

Article

“Mass,” “Movement,” “Personal,” or “Cartel” Party? Fidesz’s Hybrid Organisational Strategy

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Abstract

In the last decade, Fidesz has dominated the Hungarian political landscape, becoming the most extensive Hungarian party organisation in terms of party members, structuration, resources, and influence. The party’s organisational development has been determined by a constant strategic adaptation to new circumstances of political reality and new demands of the electorate. The article argues that in three phases of its development, Fidesz adopted different party organisation guidelines. As a result, a hybrid party architecture was formed involving various characteristics and strategies of mass parties (e.g., relatively large membership and ideological communication), movement parties (i.e., top-down generation of mass rallies and protest activities), personal parties (i.e., personalisation, centralisation of party leadership), and cartel parties (i.e., use of state resources, control over party competition). Instead of switching from one strategy to another, the party often used these strategies simultaneously. This flexible party organisation can balance among the different needs of effective governance, constant mobilisation, and popular sovereignty. The article aims to dissect these building blocks of Fidesz to gain insight into the emergence of the hybrid party model.

Keywords

cartel parties; Fidesz; hybrid party strategies; mass parties; movement parties; personal parties

Issue

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1. Introduction

The Fidesz–Magyar Polgári Szövetség (Fidesz or Fidesz–Hungarian Civic Alliance) stands out not just from Hungarian but also Central-Eastern European parties for its longevity and organisational, political, and ideological adaptability. Founded by a group of politically active students in 1988, it has evolved from a small liberal movement party to the leading actor of the centre-right, conservative camp as well as the government coalition of 1998. After losing two elections in 2002 and 2006, it re-emerged as the dominant party of the political landscape, winning a two-thirds majority three times in a row from 2010 to 2018. Unlike many of its peers, the party

avoided any major intraparty conflicts and schisms and established itself as the most extensive Hungarian party organisation in terms of party members, structuration resources, and influence. Thus, Fidesz is a prime example of Enyedi’s (2014) theory that adaptation to new circumstances of political reality and new demands of the electorate can be considered to be critical for a party’s survival and success.

Fidesz’s organisational, ideological, and political development has not followed a unidirectional trajectory. Like many parties, Fidesz has adopted diverse guidelines of party organisation to pursue different goals at different times. However, instead of switching from one strategy to another, we picture these strategies as

layers of change that often simultaneously persist. This opportunistic conversion (cf. Mahoney & Thelen, 2009) was concentrated on the party's external relations with voters and the state, leaving its internal rules largely untouched. Due to the concentration of party leadership and the collapse of support for other right-wing parties (after the 2000s) and the major left-wing parties (after 2006), the party was able to experiment and refine strategies without significant barriers or interference. Moreover, after its landslide victory in 2010, the party took advantage of the government position to further expand the scope of the party beyond the formal institutional frames. This development trajectory is rather peculiar given that Fidesz is one of the few mainstream political actors in Europe which has radicalised and become more populist in its politics. As a result, Fidesz has built a hybrid party organisation which demonstrates selected characteristics of mass parties, personal parties, movement parties, and even cartel parties. In other words, the party provides a perfect example of organisational innovation by applying a new combination of existing practices and different forms of party organisation (cf. Schumpeter, 2006, p. 132).

The mixture of different organisational practices has helped the party to simultaneously strengthen and maintain its various linkages to voters (charismatic, clientelist, and programmatic; cf. Kitschelt, 2000). The concentration of power and the informal emergence of the leader (presidentialisation; Hloušek, 2015) lie at the heart of party development and have resulted in a personal or personalised party (Musella, 2018). Phrased differently, party organisational politics are largely determined by Viktor Orbán's charismatic leadership (charismatic linkage). This strong, personalised leadership has also prevented intraparty conflicts within different organisational layers as the concentration of power allows for the control of all levels of the party. At the same time, mass party organisational strategy (see Albertazzi & van Kessel, 2021) has been reflected in the recruitment of activist support for (offline or online) campaigning. Fidesz's identity politics have strengthened this strategy, as the envisioned Christian, national, and conservative community can be mobilised by specific political messages (programmatic linkages). In governing position, the party has been able to strengthen its embeddedness in society by radically reforming certain areas of social life (culture, sports, etc.) in order to further promote this identity.

However, conscious and unhindered development has sometimes led to extreme organisational forms. Fidesz's cartel party characteristics show critical deviation from the ideal type (Katz & Mair, 1995). The domestic political crisis triggered by the former socialist Prime Minister Ferenc Gyurcsány's "lying speech" in 2006 (which was accompanied by enduring anti-government demonstrations and street violence) permanently broke the former party cartel of major governing parties (Ilonszki & Várnagy, 2014b; cf. Enyedi, 2006). After 2010, Fidesz gained a dominant position in Hungarian

politics with its non-autonomous coalition partner Kereszténydemokrata Néppárt (KDNP or Christian Democratic People's Party). This meant that there was no longer a need to cooperate with other parties. Fidesz's dominant position made it possible for it to occupy the state and to control party competition by itself to ensure its own electoral success. In other words, Fidesz is able to act as the sole agent of the state, capable of creating and maintaining clientelist networks at all levels of Hungarian society (Körösényi et al., 2020, pp. 93–115; Mares & Young, 2018).

