

PARTY MANIFESTOS IN A NEW DEMOCRACY

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The aim of the paper is to explore the content of party manifestos in Hungary, a new democracy. After describing the party system, it surveys the manifestos of all parliamentary parties between the first free election in 1990 and the latest one in 2010 (except for the election in 1998). The adoption, length and layout of manifestos are examined with the aim of finding temporal and structural patterns. The last section focuses on the pledges made by the major parties (government parties + the largest opposition party) in 2002, and formulate several hypotheses about the potential explanations for the variance in the number and informativeness of manifesto pledges.

1. The Party System in Hungary

Hungary is a third-wave democracy. Its democratic institutions were established in 1989-1990. As a new democracy, it is expected to show all the symptoms of low institutionalization. Instead, the party system in Hungary has been conspicuously stable since the end of the 1990s. The main features of the party system are as follows.

1. 1. Dominating Parties

In Hungary, trade unions and other interest organizations play a limited role. The political agenda is clearly set by parties (Enyedi—Tóka 2007). The situation is similar at the lower levels of government. While small local governments often elect independents, county and city councils have always been dominated by parties. The cognitive map of citizens and elites associate public life with parties.

2. 2. Stable Parties

The first freely elected parliament was formed by six parties. Until 2010, only one new party could enter the parliament for a single electoral cycle (1998-2002). Even that party (MIÉP) was not really new, as it splintered off from a parliamentary party (MDF). In 2010, two old parties fell out and two new ones entered. Still, 83 percent of MPs belong to parties that had factions already in 1990.

Party factions are highly disciplined. Not voting together is an extraordinary event. Party centers effectively regulate deviation from the party line. The systemness of parties is high (Enyedi and Tóka 2007).

3. 3. Less and Less Parties

A decreasing number of party lists reach the 5 percent threshold and get into the parliament. While the effective number of parties was 3.4 in 1998 (and even higher in 1990), this number dropped to 2.5 (2002), 2.3 (2006) and 2.0 (2010). The number of relevant parties has decreased even better and reached the absolute lowest number, exactly 1, in 2010. (In all cases, common lists were counted together even if their parties formed separate factions for tactical reasons.) The same pattern can be observed at the local and county level. Presently, the number of effective parties

varies between 1.8 and 2.7 in counties. The change in the Laakso—Taagepera Index ranges between -0.6 and -1.9 since 1998.

4. 4. Bloc Networks

Parties are embedded in organizational networks. As usual in democracies, all parties have satellite organizations like youth or women organizations. The bonds to these associations are very strong. Party representatives sit in the boards of associations, which, in return, have some kind of representation in the party.

Parties also have strategic associates. The connection with them is usually formalized in written agreements. These organizations have more decisional autonomy and often have their own source of income. Finally, parties allies with ad-hoc partners in an instrumental way. The links are expected to be temporary, but some connections deepen into a long-term relationship. The borders of part networks are blurred.

Party networks are inter-organizational resource networks. They mobilize resources as a joint effort. The resources include money, organizational infrastructure (like offices), information, access to media, ideology and activists.

What makes the party system interesting in Hungary is that networks are embedded in blocs. The parties do not have the same organizational ecosystems (though there may be overlaps). Sometimes, they fiercely compete with each other and their relationship is laden with many conflicts. Still, the networks cooperate with each other and form government coalitions.

In Hungary, there are two relevant blocs, which together form a party system.

5. 5. Two-Bloc System

The party system in Hungary is closed. There is no party that participated both in a left-wing and right-wing coalitions. Parties cohere along the left-right division. The party composition of blocs can be found in the Appendix.

The left-right polarization is high in Hungary compared to other Central European countries (see Enyedi and Casal Bértoa's computations based on the European Election Survey and other literature). The volatility of votes became low after 1998 and party identification exceeded the average of old democracies (Enyedi and Casal Bértoa 2010).

