traditions. The connection to a national tradition differs from country to country in the region. In Hungary, the so-called right-wing parties are associated both with the religious and with the national traditions. In the East-Central European region, those parties that are reluctant either to be labelled as religious or national or to be linked to socialism have classified themselves as part of the liberal political tradition. In this sense, the liberal parties, at least in the early stages of the transition, could not be called ‘liberal’ in economic terms; it is much more in cultural terms that they are liberal.

We would like to note here that it is generally more appropriate to define the political parties by their connections to cultural heritage, rather than by their economic programmes.

In 1990, six parties entered Parliament, and these can be classified as follows:

- left-wing (with the above provisos): Hungarian Socialist Party (MSZP)
- right-wing (again with the above provisos):
  - Hungarian Democratic Forum (MDF)
  - Independent Smallholders’ Party (FKgP)
  - Christian Democratic People’s Party (KDNP)
- liberal (with the same provisos):
  - Alliance of Free Democrats (SZDSZ)
  - Federation of Young Democrats (FIDESZ).

The Hungarian Socialist Party (MSZP) took its present form in 1989, from the ruling party of the previous one-party system. The top stratum of the party went on to acquire leading positions in business life as well. Another party supporting the traditions of the old system, called the Workers’ Party, also emerged, and it has co-operated with the Socialist Party (at least indi-

rectly, at the level of the ballot box). The left-wing bloc can largely be viewed in terms of its associations with the era between 1950 and 1989.

The Hungarian Democratic Forum (MDF) emerged in 1988, principally as the movement of the regional intelligentsia; it changed in 1989 into a party that voiced support for Western European Christian democracy and that, in its ideology, represented the middle classes. However, the party was subsequently unable to come to terms with the exaggerated expectations placed upon it, and various crises and splits have since rendered it a tiny political movement.

The Independent Smallholders' Party (FKgP) is one party with particular traditions of its own. Its birth can be traced to the agricultural movements of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, and it played a key role in national politics in the years after the First World War. It was reorganized in 1930 and had well-established set-ups in several counties and constituencies in the 1930s. After the Second World War, it became the party around which the right wing rallied; it later suffered the vengeance of the communist dictatorship. Its leaders were imprisoned, and many of them were forced to emigrate; its supporters were hit hard materially, and most of them had to give up their peasant lifestyle. Nevertheless, the party revived after 1989; it regained its strength amidst the disorder, playing a leading role in those constituencies where it had had well-established structures back in the 1930s.

The Christian Democratic parties, formed at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, have played a decisive role in numerous European countries since the end of the Second World War. Even in the strongly secular France, the Catholic MRP was, for a time, an important participant in governing coalitions. In Germany, the most important political organization is the Christian Democratic Union (CDU), which has the backing of conservative Protestants as well as Catholics. In Hungary, however, the Christian Democratic People's Party (KDNP), with its commitment to Catholicism, did not play a crucial role after 1990. In the 1947 election, this party was the greatest anti-communist political force, when the success of the party could be put down to the fact that it had emerged as one of the parties around which the anti-communist electorate coalesced.

Between the elections of 1994 and 1998, inner conflict divided the party, and at the 1998 elections it failed to reach the minimum threshold for entering Parliament. In 2003, a decision by the Supreme Court caused the party to be reorganized; and now, helped by its alliance with FIDESZ, the KDNP is back in Parliament.

All the parties that made up the first freely elected government suffered profound crises between 1994 and 1998. They unravelled and their support declined. Opinion is still divided over the reason for the crises.

The Alliance of Free Democrats (SZDSZ) was formed in 1988 by the most influential individuals in the so-called 'democratic opposition'. At the time, this party took the toughest stance on the preceding era and the party that had assumed the mantle of the former regime. The party's backing among the electorate has, however, declined significantly, in parallel with the MDF, and is now limited to the region of the capital.

The Federation of Young Democrats (FIDESZ) was founded by undergraduate students in 1988. Vociferous in their condemnation of the fading system, they defined themselves, through a liberal programme (both in cultural and in economic terms), as the principal partner of the Alliance of Free Democrats. From 1992 on, the alliance of the two parties weakened, and it ended in 1994, when the SZDSZ formed a coalition with the successor party to the communists. Since then, the leadership of the Federation of Young Democrats has consistently restructured the party, and it has become the principal force of the right-wing bloc.

## Political Traditions

The basis of the pre-1945 Hungarian parliamentarianism was the election of constituency representatives, along the lines of the British system. Landslide shifts in power relations among parties have occurred on several occasions under the British system. Even though backing for the dominant party in a given constituency might decline, its supporters may still outnumber those who desire change. Such constituencies are regarded as ‘safe seats’ within party circles. On the other hand, there are the so-called ‘marginal’ constituencies, where sections of the electorate often change their party allegiances, enough for the dominant party to lose its mandate.

A great deal of analysis has gone on in Britain to explain the anticipated and the actual voting swings before and after each election. The main point of the analysis is that the stability of certain seats, and the fluctuation of marginal constituencies, may be linked to various social or cultural attributes of the constituency. These attributes may alter, but continuities can still be discerned.