In order to support charismatic leadership and counterbalance the cartel-like behaviour, Fidesz applies "the organisational and strategic practices of social movements in the arena of party competition" (Kitschelt, 2006, p. 280; see also Almeida, 2010, p. 174). However, the movements that directly support the party (the Civic Circles and the Civil Cooperation Forum) were created in a top-down manner with no autonomy compared to other radical right-wing movement parties (Gunther & Diamond, 2003, p. 189) or left-wing party-driven movements (Muldoon & Rye, 2020). Thus, the movement party characteristics have manifested in an extreme way as the party uses this strategy as a tool for constant mobilisation. Overall, these new organisational practices accompanied by populist rhetoric blur the line between intra-parliamentary, extra-parliamentary, and government politics.

The article aims to explore this hybrid organisational strategy of Fidesz. The analysis is structured as follows. First, we describe the organisational and ideological evolution of the party in its three developmental phases. Second, the analysis addresses current organisational development, including the evolution of activists' networks and recruitment processes. Third, we consider centralised and personalised party leadership and party cartelisation.

2. The Ideological and Organisational Evolution of Fidesz

At the ideological and organisational level, the historical development of Fidesz can be divided into three main phases (see Figure 1): (a) the early movement party phase (1988–1993) characterised by collective leadership and liberal centrist ideology; (b) the personalised catch-all party phase (1993–2002) which presented professionalisation and an ideological transition to a right-wing, conservative ideological position; and (c) from 2002 onwards which reveals how the party's current ideological and organisational profile gradually developed into what we call a "hybrid party." Recently, the party has shown a mix of characteristics: Some of its features, such as the massive membership and organisational expansion, recall mass party strategy, while other strategic elements (creating affiliated organisations, mass rallies, and protest activities in a top-down manner) are similar to that of movement parties and Viktor Orbán's charismatic

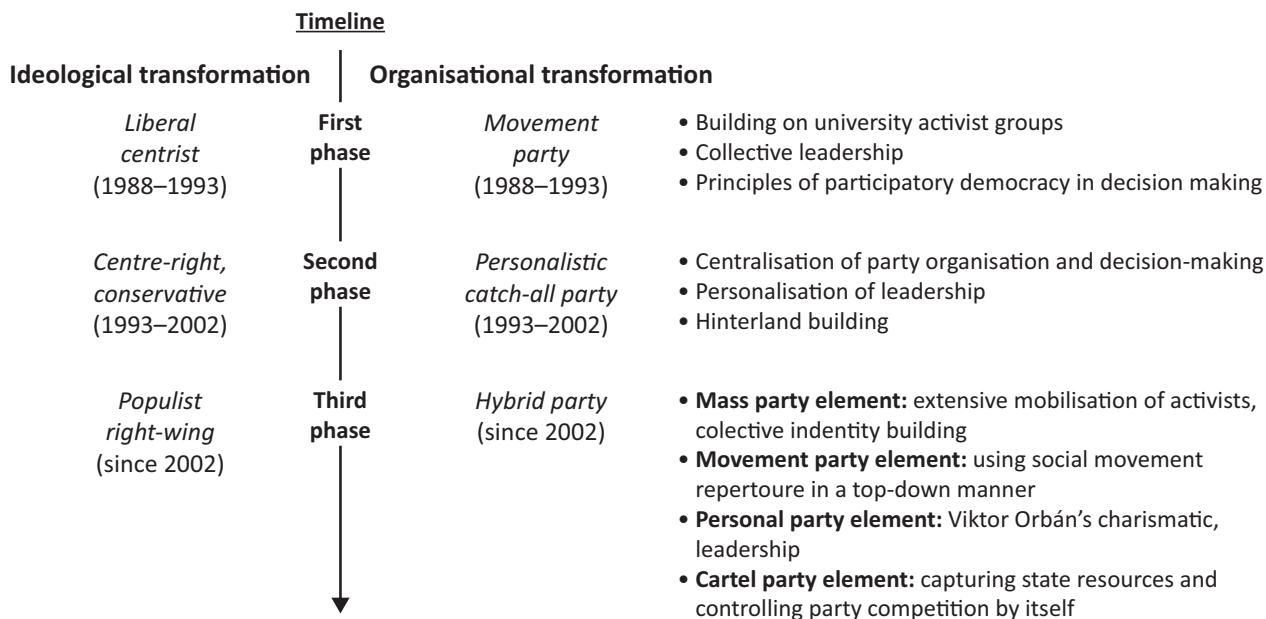


Figure 1. Ideological and organisational transformation phases of Fidesz.

leadership is a trait of personal parties. At the same time, the monopolisation of state resources and the dominance in public office remind us of cartel parties. The biggest change perceived is the “populist turn” of the party, both in terms of communication and strategy (cf. Enyedi & Róna, 2018).

