

**THE VOICE OF A DISAPPOINTED GENERATION:
STUDENT MOBILIZATION IN HUNGARY
IN THE 2000s**

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Submitted to
Central European University
Department of International Relations
and European Studies

In partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts

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Budapest, Hungary
2013

Abstract

Everywhere in the world students have started to mobilize in the past few years, and Hungary was no exception: in 2011-2013, there were more student protests than ever before since the early transition years. In the meantime, protest activity among the young on left and right alike also peaked in 2011, while there has been an earlier upsurge in mobilization on the radical right in the mid-2000s. Although exogenous causes can account for the timing of the protests and provide a macro-level explanation, in order to understand the increasing militancy of students, as well as the time lag between mobilization on the radical right and the left, endogenous causes should be considered. In accordance with Albert O. Hirschman's theory of shifting involvements, it seems like the increased mobilization of Hungarian students is rooted in three kinds of disappointment: disappointment with democracy, disappointment with higher education, and disappointment with truncated mobility. While these types differ across different groups of students, it is possible that it is the simultaneous mobilization of these groups that caused the upsurge in protest activity for a generation otherwise uninterested in politics.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my supervisor, Béla Greskovits for all the guidance and inspiration throughout the year; thanks to him I never stopped liking this project. During his classes and our discussions, he introduced me to great authors and ideas, most importantly to Albert Hirschman, for which I am especially grateful. I also thank Kristin Makszin for being so good at clearing my thoughts, and the members of Social Movement Seminar for their comments; it was a great lab for testing ideas. I would also like to thank our Social Movements class, Katarina Kušić, Christian Pasche, and Betty Ferrari in particular for thinking together with me on the smallest details. I thank Ágnes Hárs for our long discussion, and Zoltán Várhalmi for helping me with the protest data. I am grateful to all the activists from Hallgatói Hálózat and Középiskolai Hálózat, for being so welcoming and ready to share their stories. I thank Robi for lifting my spirits in the library, and Áron, for the 'the's, and for being there.

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List of Abbreviations

CEE: Central Eastern Europe
Corvinus: Corvinus University Budapest
ELTE: Eötvös Lóránd Tudományegyetem – Eötvös Lóránd University
HaHa: Hallgatói Hálózat - Student Network
HÖÖK: National Conference of Student Unions
Jobbik: Jobbik Magyarországért Mozgalom –Jobbik for Hungary Movement
KiHa: Középiskolai Hálózat – High School Students' Network
MIÉP: Magyar Igazság és Élet Párja – Party of Hungarian Truth and Life
OHa: Oktatói Hálózat – Instructors' Network
Rajk: Rajk László Szakkollégium – Rajk College for Advanced Studies
SzüHa: Szülői Hálózat – Parent Network
TEK: Társadalomelméleti Kollégium - College for Advanced Studies in Social Theory

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INTRODUCTION

The last couple of years have seen several waves of massive protest of young people and especially students across the globe. The most spectacular of these included the protests of the Occupy movement in the U.S.A. and Europe, of the “indignados” in Spain, and the youth revolts during the Arab Spring and its aftermath. Clearly, these examples of contentious politics differed in their context, motives, and impact, yet they share some common features too. Most events bear the mark of the global financial crisis and the ensuing austerity measures, as well as a wider sense of injustice in society. At the same time, more fundamental issues of democracy were voiced during these protests, such as the bankruptcy of corrupt financial or political elites, hollowing out or absence of democracy, or a future without the promise of decent life not just for this generation, but for their societies at large.

Hungary was no exception from this trend: in 2011-2013, there were more student protests than ever before since the early transition years. (Figure 1) The protests were inspired by a higher education reform that was first leaked in early 2011, and resulted in radical cuts in the number of state sponsored scholarships, leading to the de facto introduction of tuition fees. Student contracts were introduced, obliging students to stay and work in Hungary for one and a half times their time spent in state-sponsored higher education. From this angle, the story seems evident enough – students protested because state funding for their studies was cut; in Hungary, like elsewhere, austerity measures resulted in a different model for higher education.