These data refer to a well-institutionalized party system with a bipolar structure. It is not a two-party system, as the competition takes place between party alliances. However, in terms of the institutionalized political logic, it has some resemblance to two-party systems. The internally more complex structure of blocs makes the management of unity within blocs more difficult. Such a two-bloc system is not unique. In its organizational logic, it is similar to, e.g., the French party system.

While 2010 saw a step towards a dominant party system, this development cannot be interpreted as a sign of weak institutionalization (actually, the opposite might rather be the truth). One cannot know whether 2010 is the beginning of a new trend. If the right-wing party bloc loses its majority in 2014, the bipolar system may fully return.

2. Party Manifestos In Hungary

The database of the following analyses includes the party manifestos of more

than 20 years from the first free national election after the collapse of communism to the latest election in 2010. To ensure relevance, the data collection was restricted to those parties that successfully formed parliamentary faction. The party system has been stable, so the number of parties in the dataset is only nine (of which two first entered the parliament at the last election).

	1990	1994	1998	2002	2006	2010
Fidesz	5,4%	5,2%	38,3%	42,5%	36,5%	58,8%
FKgP	11,4%	6,7%	12,4%	-	-	-
Jobbik	-	-	-	-	-	12,2%
KDNP	5,4%	5,7%	-	-	6,0%	9,3%
LMP	-	-	-	-	-	4,1%
MDF	42,5%	9,8%	4,4%	6,2%	2,8%	-
MIÉP	-	-	3,6%	-	-	-
MSZP	8,5%	54,1%	34,7%	46,1%	49,2%	15,3%
SZDSZ	24,1%	17,9%	6,2%	5,2%	5,2%	-
Others	2,6%	0,5%	0,3%	0,0%	0,3%	0,3%

Source: Körösenyi et al. (2009); National Election Committee (www.valasztas.hu)

Table 1. Parties in the parliament (proportion of parliamentary seats)¹

The complete database will contain 28 manifestos. It was relatively easy to collect the manifestos issued after 2000, as they are often readily available on the websites of parties. The manifestos of the first election are also digitalized, as they are now regarded as documents of a historic period. At the moment, 21 manifestos can be found in the database in a digital form. The 1994 manifesto of FKGP, an agrarian-populist party, has not been identified, and the other manifestos from 1994 are yet to be digitalized.

3. Adoption

Party manifestos are always adopted solemnly in Hungary. The reason may be legitimacy in two ways, internally and externally. Internally, such an act makes the commitments of the manifesto credible. Members and lower-level leaders receive guidelines about the policy position and ideological standpoints of their party. Members and activists obtain the feeling of participation by ceremonially accepting the manifesto. In addition to cognitive maps, manifestos present the moral order of the party. They make clear what is right and what is wrong, what is appropriate and

¹ Parties: Fidesz – Alliance of Young Democrats (Fiatal Demokraták Szövetsége); FKgP – Independent Smallholders' Party (Független Kisgazdapárt); Jobbik – Movement for a Better Hungary (Jobbik Magyarorszáért Mozgalom); KDNP – Christian Democratic People's Party (Kereszténydemokrata Néppárt); LMP – Politics Can Be Different (Lehet Más a Politika); MDF – Hungarian Democratic Forum (Magyar Demokrata Fórum); MIÉP – Hungarian Justice and Life Party (Magyar Igazság és Élet Pártja); MSZP – Hungarian Socialist Party (Magyar Szocialista Párt); SZDSZ – Alliance of Free Democrats (Szabad Demokraták Szövetsége).

what is unacceptable, who ought to be respected and whose behavior is despicable. What is more, the ceremonies of manifesto adoption form and strengthen members' emotional attachment to the party. By declaring the ideological and policy positions of the party, describing its moral vision and mobilizing members emotionally, the adoption of manifestos may significantly contribute to the organizational stability of the party.