An analysis of constituencies in the five elections that have taken place in Hungary since 1990 allows only cautious assumptions to be made on the question of safe seats. According to the election results so far, only the MSZP enjoys stable support in some constituencies, while the majority of the right-leaning electorate ‘floats’ between one or another party of the right. FIDESZ, winner in 1998, managed by 2002, to integrate most of the voters who sided with it in 1998.

When investigating the social and cultural background of the 1998 election results, and of the results of contests between 1994 and 1998, it is worth once again looking at the territorial distribution of ideological–denominational affiliations. Put simply, this means analysing the relationship between the changing ratio of Catholics and Protestants – Calvinists and Lutherans – and the preferences of the electorate. Given the forty years of enforced secularization by the communist powers, one must be very wary of drawing too many conclusions from these data. Accordingly, it is practical to interpret the data on denominational affiliation only as indicators of a cultural heritage. Thus, we may suppose that the areas of a relatively homogeneous Catholic past are stronger supporters of the right, whereas there is a tiny correlation between the religiously mixed areas and support for left-wing parties.

Although the proportion of agricultural producers decreased in all regions of Hungary in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the number of families and households engaged in agricultural production in one form or another is still significant, particularly in comparison to Western European countries; the past is mirrored in the structure. The vast majority of the agrarian population consisted of very small landowners or peasants, and their survival depended on the large or medium-sized estates that offered work and earnings. This also influenced the political behaviour, especially in the period of open voting: the preference of the local large or medium landowner usually determined in advance the outcome of the election. Such estates were scrapped during the reallocation of land in 1945, and the ex-peasants and small landowners sided with the Communist Party and the Peasant Party. The impact of the past has not yet ceased: in the 1990s, the MSZP could still count on the support of the ex-peasants and small landowners who had a career in the management of agricultural co-operatives.

Thus, the behaviour of electors in areas where there was no significant migration is, to a much larger extent, defined by traditions rather than by recent economic and social processes. The cross-section, socio-statistical data of certain areas often do not significantly differ from one another; yet the political and electoral behaviour of the people in those areas can be very dif-

ferent. To illustrate this, let us take two bordering counties: Zala County, generally noted for its pre-Second World War smallholdings, and Somogy County, a feature of which was the dominance of large estates. In these two counties, the ability of the left bloc to garner votes differs significantly.

**Table 1: Support for the MSZP (Socialist Party) and Workers' Party<sup>1</sup>**

	2006	2002	1998	1994	1990
county	%	%	%	%	%
Somogy	43.42	43.42	38.71	42.46	21.13
Zala	37.26	38.15	30.42	31.50	12.56

A high rate of unemployment does not necessarily go hand in hand with support for one party or another; in the case of a low rate of unemployment, above-average support can be detected for FIDESZ. In the case of smaller parties, the FKgP and the SZDSZ, there is no detectable correlation between the unemployment rate and deviation from average support. It can be stated, however, that electoral support for the Workers' Party is well above average in some of the areas hit hardest by crisis, where the classic heavy industry used to be found, or where significant estates used to be owned by the Catholic Church.

## **Elections and their Results in Hungary**

In the first free election in 1990, six parties were elected to Parliament. The following table shows the result of that election:

**Table 2: 1990 party lists and mandates**

Name	Party list result %	Mandates %
Hungarian Democratic Forum	24.73	42.49
Alliance of Free Democrats	21.39	24.4
Independent Smallholders' and Civil Party	11.73	11.4
Hungarian Socialist Party	10.89	8.8
Federation of Young Democrats	8.95	5.7
Christian Democratic People's Party	6.46	5.44
Independent		1.8

The table also shows the extent to which the Hungarian electoral system distorts the results, as it transforms the vote non-linearly into mandates.

In 1990, a 'centre-right' government was formed by the MDF, FKgP and KDNP. The newly formed government was not able to meet the unreal expectations of large parts of society, and thus, by 1992, its popularity had dwindled, and it lost the 1994 election.

In 1994, six parties again gained entry to Parliament. Table 3 shows the results.

<sup>1</sup> Munkáspárt or later MSZMP.

**Table 3: 1994 party lists and mandates**

Name	Party list result %	Mandates %
Hungarian Socialist Party	32.99	54.4
Alliance of Free Democrats	19.73	17.2
Hungarian Democratic Forum	11.73	9.8
Independent Smallholders' Party	8.82	6.7
Christian Democratic People's Party	7.03	5.7
Federation of Young Democrats	7.01	5.2

A 'left-liberal' government of the MSZP and SZDSZ was formed after the election. The government was able to operate in rather more favourable circumstances, but its popularity had waned by the end of its term in office and it lost the election of 1998.

Table 4 shows the results of the election in 1998.