2.1. First Phase: The Movement Party

Fidesz was not born as a party per se during the emergence of new parties in the transition period but rather as a university activist group. The group promoted radically liberal political ideas and was set on introducing a new generation of politicians. At the time of its foundation, the party only accepted members under the age of 35 under the name of the Alliance of Young Democrats (Fidesz was originally the abbreviation for this name). The party showed several traits of movement parties (Kitschelt, 2006, pp. 280–281): It gained popularity through its involvement in protests and mass demonstrations and relied on the principles of participatory democracy. As van Biezen (2003, p. 123) has emphasised, party members played a crucial role: “The delegates to the national council were elected directly by the local groups, and their votes were weighed in accordance with the number of members they represented.” There was also no centralised leadership; instead, the party was managed collectively—a trait shared by Western Green parties (M. Balázs & Enyedi, 1996)—until Orbán was elected as leader of the parliamentary party group in 1990 and as president of the party in 1993.

2.2. Second Phase: The Personalistic Catch-All Party

After the 1993 party congress, Fidesz launched a new political and organisational strategy to mobilise more

voters, increase governing potential and become more professional. Members lost their potential to directly influence party decisions at the party congress. Local party groups became territorially organised (allowing for one group in each municipality). They were subordinated to the higher levels of decision making, resulting in a higher level of centralisation and power concentration. The role of the party president was strengthened, which was a clear step towards personalisation. In order to reach out more, the party needed to establish stronger ties to society. As Enyedi (2005, p. 708) wrote, “the leadership realised that the party needed a Hinterland, a network of organisations, media forums and elite groups that could bring social legitimacy, expertise, and various other resources.” Thus, the party started to build coalitions with right-wing elites as well as with the clergy.

An ideological turn accompanied the organisational reform as the party shifted its profile from liberal to a more conservative, centre-right party. The party offered a “coming of age” narrative which basically conveyed the message that as the founding politicians became more mature, they recognised the importance of conservative values. As a result, the party in 1995 abolished the age limit of 35 for membership and reinvented the party’s brand by renaming it Fidesz–Hungarian Civic Party. The transformation was rewarded by the success of the 1998 elections.

2.3. Third Phase: The Hybrid Party

The electoral defeat of 2002 came as a surprise to the party as Fidesz was hoping to capitalise on its governmental role and the results of the 1998–2002 period. Confident in its achievements, the party attributed the electoral loss to a lack of ability to mobilise voters in time for the elections. Thus, Fidesz engaged in a

new organisational strategy of building a network called Citizens' Alliance. This strategy established a cultural and social community which relied on civic initiatives to mobilise its voter base (Greskovits, 2020; Metz, 2015; Szabó, 2011).

Along with the mobilisation strategy, the party adjusted its political message to amplify its appeal. Despite the growing polarisation between the left and right, Fidesz decided to reach out to an even broader base of voters by innovating its economic profile. The new set of messages integrated traditionally left-wing economic policies, nationalism and populist demands (Enyedi & Róna, 2018, pp. 255–256). After 2010, the populist style and strategy based on the us–them dichotomy, the use of referendums, and the so-called national consultation, which takes the form of a national survey sponsored by the government, gradually became the primary mode of government politics. Within the framework of consultation, the national survey sends around eight million questionnaires to voters and includes rather manipulative questions, such as: “Do you agree with the Hungarian government that support should be focused more on Hungarian families and the children they can have, rather than on immigration?” The rise of participatory methods allowed the government to frame its decisions to respond to voters' expectations and let the party overrun its ideological boundaries by selling a responsive image to the electorate.

In the following sections, we detail the developments of the third phase, focusing on the different elements of the hybrid party, that is, party organisation, recruitment mechanisms, social movement repertoire, party leadership, and cartelisation of the party.

3. Between Mass and Movement Party

In order to increase organisational stability and social embeddedness, Fidesz combined the elements of mass parties with movement party strategies. While the party could establish a considerable degree of organisation (at least in the Hungarian context), these strategies go far beyond the institutional framework of the party. We now present these two interrelated mobilisation and recruitment strategies of the party. We focus on how the party makes great efforts both online and offline to attract new members and activists. We also take into account its (probable) reasons for building an activist base.

3.1. Offline Mobilisation Through Networks of Affiliated Organisations and Activists

Although its core structure has remained relatively stable since 1993, Fidesz has selectively applied elements of the mass party strategy to create a well-established organisation, membership base, and culturally and ideologically homogenous community of supporters (Hinterland). The present-day structure of party organisation is thus

the result of considerable previous recruitment work.