Externally, parties in a democracy are expected to have a manifesto which contains meaningful information about their political principles and intentions. The media doubt the seriousness of a party without manifesto. Other parties use the lack of manifesto as a political argument of discrediting. International forces may also regard parties without manifesto as irrelevant.

Our analysis of party statutes show, that a formal approval of the party congress or similar assembly is required in every party in Hungary. The participants of such party bodies are the representatives of members as citizens are represented in the parliament. The event of manifesto adoption is always solemn, but ceremonial. Although representatives usually learn the details of the new manifesto right before or during the congress, there is no case where the manifesto was rejected or significantly modified.

Party manifestos are always election programs in Hungary. The genre of long-term manifestos which include basic principles is missing in Hungary (though SZDSZ experimented with it in 2000). Manifestos are normally issued one or to months before the election day. The major exception is the first free election in April 1990. These party platforms were drafted already in 1989. The reason for that is probably the strive of the brand new parties for legitimacy both in the country and internationally.

The importance of external political pressure can be confirmed by the case of those parties which were unwilling to issue a manifesto. E.g., Fidesz was expected to win the election by a large margin (which eventually happened), so it did not really want to tie itself to specific pledges. Still, it had to draft a relatively detailed manifesto under the pressure of the media and other parties.

4. Length of Manifestos

There is no obvious trend concerning the length of party manifestos in Hungary. Most texts are between 8,000 and 15,000 words. In terms of time, the average length usually varies between 10,000 and 15,000 with two exceptional elections.

Year	Words
1990	13 166
1994	N/A*
1998	14 743
2002	5 250
2006	10 475
2010	34 775
Mean	15 682

Source: own calculation.

* Data will be available later.

Table 2. The average length of manifestos by electoral campaigns

In 2002, manifestos were very short on average. That corresponds with the commonly held view that competition was intense in that year and revolved around policies (as opposed to broad ideological stances). The data about electoral pledges, presented later, also point to the policy focus of the 2002 campaigns.

The exception in the other direction is 2010 when the average length of manifestos was much longer than in other electoral years. That can be explained by party strategies in that year. It was clear that Fidesz-MPP would win the election with a large margin. They were interested in writing a lengthy manifesto to dispel the doubt of their preparedness for governing. MSZP, the incumbent party, was expected to lose the national election, so it presented an ideologically oriented manifesto to highlight the values of the party and keep their core supporters. Both of the two newcomers, LMP and Jobbik, published very long manifestos: 71,900 and 45,700 words, respectively. The reason is not clear, but one might formulate a few hypotheses:

- The new parties felt an extreme pressure to legitimize themselves as serious contenders. Therefore, they invested lots of expert time to draft policy analyses as well as proposals for a future government. That also presupposes that the target audience of these parties was not the electorate, but the media and other parties.
- Both parties targeted at young populations and extensively relied on on-line communication. As digital technology allows the easy distribution of relatively large texts, no editorial limits were perceived by those who drafted these parties' manifestos. Actually, LMP did not even print its manifesto out, its distribution was based purely on the Internet.

Party	Words
Fidesz-MPP	10 550
FKGP	6 230
Jobbik	45700
KDNP	N/A
LMP	71900
MDF	15 900
MIÉP	N/A
MSZP	4 375
SZDSZ	22 000
Mean	25 236

Source: own calculation.

Table 3. The average length of manifestos by electoral campaigns

The averages covers significant variance in other years as well. In 1990, the shortest manifesto was 2,700 words (MDF, which emerged as the largest party), while the longest 32,000 words (SZDSZ, the runner-up party). SZDSZ consistently drafted long manifestos, confirming the image of a party of elite intellectuals, while the manifestos of other parties varied in length to a significant degree.

The general conclusion is that little conclusion can be drawn. There is no temporal trend. There may be a link between manifesto length, on the one hand, and the intensity and policy focus of electoral campaigns, the self-legitimizing needs of parties, and the elite characteristic of certain parties, on the other hand. Nevertheless, all of these generated hypotheses should be rigorously testing.