**Table 4: 1998 party lists and mandates**

Name	Party list result %	Mandates %
Hungarian Socialist Party	32.92	34.7
Federation of Young Democrats	29.48	42.7
Independent Smallholders' Party	13.15	12.5
Alliance of Free Democrats	7.57	6.5
Hungarian Truth and Life Party	5.47	3.6

Once again, six parties won seats in Parliament; the Christian Democratic People's Party, which has suffered crises and schisms between 1994 and 1998, failed to get in, whereas a radical group that had broken away from the MDF and formed a party named MIÉP (Hungarian Truth and Life Party), did gain representation. MIÉP is an organization of radical, populist politicians who left the MDF in 1992. The views of the party include nationalist demagoguery and even latent anti-Semitism. The MDF (on the back of co-operation with FIDESZ) won only a handful of mandates.

A 'centre-right' government was formed in the wake of the election. By and large, the government managed to stabilize its popularity during the parliamentary term, but lost the support of those sections of the population that were in decline. (These strata had not previously voted.) It thus suffered a loss, albeit narrow, in the 2002 elections.

Table 5 shows the results of the 2002 elections.

**Table 5: 2002 party lists and mandates**

Name	Party list result %	Mandates %
Federation of Young Democrats–Hungarian Democratic Forum	41.05	48.6
Hungarian Socialist Party	42.05	46.4
Alliance of Free Democrats	5.57	5.0

Just as after the 1994 election, a ‘left-liberal’ government of the MSZP and SZDSZ was formed.

The most recent Hungarian election took place in 2006 and again resulted in a ‘left-liberal’ government of the MSZP and SZDSZ. This was the first time in the history of the new Hungarian democracy that a government had won a second term in office.

**Table 6: 2006 party lists and mandates**

Name	Party list result %	Mandates
Hungarian Socialist Party	43.21	49,2
Federation of Young Democrats–Christian Democratic People’s Party	42.05	42,4%
Alliance of Free Democrats	6.5	5,1%
Hungarian Democratic Forum	5.04	2,8%

The most important event of the past sixteen years in Hungarian party politics has been the formation of two large political blocs of roughly equal size. The bloc better able to mobilize its supporters wins the elections.

The growing importance of political blocs and the increasingly sharp delineation between them are illustrated by the number of MPs winning constituencies in the first round of the two-round Hungarian electoral system. (Winning a constituency in the first round requires at least fifty per cent of the votes cast in the constituency.) Whereas in 1990, 1994 and 1998 winning a constituency in the first round was a rare exception, and the proportion of candidates who became MPs this way was never higher than five per cent across all 176 constituencies, the situation changed fundamentally in 2002 and 2006, when more than twenty per cent of the constituencies were won in the first round.

**Table 7: Number of MPs winning in the first round**

Year	Number	%
1990	4	2.27
1994	2	1.14
1998	1	0.5
2002	45	26.7
2006	66	37.2

## Methods of Analysis

In our analysis, we do not attempt to take sides on whether ‘the territory counts’ or to commit ourselves in the discourse of ‘ecological analysis versus methodological individualism’. The basic question is thus quite simple: ‘Are there any constituencies in Hungary that may be regarded as the heartland of certain political blocs? And if so, which parties have been able to carve out this core territory?’

The analysis revolves around the results of the four elections so far. As the four sets of data presented above are insufficient to define the parameters of a time series analysis, we had to choose a simpler approach. Hence, our analysis draws on a fairly straightforward method: we take the votes aggregated in regional units as the basic units for analysis. For all 176 constituencies, we counted the values of territorial autocorrelation, as well as the Moran and Geary



autocorrelation coefficients. In this way, we could determine how significant the autocorrelation is. For the sake of easy interpretation, we prepared our representation of local Moran autocorrelation coefficients as suggested by Anselin (1995). We used maps to present the constituencies representing the significant values of two quarters of the Moran diagram of dispersion: the positive–positive and the negative–negative. We marked the high–high values with black and the low–low with bright colours. We believe this straightforward method is absolutely appropriate to the aim of our analysis. In our analysis, we presented the data for distinct election years placed one after the other, thus creating a ‘visual time series’.

## Correlation Analysis

The R values of the table stem from the votes for the party lists, summarized for each constituency. R\* is the rate of correlation between those constituencies where the local Moran gave a positive autocorrelation result in the constituency.

**Table 8: The correlation between the results of FIDESZ in 2002 and the ‘right wing’**

	R	R*
1990	0.355	0.828
1994	0.595	0.930
1998	0.707	0.944

**Table 9: The correlation between the results of FIDESZ in 2006 and the ‘right wing’**

	R	R*
1990	0.367	0.832
1994	0.607	0.937
1998	0.723	0.948

## Spatial Clusters of Political Parties in Hungary

In our analysis, we included the votes for party lists in all 176 constituencies. We prepared the correlograms by calculating the index numbers of autocorrelation. The correlograms clearly show that political parties are spatially clustered. To aid understanding, we show the results in figures and maps (see below). As well as by political party, we prepared the calculations at the level of political blocs. We distinguished three blocs: left-wing, right-wing and liberal. Our calculations, shown in figures and maps, clearly demonstrate the existence and spatial clustering of such blocs.