The basic organisational unit is the municipal-level party group, and its functions are mainly focussed on organising the local life of the party. Fidesz today has the most developed organisational network in Hungary, with 1.220 municipal-level party groups in 2015, which is extensive compared to the other two major parties of the time: Jobbik Magyarországért Mozgalom (Jobbik, Movement for a Better Hungary) with 834 groups and the Magyar Szocialista Párt (MSZP or Hungarian Socialist Party) with 463 groups (Horváth & Soós, 2015, p. 255). As the next step on the party ladder, the electoral district-based units are led by a loyal party member who is often the candidate running for the respective single-member district at the national elections. Above them, there are regional committees that only bear a minimum level of responsibility within the party. In the territorial hierarchy, the next step is the National Board, which consists of the National Presidium members, the regional committee leaders, the delegates from district-based units, the party's European Parliament delegation leader and the leaders of the partner organisations. The National Board manages the operative issues of the party between party congresses. The two most important central bodies are the Congress, which has the right to make and/or approve all decisions, and the National Presidium, which acts as the executive within the party.

Regarding party membership, according to data collected by Kovarek and Soós (2016), only 1% of the Hungarian population belongs to any party. While Fidesz has devoted a critical level of resources to increasing party membership, it nonetheless stays below 38,000 members, which is still higher than any other party's (e.g., the MSZP had 20,000 members in 2015, Jobbik had 15,000; see Kovarek & Soós, 2016). Compared to other parties in Hungary (Kovarek, 2020), the requirements to become a party member are not as strict, yet they reflect the party's lack of openness: The applicant must have three recommendation letters from members who have been members of the party for at least one year. In addition, as a reflection of the relationship between KDNP and Fidesz, members are encouraged to have dual party membership.

While holding governmental power, Fidesz needed a strategy to uphold its mobilisation potential, which relied on protest sentiments prior to 2010. Borrowing from the toolbox of movements and movement parties, the party launched a series of rallies (e.g., peace marches) that were initiated by organisations close to the party elite (predominantly by the former Civic Circles). These demonstrations revitalised the party's civil network and renewed its ties to society. In order to ensure central party control over these events, the party decided in approximately the late 2000s to integrate these initiatives into the party organisations by annexing these organisations. The expansion of the party organisation allowed for greater control and direct outreach to supporters on the ground.

The networks of affiliated organisations benefited the party on two levels. At the organisational level, it strengthened the party by increasing the number of local party groups and membership. The first network, called the Civic Circles Movement, founded by Orbán, was aimed at reuniting the right by integrating politicians, activists, and voters of other right-wing parties that had been weakened or disintegrated after the loss of the 2002 elections. The movement consisted of more than 11,000 civic circles and engaged approximately 163,000 members and was also connected to numerous church-bound, patriotic, professional, cultural, and local organisations. These local circles often became the focal point for local party organisations and offered a recruitment platform which resulted in a sevenfold increase in the party's membership. However, the decentralised nature of the Civic Circles contradicted the party's development strategy, and soon this movement was reformed under a non-governmental organisation, the Civil Cooperation Forum.

At the ideological level, this organisational network helped to re-establish and revitalise the bond between voters, supporters, and members by building a community that, in the party's rhetoric, embodies the nation and the people. One of the most significant challenges was overcoming ideological diversity since the network brought together voters and supporters with different political backgrounds. However, the routinisation of populist politics and mobilisation (from small gatherings to mass rallies) have broken down the substantial ideological barriers in the right-wing camp. Such regular events—Tranzit Festival, Tusványos Festival, and the party's annual private meeting at Kötcse—serve this goal by providing an opportunity for the political, administrative, and cultural elites associated with the party to come together. The culmination of events is usually Viktor Orbán's speech, which sets out the main political direction and topics for the near future. The Civil Cooperation Forum has also orchestrated several mass events since 2012 to express support for government politics. Among these events, the most notable is the peace march organised each year, which displays a curious mix of characteristics. The event itself is shaped as a demonstration closely linked to the party (through the use of party symbols) and bears a strong resemblance to official state events with the prime minister addressing "the People," "the nation." This mix of characteristics clearly shows how the party and its leaders have blurred the lines between state politics and party politics, with Orbán as the official leader of both the party and the country. This personalisation strategy presented Orbán as not only the official party leader and the elected leader of the country but also as the ideological leader of the political right.

As a continuation of its focus on increasing its mobilisation potential, Fidesz from 2004 onwards compiled a list of supporters, voters, and activists. The list became the central element of supporter and activist mobilisation. It was known as the "Kubatov list" in public dis-

course, named after Gábor Kubatov, the party director, central campaign manager, and vice-president. While canvassing has long been part of the parties' mobilisation toolbox and has often been used for accumulating systematic databases about voters with their consent, opposition parties have continuously challenged the party's methods of data collection. Based on a video made by opposition activists, the Curia (Supreme Court) of Hungary issued a decision stating that Fidesz activists had violated the rules of political data collection by misleading voters as to the use of their data (Kúria, 2019).