5. Layout of manifestos

The layout of manifestos has developed a lot since the first free elections in 1990. The trend can be seen in terms of colors, printing quality and typography.

The black and white printing, which was dominant in the 1990s, were replaced with full-color printing in the 2000s. The quality of manifestos in 1990 was not that far from the quality of 'samisdat,' the underground press of dissidents. By the 2000s, the printing quality reached that of business brochures. One could mistake a manifesto for a car prospectus.

In the beginning, party manifestos contained almost exclusively text. By the end of the decade, info-graphs became usual and consumer-oriented design has since prevailed. Probably it was the manifesto of SZDSZ in 2006 that reached the extreme point, as it looked like a Power Point presentation with graphs and tables on almost every page, accompanied with little text.

Interestingly enough, the manifestos of the new parties, that emerged in 2010 as users of the latest technologies, are black and white, and include no visual elements (Jobbik) or only a few (LMP). Still, other campaign materials of both parties are designed in a complex way, so the trend does not seem to be broken.

Merz és Regel's (2011) typology, which categorizes manifestos along the dimensions of manifesto layout and length, is useful here to trace the developments. In the first free party competition in 1990, simple layout dominated, while the length varied from leaflet (MDF) to pamphlet (MSZP) and book (SZDSZ). By the 2000s, the layout became complex, but length has shown great variety from brochure (e.g. MSZP 2002) to magazine (e.g. Fidesz 2006) and catalogue (e.g. the manifestos of SZDSZ).

		Length		
		short	medium	long
Layout	complex	Brochure	Magazine	Catalogue
	simple	Leaflet	Pamphlet	Book

Source: Merz – Regel (2011:9).

Figure 1. Categorization by the relationship between the length and layout of manifestos

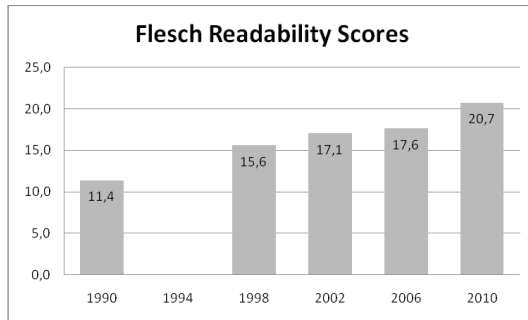
6. Language of manifestos

Our analysis of party manifestos in Hungary was based on Rudolf Flesch (1948). The Flesch Reading Ease (FRE) test counts and weights word length and sentence length. The outcome may normally be between 0 and 100 (though lower and higher values are theoretically possible). Higher scores point to easier readings, while lower points indicate more difficult readings. "Reader's Digest magazine has a readability index of about 65, Time magazine scores about 52, an average 6th grade student's

(an 11-year-old) written assignment has a readability test of 60–70 (and a reading grade level of 6–7), and the Harvard Law Review has a general readability score in the low 30s.” (Wikipedia http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Flesch%E2%80%9393Kincaid_readability_test, retrieved on 29-12-2012)

It clearly turned out that party manifestos in Hungary are very far from the written language the average citizen can meet in the media. The FRE analysis of manifesto texts resulted in quite low scores. None of the manifestos exceeded 30 points, which is conventionally regarded as the borderline of difficult texts. MSZP produced the highest score in 2010, but even this was only 25.8 points. According to the usual classification, such texts are normally understood by university graduates.

Manifestos in Hungary are not written for the average voter. Nevertheless, there is a clear positive tendency. As the graph demonstrates, the comprehension difficulty of manifesto texts has decreased since 1990. What is more, there has been a step forward at every election.



Source: own calculation

Figure 2. FRE of party manifestos in Hungary

7. Purpose of Manifestos

What is the political purpose of manifestos in Hungary? We use Leonard Ray's (2007) typology that divides manifestos into three categories: (1) contracts pledge on specific policy propositions that are fulfilled if the party participates in the next government; (2) advertisements put emphasis on broad policy differences and make vague promises; (3) statements of principle present the identity, values and norms of the party.