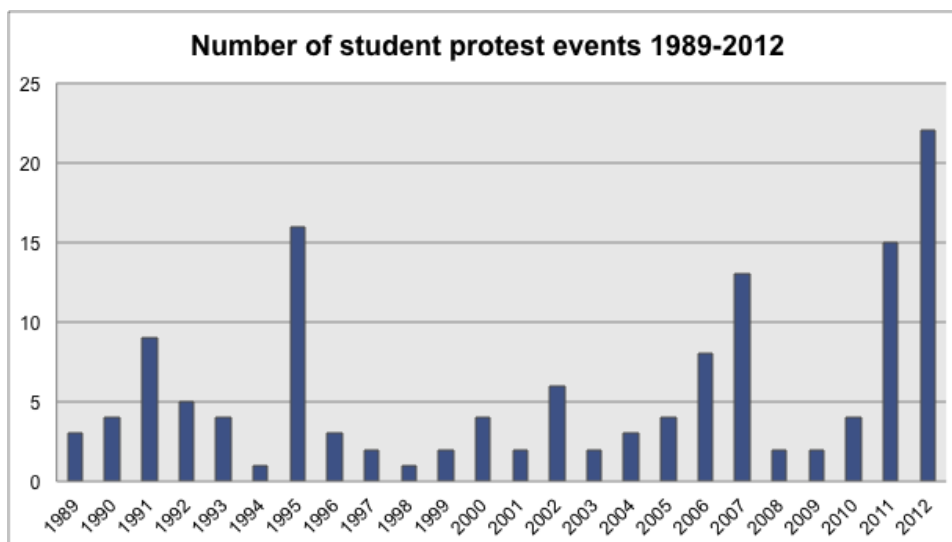


Figure 1: Frequency of Student Protests in Hungary. Author's calculations based on ongoing research. See Appendix for source.

However, there is reason to believe that there is a larger picture to paint. First, most student protesters' publicly financed higher education was still secure, and not high school students whose future became uncertain. Many of the claims during the protests in late 2012 emphasized values of solidarity and equality. Students also gave voice to broader issues: such as the failure of representative democracy at large: witness their slogans "no decision about us without us" and "we are the first generation born into the rule of law and we don't want to be the last."

Second, there has also been a wave of mobilization on the radical right, which started as a student movement and ultimately led to the conception of Jobbik in 2003¹. While Jobbik as a party no longer limits its appeal to students, it is currently the most popular party among university students with a party preference and is more successful in taking students to the street than any other political entity.² As indicated by the number of protests on each side³,

¹ See Appendix for a list of abbreviations.

² Dóra Ónody-Molnár, "Tarol a Jobbik, az egyetemisták körében veri az LMP veri a Fideszt." Népszabadság, February 16, 2013, accessed April 19, 2013 http://nol.hu/belfold/20130216-tarol_a_jobbik

³ See source in Appendix.

the radical right in Hungary took politics to the streets much sooner than did the left or the liberals.

Research Questions and the Case of Hungarian Student Movements

The ascendance of contentious student and youth movements of the right and the left in Hungary calls for a number of questions, which motivate my study.

1. What explains the increasing militancy of students in the new millennium producing two subsequent peaks in the frequency of protest events around the mid 2000s and, again, after 2010?

2. Protest does not occur in a social and political vacuum. My main related question is: is there an underlying *endogenous* logic to the dramatic increase in student protests – in addition to the *exogenous* factors, such as the threatening educational reforms, or the historical turning points in democratic politics? Further, how to link individual, or micro-level factors with macro-level contexts?

3. What explains the time lag in the mobilization of students from left and right? How have ideologies, organizational resources, or new political opportunities and risks, and a more general disappointment with private and public life (e.g. matters of education and broader socialization), triggered the subsequent mobilization of right-wing and left-liberal youth?

4. Finally, in a globalized world, student protest ought to bear the mark of international influences. How far does the analysis of the Hungarian case allow reflections to increasing youth militancy in Europe and across the globe?

Before briefly outlining my main propositions, let me justify my focus on the Hungarian case, and on students. First, while similarly to Poland, pro-elderly policies were in

place, Hungary has stood out in its generosity toward young people⁴, which makes the increasing militancy of students over the 2000s puzzling. However, successive Hungarian governments, including the current one, have attempted to cut back on funding for higher education and to abandon education as a priority in general. Second, over the past few years, Hungary has become the odd one out in the CEE region: its government provoked intense criticism from international organizations, NGOs, and foreign governments for the reforms introduced during Fidesz's supermajority in parliament.

But how representative is student protest of the behavior of Hungarian youth at large? Clearly, higher education is an issue that concerns first and foremost the elites. Those who have an opinion on the standards and purpose of higher education are those who expect better quality at public universities and are willing to invest in activism, because public involvement is costly. While this should give a pause to overly ambitious conclusions, there are a number of reasons in favor of telling this story.