The need for coordinated mobilisation also led Fidesz to establish a formalised network of activists. In 2014, the "Hungarian Team" was formed, engaging more than 100,000 supporters as activists in the election campaign (Szalai, 2014). Later similar but hidden task forces followed, often engaging young activists, such as paid high school students among others (Magyari, 2015). These activists are on the borderline of the party structure: While many only temporarily engage in political activism, some devoted and loyal supporters find their way into the party organisation and even launch careers.

The recruitment of political, administrative and cultural elite also became a burning issue within the party, as the direct and indirect influence of Fidesz became more extensive and expansive in the various level of politics (media, government, party competition). Three recruitment paths emerged. The first path leads through the party where the entry-level is local politics or the party's youth organisation Fidelitas. It serves as a recruitment, training, and socialising camp for wannabe politicians. Indeed, many members of the new elite jump-started their career at Fidelitas, forming the nucleus of the National Cooperation System, which can be regarded as the elite network system behind Fidesz's and Viktor Orbán's regime.

The second path represents the party's narrower governmental and political Hinterland. The central government and pro-government think-tanks offer scholarships or/and jobs to undergraduate and graduate students with relevant knowledge and expertise. The internship programme of the Fidesz's party foundation, the Foundation for Civic Hungary, which is aimed at university students, is an excellent example of this practice. This programme is designed to engage politically committed and active students in the party's professional background work.

The third path goes through less political or ideological networks of knowledge centres and educational institutions, such as the Matthias Corvinus Collegium (MCC), which is a "quasi-college for advanced studies" financed directly by the government. While colleges for advanced studies have a long tradition in Hungary, and many of them are centres of academic excellence, MCC has not only a strong ideological profile but maintains clear and strong ties to the government. The institution is led by a prominent member of government, Balázs Orbán, deputy minister of the Hungarian prime minister's office.

Its extensive programme that reaches out to students from all over Hungary and to those beyond the border is financed by government grants, as MCC has been awarded billions of forints from the state budget and has received a transfer of shares and real estate from the government. According to its vision, the college offers educational programmes from elementary school onwards for future leaders who are committed to working for the nation.

3.2. Online Mobilisation Through Virtual Networks

Along with the efforts going into offline canvassing and mass organisation, Fidesz's online political presence has been strengthened since 2010. In order to increase its online presence, Fidesz politicians have been prompted to increase their posting frequency. For example, the minister of foreign affairs, Péter Szijjártó, who only launched his official Facebook profile at the end of 2019, gained 143,000 likes last year. Other prominent Fidesz politicians, like Judit Varga (95,000 likes), Máté Kocsis (94,000 likes), and Katalin Novák (79,000 likes) are far less visible online. Viktor Orbán's outreach, however, is enormous compared to other politicians and parties (see data on likes received in Table 1) and it witnessed a recent upsurge generated by the Prime Minister's strategic use of Facebook to introduce the government's decisions about the pandemic. The pandemic news and the need to be informed might allure site users not invested in politics to the politician's Facebook page.

While the accounts of politicians are more popular than the official party accounts, they do not enjoy autonomy from the party as their online presence is con-

trolled by the party centre both in terms of content (campaign slogans and messages) and funding (Facebook ads). According to a recent analysis of an interview series with Hungarian politicians (Oross & Tap, 2021), Fidesz has established top-down control its of social media presence, making it mandatory for its politicians (from government members to mayors and local faction leaders) to join Facebook. In 2017, one year before the election, the party centrally requested candidates to nominate a virtual staff member to manage Facebook communication and then provided them with specialised training. Their responsibilities included managing the candidate's page, building the candidate's online image, developing a separate account from the official ones devoted to negative campaigns, and involving online activists and delegating tasks to them (Haszán, 2018). By the 2018 elections, the virtual activist networks showed a highly centralised structure in which the control of campaign activity was extensive. Part of this network came under media scrutiny when anonymous sources unveiled that many of its online activities, including posting, sharing and commenting, were not voluntary but required within the network (Haszán, 2018), which undercut their authenticity and pointed towards the manipulative nature of online communication. Central party communications also create the content (e.g., memes, pictures, core messages, and slogans) for Facebook and disseminate it through the personal accounts of party members, politicians and activists. This centralisation is also reflected in the fact that Fidesz completely lacks any online platform for deliberation, candidate selection, policy formation, and voting, unlike smaller parties in the country (Oross & Tap, 2021, p. 15).

Table 1. Hungarian parties and their leaders' presence on Facebook.