**Table 10: The autocorrelation coefficients of 176 constituencies to various political blocs**

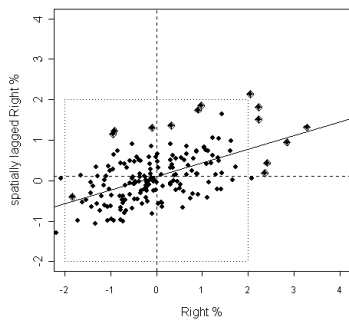
year	Right-wing parties				Left-wing parties				Liberal parties			
	Moran I	p	Geary c	p	Moran I	p	Geary c	p	Moran I	p	Geary c	p
1990	0.405	0.001	0.574	0.001	0.405	0.001	0.574	0.001	0.404	0.001	0.587	0.001
1994	0.419	0.001	0.551	0.001	0.419	0.001	0.551	0.001	0.293	0.001	0.685	0.001
1998	0.374	0.001	0.596	0.001	0.374	0.001	0.596	0.001	0.312	0.001	0.661	0.001
2002	0.451	0.001	0.528	0.001	0.451	0.001	0.528	0.001	0.327	0.001	0.639	0.001
2006	0.510	0.002	0.500	0.001	0.490	0.001	0.510	0.001	0.800	0.001	0.210	0.001

The data in Table 10 show that the importance of political blocs is growing.

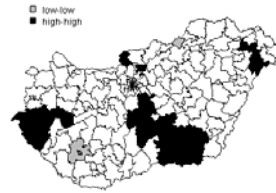
We illustrate the restructuring of the political parties by analysing the position of FIDESZ. We argue that FIDESZ occupies the space of political parties defining themselves as right-wing. This argument is proven by both the correlograms and the maps.