First, students, while not necessarily representative of all youth, are most receptive to the broader ideological shifts in society, and they are often the ones to become social and political entrepreneurs to shape a generation's attitudes.⁵ Students are overrepresented in youth protests and among young voters alike. University graduates are more likely to be employed in Hungary,⁶ and so their preferences seem to be a reasonable subject of study. Yet it is also important to take note of the broader shifts in the ideological preferences of the young and their voting behavior, and judge student involvement against this backdrop.

⁴ Pieter Vanhuysse, *Divide and Pacify: Strategic Social Policies and Political Protests in Post-Communist Democracies*. Budapest: Central European University Press, 2006.

⁵ Hungarian Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor: "A fiatalok társadalmi közérzete, politikai kérdésekhez való viszonya" in *Ifjúság 2008 gyorsjelentés*, ed. Béla Bauer, Andrea Szabó (Budapest: Szociálpolitikai és Munkaügyi Intézet publisher, 2009) 101-123

⁶ Központi Statisztikai Hivatal, (KSH), Number of Unemployed by Degree of Education 1998-2012, accessed 19 April 2013 http://www.ksh.hu/docs/hun/xstadat/xstadat_eves/i_qlf012.html

The growth in student protests occurred simultaneously with a steep increase in the aggregate number of youth protests. While the protest activity of Hungarian youth should not be overestimated, there are arguments in favor of exploring this connection.⁷ The young might be chronically uninterested by politics, but students are not, suggesting that the larger increase in youth protests can also be explained by the growing interest of students in public affairs.

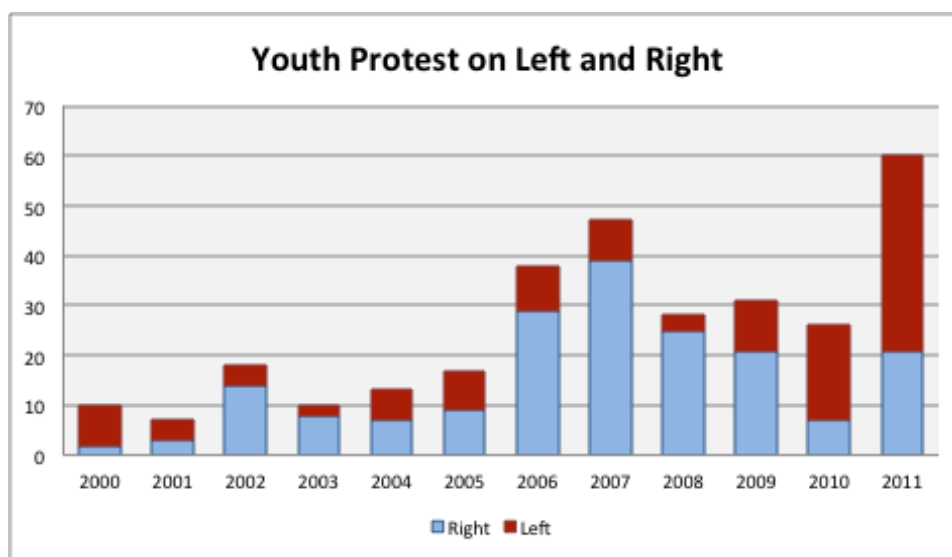


Figure 2: Author's calculations of the frequency of youth protest events in Hungary 2000-2011 on left and right. See Appendix for source and methodology.

A second argument for addressing this issue now is that those who are currently university students were born during the transition. They were the first to be socialized in a new context of market economy, rule of law, and representative democracy, and so their dissatisfaction can be an indication of the successes and failures of the system built after 1989. Students might raise their voice not just because they have a problem with the government in power, but also because they take issue with the establishment regarding redistribution, mobility, representation, or the obsolete ideological cleavages. The twenty

⁷ According to the findings of Ifjúság 2008, the overwhelming majority of the young are uninterested in politics: even when potential participation was measured, sixty-one per cent of respondents answered that they would not participate in any kind of political activity. Importantly, however, interest in politics was dependent on one's level of education: university students and the children of the elite constituted the core of those nevertheless interested in politics.

plussers in Hungary might not be able to place themselves in the dichotomy of left and right, or to relate to naming and shaming former Communists.