	Likes (rounded numbers)	Change from 20 March to 21 March
Fidesz	320,800	+23,500 (+8%)
Viktor Orbán	1,120,000	+146,200 (+15%)
Jobbik	534,500	+32,800 (+7%)
Péter Jakab	296,300	+156,400 (+112%)
Demokratikus Koalíció (DK, Democratic Coalition)	167,500	+24,500 (+17%)
Ferenc Gyurcsány	298,500	+37,100 (+14%)
MSZP	216,300	+7,400 (+4%)
Bertalan Tóth	36,600	+12,700 (53%)
Ágnes Kunhalmi	42,500	+1,900 (+5%)
Párbeszéd (P, Dialogue)	132,000	+7,300 (+6%)
Tímea Szabó	152,700	+36,400 (+21%)
Gergely Karácsony	274,100	+47,000 (+21%)
Momentum	117,700	+6,200 (+6%)
András Fekete-Győr	46,700	+17,700 (+61%)
Lehet Más a Politika (LMP, Politics Can Be Different)	74,800	+914 (+8%)
Erzsébet Schmuck	34,600	+18,300 (+113%)
Máté Kanász-Nagy	5,400	+4,300 (+367%)

Note: Self-collected from CrowdTangle (3 March 2021).

In addition, the government and Fidesz are the most significant Facebook advertisers in Hungary. The former spent HUF 283.8 million and the latter HUF 141.6 million on advertising between 2019 and 2021 (Hanula, 2021a). It is also worth mentioning that the party was the most generous in spending money on YouTube ads (HUF 65 million) compared to other parties (Hanula, 2021b). The government and the party's online activities are difficult to distinguish (Hanula, 2021a). On the government's Facebook profile, the prime minister and some prominent members of the government (most notably Péter Szijjártó, Judit Varga, and Katalin Novák) regularly appear, but their messages are rarely directly connected to party politics. However, the issues they raise (e.g., promoting Coronavirus vaccinations) often feed into the political narrative of the party (e.g., Fidesz politicians are pro-vaccine while opposition politicians are anti-vaccine).

Despite the strengthening of its online strategy, the most recent elections in 2018 revealed that the party had lost touch with youngsters and intellectuals in urban areas. Megaphone Centre, a new pro-government initiative, explicitly undertakes to address like-minded young online activists, sponsors well-known senior opinion leaders (e.g., Philip Rákay and Zsolt Bayer), and offers training and content for them to face this challenge. Another digital platform called Axioma, founded by circles close to Fidesz, operates along similar lines, producing online content that echoes conservative values, and often features high-ranking government officials.

Overall, due to the applied elements of mass and movement party strategies, Fidesz could have established a broad and extensive party organisation (at least compared to other Hungarian parties). The party made great efforts to attract members and activists in offline and online space by mobilising them in a top-down manner, creating controlled recruitment paths and centralising the online presence of the party. The activist network based on offline linkages (Civic Circles, lists of party activists, and supporters) proved to be strong enough for a long time to mobilise enough people to win elections. While supporters can grow tired of the continuous campaign, the party devotes considerable efforts to promote and sustain these networks. At the same time, it provides innovations like online activism and specialised elite recruitment through party channels, adapting to the changing environment and new challenges.

4. Between Personal and Cartel Party

The organisational evolution showed intense centralisation both in terms of leadership, which translated to personalisation/presidentialisation, and in terms of state capture and domination of political competition, which manifested as a radical form of cartelisation.

Although the party was not born as a personal enterprise, after 1994, under Viktor Orbán's autonomous charismatic leadership, it "became the most centralised,

most homogeneous and most disciplined party in the country" (Enyedi, 2005, p. 708). The party's organisational and ideological transformation culminated in a symbolic re-foundation after the lost elections of 2002. It was symbolised by changing the party name from Fidesz–Hungarian Civic Party to Fidesz–Hungarian Civic Alliance, integrating the right-wing political spectrum. Orbán's leadership was also crucial to create, develop and stabilise Fidesz on organisational and ideological levels (Metz & Oross, 2020). This transformation presented the most evident shifts in the process of personalisation and presidentialisation in Hungary and East-Central Europe (Hloušek, 2015). Let's examine the main proof for formal and informal power concentration.

In light of the formal rules, all power is concentrated in the party's National Presidium (Z. Balázs & Hajdú, 2017; Kovarek & Soós, 2016). This role can be interpreted as the only real political forum for debates on crucial issues. The party leadership dominates the relationship between national and local bodies by appointing electoral district presidents who enjoy considerable power within specific areas. This centralisation helps to bypass the party on the ground (local and middle-level leaders) and prevent the emergence of independent power centres. Moreover, the National Board can dissolve its local units for working against the party programme or offending "the national interest of the party." While there are other central bodies, these are relatively weak: Congress almost has only a legitimating function, and the National Board's power is also limited and dependent on party leadership.

The National Presidium has formal control over key internal direction fields. One of its most essential prerogatives is the exclusive right to initiate amendments to basic party statutes; however, statutes can only be modified by the National Board and must be approved by Congress (Kertész, 2013). Due to this prerogative, the party leadership can fully control the party organisation's development and the separation of power.