# 1. Right-wing parties

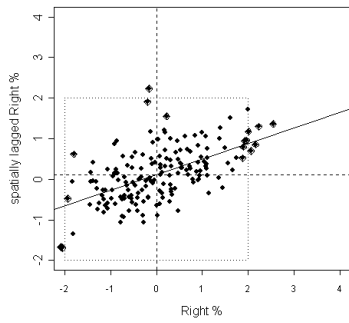
**Fig. 1.1 1990**



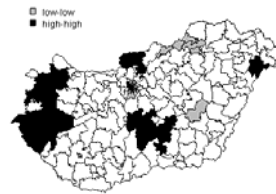
**Map 1.1 1990**



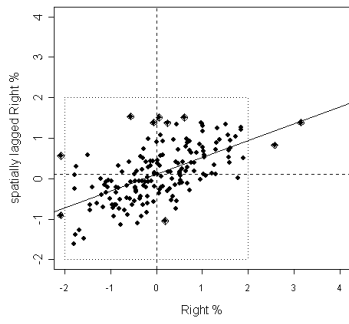
**Fig. 1.2 1994**



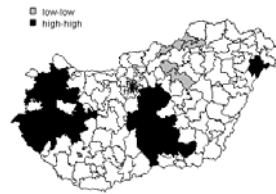
**Map 1.2 1994**



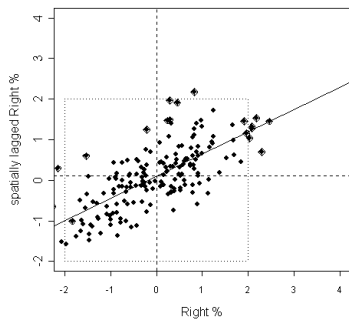
**Fig. 1.3 1998**



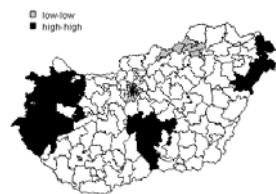
**Map 1.3 1998**



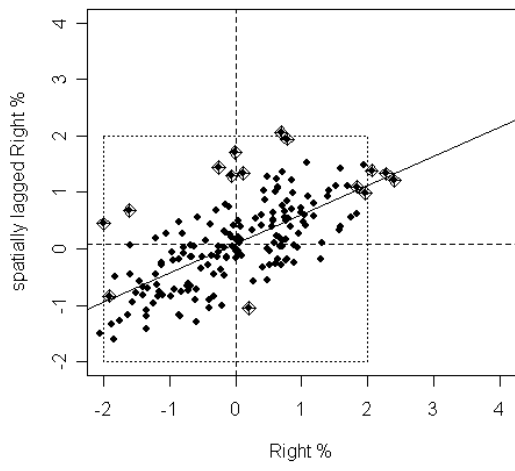
**Fig. 1.4 2002**



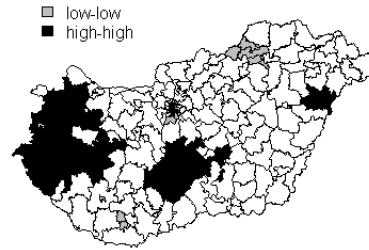
**Map 1.4 2002**



**Fig. 1.5 2006**

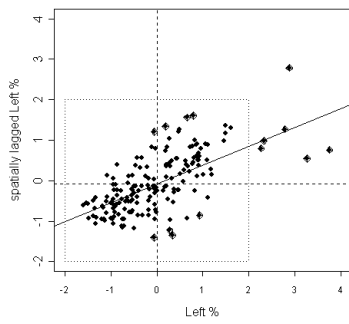


**Map 1.5 2006**

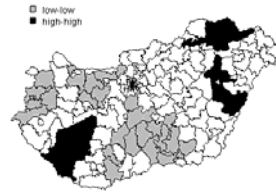


## 2. Left-wing parties

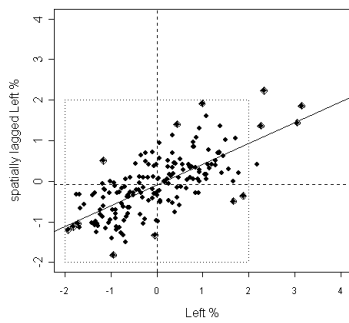
**Fig 2.1 1990**



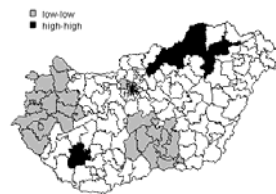
**Map 2.1 1990**



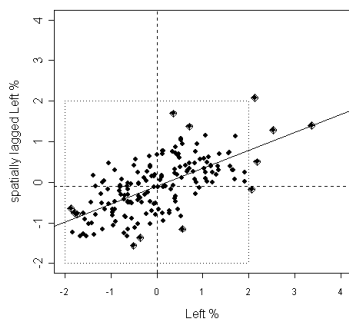
**Fig 2.2 1994**



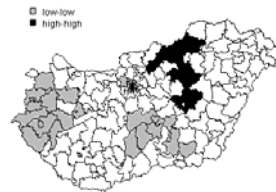
**Map 2.2 1994**



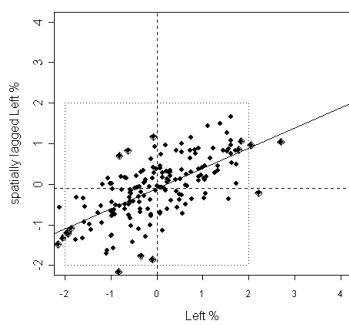
**Fig. 2.3 1998**



**Map 2.3 1998**



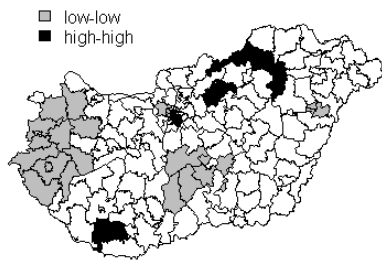
**Fig. 2.4 2002**



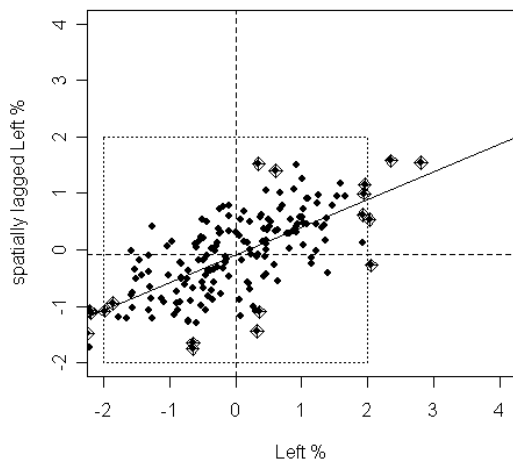
**Map 2.4 2002**



**Fig. 2.5 2006**

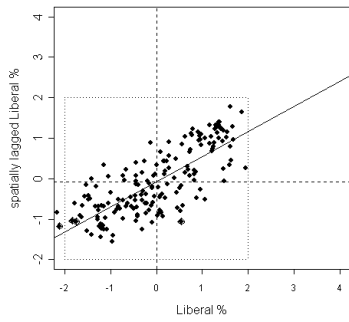


**Map 2.5 2006**

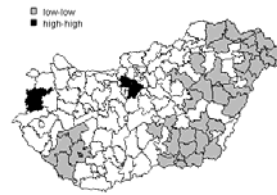


### 3. Liberal parties

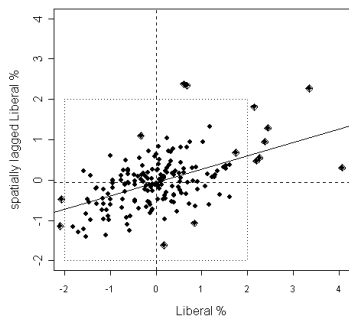
**Fig. 3.1 1990**



**Map 3.1 1990**



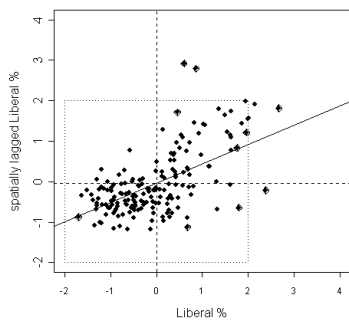
**Fig. 3.2 1994**



**Map 3.2 1994**



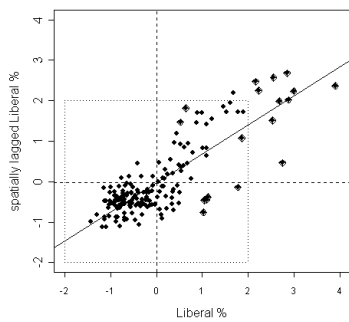
**Fig. 3.3 1998**



**Map 3.3 1998**



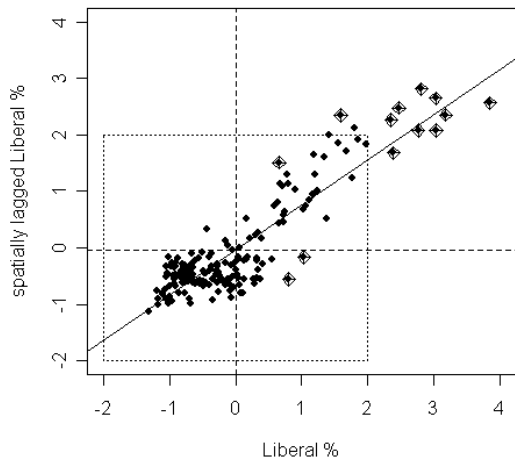
**Fig. 3.4 2002**



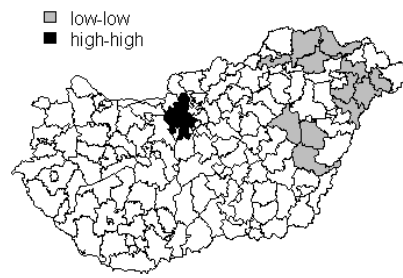
**Map 3.4 2002**



Fig. 3.5 2006



Map 3.5 2006



## Transformation of Parties Representing the ‘Conservative’ Bloc

In the last couple of years, previously significant parties have shrunk in size, while others have emerged. These processes have not left unscathed those parties that represent the political will of people with ‘religious-national’ attitudes. Let us take the MDF, the FKgP and the KDNP, all of which were important in 1990: the KDNP has succeeded in becoming a parliamentary party once again, thanks to its alliance with FIDESZ, although it can only be regarded as a minor party; the FKgP has ceased to function as a party; and the MDF, though it does have its own parliamentary group, could barely reach the threshold of five per cent required to enter Parliament.

In our analysis of election data, we showed that the political blocs representing different value sets are very stable in Hungary. Below, we will examine the process by which the former parties of the ‘right-wing bloc of electors’ shrank and saw their places taken by a formerly liberal party, after its change of image and ideology. We show that the electorate’s preferences did not change (as the right-wing bloc of electors is reasonably stable), but that the place of parties representing this set of values came to be occupied by this new player.