In most cases, party manifestos in Hungary serve as advertisements. Almost all manifestos discuss and evaluate the past in broad terms. Incumbents point to the alleged successes of their rule. Contenders frame the performance of the existing government in negative terms. In both cases, analyses are followed by policy proposals. They are often rather guidelines (rhetoric pledges) than specific pledges that would hold the party accountable.

There are exceptions, when the specific promises dominate the manifesto. Such contract-type manifestos were drafted in 2002.

Statement-like manifestos are published when parties position or reposition themselves. All the manifestos in 1990 can be categorized as statements of principles. Before the first free elections, all the running parties felt necessary to

present their identity and place themselves on the political map. These manifestos also had a strong policy element, as the new democratic parties attempted to prove they are competent for governing. That may bring them closer to the contract-type, but the main reason for policy analyses and proposals is self-legitimizing, not the direct persuasion of voters. The new parties launched similar manifestos in 2010 for similar reasons. Established parties issue manifestos as statement of principle, when they reposition themselves. One of the two notable examples are the 2006 MDF electoral program, which tried to maneuver the party from a loyal ally of Fidesz to the center. The other is MSZP's manifesto in 2010, in which the Socialists, who could be sure of losing the next election, formulate their values for the core constituency.

8. Audience

Who is the target of party manifestos in Hungary? A very rudimentary distinction can be made between universal and group-oriented manifestos. The former ones formulate policies that altogether serve the interests of the whole political community. The latter have real target groups whose interests are promoted.

Methodologically speaking, it is highly difficult to determine which groups are targeted with a rhetoric or specific policy proposal or even an ideological statement. For example, pledging the building of a motorway may address the voters in the region, the construction sector or the general interests of transport.

Setting aside the methodological concerns, it intuitively seems quite clear that the large parties target at a universal audience. That fits in the image of the two-bloc system presented in the beginning of the paper. Large catch-all parties compete for votes in every and each social group. More specifically to Hungary, blocs are culturally formed, so competition for votes does not focus on the linkage to specific social groups. The various segments of manifestos may target at specific groups (like pensioners), but the overall message is that everyone obtains something and nobody really loses.

Smaller parties specify more on certain groups. For example, SZDSZ positioned itself as the representative of urban middle class, especially the inhabitants of Budapest, the largest city of Hungary. The parties that emerged in 2010 also have a more specific political profile.

9. Confrontation

As election campaigns, party manifestos also may be positive or negative. The difference is in the focus. A manifesto may concentrate on the performance and future plans of the party. Or, alternatively, it may point to the mistakes or evil nature of other parties. The character of a party manifesto is largely determined by its confrontative or constructive intentions. Actual manifestos can rarely be placed at one of the extremes of this scale. Still, analyzing them from this point of view may add a lot to our understanding.

Some broad hypotheses can be put forward in an a priori manner. One may presuppose that the level of confrontation varies with the ideological character of the party, its political position, or the degree of competition. (1) There may be parties that are more confrontative by nature. Anti-systemic parties can fall into this category. Their manifestos are expected to be hostile to the other political players

at all times. (2) The nature of manifestos partly may depend on the present and expected positions of parties. Opposition parties tends to be more prone to criticize the government. (3) System-critical (but not anti-democracy) parties, which are usually newcomers or repositioned parties, denounce the economic, political, and – especially – moral performance of all previous years and are expected to issue even more confrontative manifestos. (4) One may also expect more confrontative party platforms when the competition is especially intense in the electoral campaign.

Not all hypotheses can be confirmed in Hungary.

1) No party has always been confrontative in Hungary. New parties are very critical, but they have never fully rejected the idea of the democratic system with multi-party competition. Therefore, there is no party whose manifestos always focus on the perceived enemy.