Another crucial question is how parliamentary candidates (local, national, and European) are selected. Formally, the nomination is managed by a national body, the Electoral Coordinating Committee (ECC; Kertész, 2013), which is controlled and dominated by the National Presidency and the party leader due to personnel overlaps. The ECC can propose names for individual districts, country lists, and European Parliament lists. The room for modification is very limited: Local party units can only make comments on the proposed names. The National Board can only approve or reject the list but cannot suggest any modifications. Even in a case of rejection (which has never yet happened), the party leader has the right to override the decision and go forward with the original list. The National Board's independence from the party leadership is questionable in any case: Its members are not delegated by local organisations but are public officials elected under the Fidesz party brand who are, as a result, very dependent on the party leadership. It is

also a telling fact that the nomination process for public offices like Prime ministership and presidency is not regulated in the party procedures, leaving more autonomy for the party leader to promote its favoured candidate (or themselves). The process of local government nomination is very similar: Based on local units' proposals, only a narrow county leadership (namely local governments ECCs) decides on the matter. Moreover, the party centre can override this decision.

The selection of party leaders is also closed (Ilonszki & Várnagy, 2014a; Kertész, 2013). Congress elects the party president or renews the mandate biannually, but the nomination belongs to the National Presidium or a nomination committee. The nomination procedure is also not clearly regulated, which strengthens the position of the incumbent party leader. Looking beyond the rules reveals that Orbán's role has only once been challenged in practice. Following the 1994 election defeat, he resigned from the party presidency to take responsibility for the result, but he regained his power in the next party leadership election. In 2000, as prime minister, he renounced the party leadership to create the image of a responsible statesman who stands above partisan conflicts and politics. But since his informal influence over the party has remained strong, he has passed the formal title to his comrades or "close" allies (László Kövér, Zoltán Pokorni, and János Áder). The defeat of 2002 provided an important lesson for Orbán: He recognised that political success in Hungarian politics requires strong leadership and absolute control over the party. He formally regained the position of party leader. Since then, he more closely controls party-related patronage and surrounds himself with disciplined and loyal allies who are dependent on him. Those who have created autonomous power centres, or have repeatedly formulated opposite or alternative opinions, are neutralised or marginalised. For instance, former ministers Tibor Navracsics and János Lázár had to give up their portfolios in exchange for low-profile political positions.

Consequently, Fidesz doesn't provide much room for internal democracy, formally or informally. The party's particular characteristic is that the real debates are only encouraged among the party elite in some closed forums (e.g., Kötcse party meetings, informal gatherings) or through lobbying; expressing a critique publicly is unacceptable since it is considered as a sign of weakness. The party substitutes internal democracy with a symbolic and quasi-direct relationship between members and leader. The leader's direct and active interaction with its sympathisers, activists, and members creates the pretence that the party is governed democratically. However, even if the party organisation is extensive, it is also relatively weak (Z. Balázs & Hajdú, 2017; Enyedi & Linek, 2008) and highly dependent on Orbán's leadership. As a result, the National Presidium, which has decisive power on paper, has become weightless in a political sense. There is no open competition for National Presidium membership, similar to the uncontested party

leader selection (Ilonszki & Várnagy, 2014a). Members are hand-picked by Orbán, who typically rewards his strongest and most loyal allies. Interestingly, the list of office holders' names is not available on the party's website, which also gives the impression that they are not important. Moreover, in contrast to the party statute, major political decisions, such as leaving the European People's Party, are made by Orbán with the advice of influential groups around him.

Since 2010, the party's cartelisation has not only become personalised but also conspicuous. This process can be tracked through various developments inside the party (i.e., the growing dominance of the party in public office) and even outside the party (i.e., state capture through patronage and clientelism, controlling party competition) that exploit tools and resources of the state. Expressed differently, the party can freely employ the state's resources to limit political competition and ensure its own electoral success.

Concerning the intraparty changes at the organisational level, we can observe a strong centralisation and the consequent emergence of a small party elite. The "party in the public office" saw its role strengthened in comparison with the party in the central office and party organisation and membership (party on the ground). The growing dominance of the party in the public office made it much harder to separate the different faces of Fidesz's organisation (Enyedi & Linek, 2008). As a result, the government function became dominant within the party, subordinating the parliamentary and extra-parliamentary functions. Party members holding public office dominate the party's highest bodies and internal decision making. Currently, everyone from the eight-member National Presidium has high-level positions in government or legislation (as Prime minister, president of parliament, minister, secretary of state, leader or members of the parliamentary faction).

Regarding state capture, Meyer-Sahling and Jáger (2012) documented extended party patronage beyond the realm of business. Patronage practices are applied in sectors such as the media, economics, and even, to a certain extent, the judiciary. The most intriguing practice is the capture of the government, which often promotes party interest. One striking example is outsourcing campaign activities to the government (and partly to pro-government NGOs). The party's communication activities are now indistinguishable from official government communication, effectively creating a legal loophole for campaign finance rules. Although national consultations and related campaigns, which have become a permanent political tool since 2010, are initiated and funded by the government, the aim is to maintain and broaden support for the party and Orbán's leadership. By 2021, the government had organised ten national consultations during which suggestive political questionnaires were sent to each household with a letter from the prime minister focussed on a particular topic (e.g., pensions, constitution-making,

social issues, economic issues, immigration, terrorism, the Soros Plan, family entitlements, and the crisis management of the coronavirus pandemic). Without formal regulation, transparency and obligations of the referendums, this plebiscitary maintains a direct relationship with Orbán's constituents and legitimates decisions.