In our examination, we shall perform a secondary analysis of public opinion surveys (the sources of our data are the Panel and OMNIBUS surveys of TÁRKI). The data sources of the Panel are available for 1992 to 1997, and the OMNIBUS data can be used for the interval between 1998 and 2006. The data were gathered in late spring, in the case of the Panel, and in February in the case of OMNIBUS. The people in the group polled for the Household Panel survey remained the same, and thus any changes in their voting preferences can be traced even at the individual level. The sample groups of the OMNIBUS surveys were always different, and thus these surveys are not suitable for comparisons at the individual level. Assuming, however, that the data represent more or less the national distribution, we can attempt to trace any alteration in the opinions of the groups. We would like to emphasize that the data of public opinion surveys are very useful, but are not without their problems: according to Leslie Kish, the error interval of a random sampling survey of 1,000 persons is between eight and 28 per cent (Kish, 1965). This applies especially to surveys that contain retrospective questions; it is a well-known fact that a percentage of those interviewed express the views they assume the interviewer wants to hear. By means of survey data, we endeavour to describe the process by which FIDESZ increasingly became the accepted representative ‘of the right’ for the electorate.

Using the Hungarian Household Panel data, we now analyse changes in the support for whole parties among the electorate. Although we must approach the survey data with some scepticism, the data, whatever their faults, can still provide some good signposts for a description of the processes.

The data from the Household Panel show that, by 1997, MDF and KDNP voters had, to all intents and purposes, chosen FIDESZ as the party to represent them. The following tables illustrate this process.

**Table 11: Choice of party in 1990 and party preference in 1992**

1990/1992	MDF	SZDSZ	FKgP	MSZP	FIDESZ	KDNP	Workers’ Party	N/A
<b>MDF</b>	25.1%	1.7%	4.6%	3.6%	19.9%	2.4%	0.5%	28.5%
<b>SZDSZ</b>	2.9%	28.1%	2.1%	1.9%	36.5%	2.5%	0.6%	15.8%
<b>FKgP</b>	4.8%	0.4%	38.4%	3.7%	10.0%	4.1%	0.4%	23.2%
<b>MSZP</b>	1.5%	1.5%	0.5%	62.3%	19.1%	0.0%	2.0%	10.1%



<b>FIDESZ</b>	2.3%	1.0%	1.0%	3.3%	72.0%	1.0%	0.3%	13.3%
<b>KDNP</b>	2.5%	0.8%	0.8%	1.7%	6.7%	69.7%	0.8%	7.6%
<b>MSZMP</b>	0%	2.1%	2.1%	8.5%	10.6%	0.0%	63.8%	12.8%

The above table summarizes the answers given to the questions in the 1992 wave of the Household Panel survey. Reading across the table for party choice in 1992 and down for votes cast for party lists in 1990, we can see clearly that the parties generally had poor voter retention. While the MDF was only able to retain 25 per cent of its supporters, the MSZP could hold on to 62 per cent, and FIDESZ managed 72 per cent. In the light of these figures (which correspond to our own observations), it is clear that the collapse of the MDF had already begun in the early 1990s.