Third, students' (dis)satisfaction with the perspectives of upward mobility points to broader problems of social mobility: it matters for young elites' perceptions of a healthy society, and it can also shape the fears and hopes of those left behind.^{8 9}

Conceptual Framework and Main Propositions

While the focus on highly educated Hungarian youths along the above lines is justified, my main objective is to come to plausible propositions concerning the factors of their social movements and political mobilization.

Protest data and existing literature confirm that there have been two major shifts toward more public involvement since the first years of the transition: one among supporters of the radical right in the early-mid 2000s, and a more recent upsurge in public activity triggered by the higher education reforms of the current government (Figure 2). The ideological shifts among the young, as well as two historical junctures, the 2002 and the 2010 elections were responsible for the timing of these shifts, caused by a building disappointment among different groups of students.

Searching for the causes of social contention, one can view explanatory variables termed as push and pull effects. Seminal authors of social movement theory such as Sidney

⁸ Albert O. Hirschman and Michael Rothschild. "The Changing Tolerance for Income Inequality in the Course of Economic Development With A Mathematical Appendix." *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* 87, no. 4 (1973): 544-566.

⁹ In the mid-2000s, as mobilization of the young started on the radical right, many of the grievances voiced related to the deficiencies of the political system, such as the ideological proximity between left and right wing parties, and the lack of representation for certain radical ideas on the right, the result of Fidesz's strategy to extend its base to all right-wing voters. Jobbik's founders were also alarmed by the fact that their right-wing ideology in general was pushed to the margins in 2002: Fidesz lost the elections and MIÉP did not get into parliament.

Tarrow¹⁰, Hanspeter Kriesi, or Donatella della Porta¹¹ tend to emphasize pull effects in their analyses. Albert O. Hirschman on the other hand stresses the importance of push effects of public action, which, he argues, are often unduly pushed to the margins in the literature.¹² In my thesis, I attempt to combine these theoretical perspectives.

Concretely, the pull effects of mobilization of students, the 2010 elections and the higher education policies of the Fidesz government provide plausible explanations for the timing of the events of 2011-2013. Similarly, the elections lost by Fidesz in 2002 and 2006 might be of some indication of the birth of the movement on the radical right. However, I see my conceptual contribution in adapting Hirschman's theory on shifting involvements, in order to explore the relevant push effects, or the deeper sources of students' disappointment with the achievements of transformation in both instances.

Hirschman argues that mobilization stems from a sense disappointment that is inherent in people's private lives. This resentment of private endeavors in turn pushes people towards public involvement as they start criticizing the system at large (as long as this new life keeps up the level of excitement they seek). As disappointment with public activity sets in, people return to the private pursuit of happiness, like politicians who resign "to be able to spend more time with their families." In the following chapters I will demonstrate that Hirschman's theory is instrumental for a better understanding of Hungarian students' public participation patterns.

In both periods, disappointment with whatever the system after the transition could offer to educated youths was twofold: disappointment with democracy on the one hand, and

¹⁰ Sidney G. Tarrow, *Power in movement: Social movements and contentious politics*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994) 85.,

Hanspeter Kriesi, "Movements of the left, movements of the right: Putting the mobilization of two new types of social movements into political context." *Continuity and change in contemporary capitalism* (1999): 398-423

¹¹ Donatella Della Porta, "Multiple belongings, tolerant identities, and the construction of 'another politics': between the European Social Forum and the Local Social Fora." *Transnational protest and global activism* (2005): 175-202.

¹² Albert O. Hirschman, *Shifting involvements: private interest and public action*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982

with the higher education system and social mobility on the other. These factors are relevant to different degrees to different groups, depending on social status, ideological representation and the extent to which they have benefited from the transition. I propose that the 2012 peak in protests is the result of the *simultaneous* mobilization of students on the left and the right.

International influences have affected public activity of students in several ways. Occupy has inspired the mobilization techniques of the currently evolving student movement, and the global financial crisis has had its impact on Hungarian students in several ways. The increasing popularity of the radical right across Europe left its mark in Hungary.

The thesis elaborates the above propositions in the following sequence. In Chapter 1, I will present my theoretical framework, which includes an application of Hirschman's theory to the cases of student mobilization on the left and the radical right, a brief introduction of Sidney Tarrow's social movement theory, and some thoughts on the role of ideology in shaping social movements, based on Hanspeter Kriesi's theories. In Chapter 2, I will investigate the causes of Jobbik's success in mobilizing students in the mid-2000s and beyond, first on a macro-level, relying on Tarrow's arguments, then on a micro-level, concentrating on individual motivations. In Chapter 3, I will do the same in my analysis of the case of Hallgatói Hálózat (Student Network, or HaHa) and the mobilization of students on the left, before I conclude and develop suggestions for further research.