Capture of the media was also critical to fostering the dominance of the political agenda (as well as the political competition). New regulations facilitated media capture (e.g., new media law and media authority, channel allocations, restriction of press presence in parliament, and selective advertisement tax), established Fidesz-related media networks (TV, print, and internet press) and reorganised and monopolised state-funded public broadcasting (Z. Balázs & Hajdú, 2017, pp. 99–100; Körösenyi et al., 2020, pp. 103–106). News editing practices of party-friendly public and private media show the party and the government in a positive light. At the same time, in the pro-government media, representation of the opposition is lacking except for its negative portrayal.

The result of personalisation and cartelisation is clear: The government, the party, and the leader are ultimately inseparable. Moreover, as suggested by Z. Balázs and Hajdú (2017), the party's centrality and organisational autonomy can be questioned: Is Fidesz only an "electoral machinery" in the party leader's hands? It seems that the party's purpose is only to maintain electoral legitimacy, coordinate election campaigns, and manage and reconcile the complex personal and political interests and ambitions of the political elite. Many of the crucial political functions are managed outside of the party framework: Political communication is defined as government communication channelled through the pro-government media, while interest and preference aggregation are conducted via national consultations. Meanwhile, mobilisation is driven by external actors who make up Fidesz's political Hinterland. In this sense, it is the government or the prime minister that has a party and not the other way around.

5. Conclusion

In many respects, Fidesz is clearly an extreme case as it has shown an unprecedented organisational transformation by adapting to the changing political demands. As a result, the party has been able to take root in civil society and occupy the state at the same time.

Through dissection of the building blocks of the party, the article is aimed to gain insight into Fidesz's hybrid party structure. On the one hand, we argue that the party combines the characteristics of mass and movement parties in building organisation and activist networks. Based on an ideologically integrated community and collective identity, the party operates extensive offline and online networks. On the other hand, Fidesz also adapts components of personal and cartel parties. Party leadership has not just become more personalised and centralised than ever before; the party in public office, that

is, the government, has also cut itself adrift from the rest of the party and established a dominant position in many realms of the public sphere through occupying the state (e.g., patronage, clientelism) and the reconfiguration of institutions, such as the electoral system. To counterbalance its dominant elite position, it has become essential to facilitate and maintain a quasi-direct relationship between party leaders and supporters through participatory practices, fulfilling the populist appeal. It is critical to note that Fidesz did not only transform its own practices and strategies, and thus the party itself, but also successfully modified the surrounding political framework: party competition (Enyedi, 2016), the party system (by establishing a "predominant party system"; see Horváth & Soós, 2015), and the political regime (Körösenyi et al., 2020).

The case of Fidesz, although special, holds two general lessons for us. First, modern political parties often simultaneously use different organisational strategies in an eclectic way to achieve their goals. Personalisation (Musella, 2018) and cartelisation (Katz & Mair, 1995) are well-known, but there are multiplying signs of a renaissance in mass-party practices (cf. Heinisch & Mazzoleni, 2016) and the movement activity used by the parties (Muldoon & Rye, 2020). Second, loosening institutional and political barriers can lead to extraordinary organisational forms. For example, the introduction of the practices of movements and movement parties is not new for mainstream parties (see the Labour Party in the UK with the upsurge of the pro-Corbyn Momentum). However, the highly centralised, presidentialised, and personalised leadership of Fidesz, which lacks internal organisational constraints, has been able to generate movement activity in a top-down manner. Perhaps the biggest distortions were caused by the lack of external constraints which disappeared because of the victory series from 2010. These developments show the cartel thesis from a new angle. What happens when a party does not have to cooperate with other actors to allocate state resources and control the political market? One of the major features of the cartel thesis is seemingly missing, that is, elite cooperation, but the cartel is created within the party and its Hinterland.

As a result, the party's boundaries became blurred, as many actors ranging from activists to government organisations act in Fidesz's interest. Paradoxically, hybridisation did not strengthen the party itself since its dominance is ensured through the embeddedness of the party elite in economic, social, and political networks. The window of opportunity presented itself when Fidesz came into a government position with a qualified majority, allowing it to conquer not only positions but institutions outside of Fidesz (such as the MCC or pro-government civil organisations). In our assessment, this process does not create a new party type. It just provides a new strategy combining the advantages of the existing organisation and mobilisation strategies to overcome challenges a party could face in the electoral and governmental

arena of party politics. This has become particularly spectacular in the extreme case presented by Fidesz, which was able to apply this strategy at will under particularly favourable conditions.

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Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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