**Table 12: Choice of party in 1990 and party preference in 1997**

1990/1997	MDF	SZDSZ	FKgP	MSZP	FIDESZ	KDNP	Workers' Party
<b>MDF</b>	10.2%	3.4%	22.7%	15.9%	38.1%	5.7%	4.0%
<b>SZDSZ</b>	1.6%	28.5%	17.9%	13.8%	28.5%	8.9%	0.8%
<b>FKgP</b>	2.5%	2.5%	63.0%	9.9%	17.3%	3.7%	1.2%
<b>MSZP</b>	0.0%	4.5%	1.5%	84.8%	6.1%	0.0%	3.0%
<b>FIDESZ</b>	2.2%	8.8%	12.1%	19.8%	50.5%	3.3%	3.3%
<b>KDNP</b>	7.4%	3.7%	11.1%	11.1%	18.5%	40.7%	7.4%
<b>MSZMP/Workers' Party</b>	0.0%	11.1%	0.0%	38.9%	0.0%	0.0%	50.0%

Table 13 contains a summary of Household Panel data. We compare the actual votes cast according to the 1992 survey with the political preferences expressed in 1997. The figures reveal that, between 1990 and 1997, the MSZP had the strongest voter retention, whereas the 'transition' parties lost the majority of their supporters. The MDF was only able to hang on to 10 per cent of its 1990 voters, and the SZDSZ managed only slightly more than 28 per cent of its supporters. According to the 1997 figures, FIDESZ was the major winner in the transformation, since, as a true collective party, it was able to attract the supporters of all parties except the left bloc. The vast majority of the MDF's 1990 electoral base backed FIDESZ in 1997, and it had also gained a considerable number of SZDSZ supporters. (It is worth noting that, in contrast, FIDESZ had lost half of its 1990 electoral base.)

FIDESZ's integration of the electoral base of the FKgP was well under way by 1997 and was complete by 2002. The next table shows this process.

**Table 13: Electoral stability and directions of abandonment of the FKgP**

	FIDESZ	MSZP	FKgP	SZDSZ	MIÉP	MDF	Workers' Party	KDNP	Support for FKgP within party selectors
<b>2002</b>	60.0%	11.4%	8.6%	0.0%	17.1%	0.0%	0.0%	2.9%	5.5
<b>2001</b>	0.0%	6.1%	81.8%	0.0%	3.0%	6.1%	0.0%	3.0%	5.5
<b>2000</b>	8.2%	14.3%	71.4%	0.0%	6.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	7.3
<b>1999</b>	11.8%	0.0%	64.5%	1.3%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	7.3

## Voter Retention Power

In analysing the processes, it is worth examining the power of parties to retain their supporters, since the emergence of some parties and the collapse of others can be well characterized by the stability of the given party's electoral base. The following table shows the voter stability of different political parties from one year to the next. In the table, data from the Household Panel illustrate the changes in preference and stability from year to year. The data clearly demonstrate that the Hungarian Socialist Party possesses the most stable electoral base, while the voter stability of all the other parties is, to varying degrees, below the MSZP's. The average stability of the MSZP between 1990 and 1997 was over 60 per cent.

**Table 14: Voter retention power between 1990 and 1997**

	90T/92	92/93	93/94	94T/95	95/96	96/97
MDF	25.1	46.9	34.5	58.9	27.7	45.9
SZDSZ	28.1	28.0	36.0	54.5	40.3	48.8
FKgP	38.4	47.7	51.7	79.3	45.8	71.3
MSZP	62.3	64.1	53.0	45.8	72.5	73.5
FIDESZ	72.0	54.8	14.3	47.6	42.7	83.2
KDNP	69.7	49.1	44.0	67.9	56.4	42.6

## Composition of the Conservative Electoral Base

Using data from public opinion surveys, we look at what are the main macro-sociological features that are characteristic of the conservative electoral base; that is to say, what parameters describe the ideal/typical conservative voter. We shall demonstrate the transformation of the FIDESZ electorate by means of three main socio-demographic indicators, and will compare them to the similar indicators for MDF, KDNP and FKgP voters in 1990. The age composition of FIDESZ voters changed radically between 1990 and 2003, and the formerly youthful support base came to be transformed into one that corresponded pretty closely to the age distribution of society. Distribution by domicile altered in a similar fashion: the FIDESZ electorate changed from being urban to being 'provincial'. When seeking to describe commitment to values by attitude to religion, it is worth classifying the electoral base of a given party in terms of expressed religiosity. In 1990, FIDESZ was a secular party: the vast majority, almost 90 per cent, of its voters were not basically affiliated to Churches. By 2002, this had changed, and FIDESZ voters can be regarded as more religious than the society average.