2) Opposition parties tend to be more confrontative than parties in incumbent government. For example, the manifesto of Fidesz, the major opposition party, in 2006 was more confrontative than MSZP's, the major governing party. Still, the tendency covers much variance. When the opposition with hopes of participating in the next government wants to compete with the demonstration of competence and pledges peace after years of political wars, its manifestos focus on positive elements.

3) New parties, whose competitive edge is their lack of political past, have manifestos that analyze the performance of previous governments and oppositions in a highly critical manner. The party platforms of Jobbik and LMP, which successfully entered into the serious competition in 2010, and MIÉP, the surprise party from extreme right in 1998, all support the hypothesis. The best case is 1990, when all the parties but the former communist MSZP were new. A major part of the manifestos was devoted to the criticism and denouncement of communist times.

4) Competition is always in intense in Hungary compared to many other democracies. The winner is always clear. All elections but one resulted in a change of government. No party remained in government after a lost election. Coalitions are always made within blocs, and party blocs fiercely fight against each other. Still, manifestos do not always deal with other parties. If the level of competition is interpreted as the closeness of the main parties, manifestos in 2002 should be of the most confrontative nature. Thus, the hypothesis of a relationship between the intensity of competition and the level of confrontation is not supported.

10. Informativeness

Both authors contribute to the *Election Pledges and Public Policy in Hungary* project. One of the goals of this research is to count the number of pledges parties make in their manifestos and assess the degree to which these pledges are accountable. Following mandate theory, party manifestos are expected to provide information about their drafters' policy intentions. According to the logic of mandate-based democratic theory, the winning party obtains authorization for carrying out a set of policies. Authorization presupposes the timely and detailed presentation of policy proposals, otherwise it would be impossible to hold the elected accountable. Party manifestos should be informative to allow the authorization of government mandate.

Informativeness is interpreted here as the specificity of pledges. Specificity is measured at three levels. Pledges were regarded as fully specific if they contained numerical targets (e.g., increase of pensions by 10 percent) or a status change (e.g., the abolishment of legal regulation or the building of a motorway). Partially specific are those pledges which indicate the change of direction (e.g., pensions will be raised – without specifying the actual raise) and those which contain imprecise terms (e.g., low pensions will be raised by 10 percent – without specifying the precise target group). All other pledges were classified as non-specific; therefore, non-informative.

The research project will cover all the elections so far and the manifestos of the 2014 election by the summer of 2014. Manifestos of the governing parties and that of the largest opposition party will be included in the full database (seven elections and 26 manifestos).

At the moment, consolidated data are available for the 2002 election only. These can be seen in the following table. Table 4. Informativeness of manifestos in Hungary, 2002

Party	MSZP	SZDSZ	Fidesz
Fully informative	44.5%	49.3%	71.4%
Partially informative	41.8%	31.5%	24.1%
Not informative	13.7%	19.2%	4.5%
Total	100%	100%	100%

There is apparently difference among parties. The government party, Fidesz, made more specific pledges than the two parties that eventually won the election. Obviously, a single case does not allow much generalization. When more variance is available, a large potential for analysis will open up. Many hypotheses can be tested concerning questions about why a party is more willing to make informative pledges in its manifesto than others.

First, the target audience of the campaign or certain campaign elements may be important. Campaign promises are usually considered as messages to the general public. They may target at more specific audiences. That is hypothesized to increase the number of responsive and specific pledges to seal the alliance. For example, trade unions expects the party they support to explicitly and publicly commit itself to certain policies.

H1: The more the party is linked to specific groups (endorsing organizations, business associations, trade unions, client groups) in the campaign, the more informative the pledges in its manifesto are in the relevant policy areas.

That may be true only of the policy areas where the party has to commit to only one group's policy needs. Where there is a conflict of expectations, the party is hypothesized to hide these contradictions and make vague promises.