**Table 15: Distribution of supporters of conservative parties in 1990 and of FIDESZ between 1990 and 2006 by age group**

Year	18-25 %	26-35 %	36-45 %	46-60 %	61+ %
1990 MDF	5.7	15.2	22.6	27.0	29.5
1990 KDNP	3.3	12.4	13.9	31.0	39.4
1990 FKgP	4.0	6.4	11.2	25.6	52.8
$\Sigma^2$	5.0	13.7	19.5	27.8	34.0
1990	23.9	29.2	21.3	17.3	8.3
1994	29.2	39.8	12.9	11.1	7.0
1998	22.6	18.8	21.9	22.9	13.7
2002	16.1	21.0	14.0	34.9	14.0
2003	5,5	20,0	19,2	26,7	28,6
2006	9,0	24,4	18,3	24,0	24,4

<sup>2</sup> Weighted average.

**Table 16: Distribution of supporters of conservative parties in 1990 and of FIDESZ between 1990 and 2006 by domicile type**

Year	Homesteads %	Villages %	Towns %	Cities <sup>3</sup> %	Budapest %
1990 MDF	0.7	37.2	25.9	15.1	21.1
1990 KDNP	0.0	38.7	29.0	14.5	17.7
1990 FKgP	4.0	56.0	28.4	7.6	4.0
$\Sigma^4$	1.4	41.5	26.8	13.4	17.0
1990	0.7	22.2	36.8	15.6	24.8
1994	2.4	37.6	35.3	15.3	9.4
1998	-	32.1	24.6	24.9	18.4
2002	-	39.2	26.1	19.6	15.1
2003	-	42.0	32.9	12.9	12.2
2006	-	45.9	21.1	21.9	11.1

**Table 17: Distribution of supporters of conservative parties in 1990 and of FIDESZ between 1990 and 2006 according to the frequency of attending religious services**

Year	Never	Less than yearly	Several times a year	Once a month	2-3 times a month	Each week	Several times a week	daily
1990 MDF	31.2	16.2	30.3	5.1	5.4	10.0	1.3	0.5
1990 KDNP	10.7	1.5	2.4	5.9	9.5	17.8	27.1	26.7
1990 FKgP	27.7	15.3	27.0	5.8	4.6	11.3	2.8	0.7
$\Sigma^5$	28.4	15.0	28.0	5.4	6.2	13.7	3.0	0.8
1990	36.6	21.5	27.5	5.0	2.7	5.0	0.7	1.0
1997	47.4	16.7	19.9	4.5	2.6	7.7	1.3	0.0
1998	28.7	22.5	30.0	6.8	4.8	-	7.2	-
2002	29.5	25.5	22.2	3.3	3.0	-	16.5	-
2003	23.1	21.2	33.3	4.3	3.5	-	13.7	-
2006	25.9	25.2	24.5	7.6	2.9	-	13.3	-

## Assessment of our Results

In Table 10 we summarized the autocorrelation coefficients of 176 constituencies to various political blocs. The figures in the table clearly show that the results from the constituencies are autocorrelated.

We considered a dual hypothesis: first, at least two more or less stable political blocs exist in Hungary and can be delineated territorially; and second, by 2002 FIDESZ had integrated the voters of the ‘conservative bloc’, as the figures show.

Consequently, this also applies to the ‘left-wing’ political bloc, the spatial representation of which is essentially the opposite of the conservative political bloc; it shows a basically stable spatial autocorrelation between 1994 and 2002. The autocorrelation map shows the slow and steady withdrawal of the liberal bloc. Our second hypothesis postulates a shift among the political parties of the conservative bloc. This hypothesis is demonstrated in two ways. First, the autocorrelation values of the previous conservative bloc of 1994 (MDF–KDNP–FKgP) and of FIDESZ in 2002 are similar; second, the correlation values between FIDESZ and the earlier conservative bloc are very high.

Therefore, our argument can be said to have been demonstrated. That is to say, while Hungary is a small country territorially, it is highly structured in terms of political geography; second,

<sup>3</sup> Defined as county towns.

<sup>4</sup> Weighted average.

<sup>5</sup> Weighted average.

the parties representing the voters of the conservative bloc have been restructured, those parties that were significant in 1990 have now become irrelevant, and a previously liberal party has taken their position, having altered its political profile.

We have analysed the transformation process of the conservative bloc, and seen how FIDESZ has integrated the former voters of the MDF, the FKgP and the KDNP.

To sum up, we can conclude that the major hypothesis of our study – the existence of stable electoral blocs – has been demonstrated. The political force representing the left-wing political bloc has remained the same over the past fifteen years – the MSZP; meanwhile, the right-wing political bloc seems to have a stable electoral base, but the parties represented within it change periodically.

Our second contention – that the political forces which previously represented the right-wing bloc have lost their voters, that FIDESZ has become the party representing this bloc, and that it has integrated the voters of this bloc – has likewise been demonstrated.

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