H2: Parties make less informative pledges in policy areas where the expectations of supporting groups conflict with each other.

The constituency can be within the party, too. Party platforms, often based on ideological differences, represent different policy options. The party campaign must gain the support of intra-party factions by means of clear commitments to the policies they look important.

H3: Pledges are more informative in policy areas which are important to one of the party factions.

The same caveat must be made as in the case of external groups. If factions have different views about certain policies, the pledges are expected to be more vague to avoid overt conflict.

H4: Pledges are less informative in policy areas over which party factions have disagreements.

A third type of target group is the potential partner in government. The hypotheses depend on the nature of relationships between parties. When they have a history of cooperation, the expectations of each other are well known. Like and old couple, they serve each other's needs.

H5: The more institutionalized the party's relationship with its potential coalition partners, the more informative the pledges in its manifesto are in policy areas which are important to the expected coalition parties.

Even old couples have disputes, which they do not want to reveal.

H6: Pledges are less informative in policy areas over which expected coalition partners have disagreements.

The situation is different when parties expect hard negotiations. Formulating strong policy statements is not necessarily practical. Clear pledges which are diametrically opposite to the policies of the expected partner may impede the success of negotiations, as one of the parties have give up on their publicly made promise. Making clear pledges which are exactly what the partner wants would be a loss of trumps. Therefore, promises in manifestos are hypothesized to be vague in the relevant policies.

H7: Pledges are less informative in policy areas which are important to those potential coalition partners which hard negotiations are expected with.

Not only the 'who' may matter, but the 'when' also. Parties may send more rhetoric messages and make broad promises. The intensity of the campaign, then, often presses them to become more precise and formulate their pledges in a more informative way.

H8: Parties make more informative promises as the campaign approaches the election day.

In all probability, the perceptions of chances influence the level of campaign informativeness. The party that is predicted to be the clear winner of the election is expected to have only responsible pledges, but not many of them. On the one hand, they do not have to use pledges to compete. On the other hand, committing themselves in the manifesto too much makes governing difficult.

H9: The more a party predicts a clear electoral victory, the less informative pledges it makes in its manifesto.

Somewhat surprisingly, a similar outcome can be expected in the reverse case. On the one hand, competition does not force informative pledge. On the other hand, a losing party focuses on its ideological messages to secure the long-term success instead of specific pledges which may be used by rivals later.

H10: The more a party predicts a clear electoral defeat, the less informative pledges it makes.

Therefore, one may expect the more informative promises when the competition is perceived open.

H11: The more intense the electoral competition, the more informative the pledges.

Society is different from nature, as societal agents can learn. Social sciences work with subjects who can reflect on their conditions. Citizens are knowledgeable agents. They realize that parties sometimes make pledges they do not want or are not able to fulfill. The attention on credibility is especially high after scandals of unfulfilled promises. At such times, one may expect more informative pledges from parties who must show their commitment to clear commitments.

H12: The stronger the accountability and mandate discourse, the more informative the campaign pledges.

The hypotheses presented in this section is meant to demonstrate the potential of pledge analysis for manifesto research, but do not amount to any completeness in terms of scope and breadth.

11. Conclusions

At this stage, our research is based on partial data. Therefore, conclusions also can be only preliminary and tentative. Still, some intriguing conclusions can be drawn from this exploratory analysis of party manifestos in Hungary.

1. Party manifestos are adopted ceremonially to provide internal and external legitimacy.

2. The length of manifestos is normally between 10,000 and 15,000, but there are major exceptions.

3. The layout has become more professional since the 1990s.

4. Large parties are of catch-all character and target at the whole society in their manifestos. Smaller parties focus more on certain social groups.

5. The level of confrontation in manifestos somewhat correlates the opposition/government division and the newness of parties, but is not very related to the general party ideology and the degree of competition.

6. Manifestos were relatively informative in 2002. Hypotheses relevant to manifesto research can be formulated concerning the variance in informativeness.

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