Methodology¹³

In order to identify both push and pull effects I combined quantitative research methods with qualitative ones. I conducted semi-structured interviews with the organizers of student protests, and while they operate on a basis of participatory democracy, I tried to target the more prominent figures of the movement. I concentrated on issues of threats and

¹³ For the methodology section I used parts of an assignment I submitted to Research Method class

opportunities, opportunity structures, repertoires of action, and cycles of contention. I also aimed at learning about the ideological preferences of protesters and their perceptions of politics, as well as about the features of an ideal party that they would vote for. Since framing is an important aspect of contentious collective action, I also asked questions on protesters' opinion on their media representation and how it relates to their reality. In order to identify causes of disappointment, I asked activists about the degree of their satisfaction with university services as well as their opinion on politics. I also asked for their opinions about the transition, democratization, and privatization.¹⁴

As for sources of quantitative research, I relied on a unique database of protest events that took place between 1989 and 2011 in Hungary. (See Appendix for further details.) A protest event was listed in case it was mentioned by at least two media outlets among the two daily papers and two weeklies that were coded. (The papers were selected so that both papers on the left and right would be taken into account.) Collective action was defined as an act of protest where at least three people were involved, but extreme acts such as self-immolation or hunger strikes carried out by one individual were also counted. Unfortunately half of the data for the year 1994 is missing, thereby slightly distorting the trends visible in the early nineties.

Because student protests accelerated in 2012, I coded student protests according to the same instructions.¹⁵ I needed to limit the research to the two dailies, and I did not have the time to code all events, only the ones that involved students. Consequently, I lost the information regarding the share of student protests in all protests.

To acquire a more refined picture of HaHa's growing popularity, I asked for the statistics of HaHa's Facebook page and its blog, which proved a valuable source of

¹⁴ All the quotes in the text are translated by the author.

¹⁵ See the reference to the Hungarian data protocol in the Appendix

information concerning the changing agenda of the movement as well as the composition and size of its base.

Finally, concerning the living standards, educational background job prospects, and electoral behavior of young people in Hungary, I relied on the Ifjúság 2008 research project, a survey-based project that was conducted with the participation of 8076 youths between the ages of 15 and 29. Therefore throughout the thesis when I refer to young people, I refer to people between the ages of 15 and 29¹⁶.

Ethical Concerns

Since the protesters I interviewed have been the targets of several media campaigns, I cannot disclose their names, only the time and venue of our interviews. It is important to note that I was present at most student demonstrations as an observer; therefore I contributed to the turnout at the events and might have a distorted image about them.

¹⁶ Hungarian Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor, Ifjúság 2008 gyorsjelentés, 2009

CHAPTER 1: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In this chapter, I elaborate on my theoretical framework of understanding Hungarian students' contentious collective action. Following a brief summary of Hirschman's concept of shifting involvements, I adapt its main terms to the specificities of my case and propose three varieties of push factors driving protests. These are as follows: the disappointment coming from being born into and living in a democracy "furnished" by political elites against the preferences of the youth; the disappointment inherent in the "consumption" of state services; and the disaffection with anticipated truncated mobility.

To account for the relevant pull effects, the chapter turns to some seminal authors in social movement theory, such as Sidney Tarrow¹⁷ and Hans-Peter Kriesi¹⁸, and operationalizes their relevant terms to the Hungarian case. I propose that, historical turning points and government actions, the political opportunity structure and the shifting ideological preferences of the young will be of some indication of the pull effects that impacted on the increased mobilization of students. The chapter concludes with some propositions on how the push and pull effects have interacted to produce a growing amount of protests over the 2000s and beyond. The detailed empirical study of these processes and mechanisms will be presented in the empirical chapters.

Push Effects

As mentioned above, increased public activity among students can be explained in terms of push and pull effects, or endogenous and exogenous factors. Pull factors include all structural causes influencing students collectively, anything beyond their control: broader ideological

¹⁷ Tarrow, *Power in* (1994) 85.

¹⁸ Hanspeter Kriesi, "Movements of the left, movements of the right", 1999

shifts, historical turning points,¹⁹ international influences, social cleavages,²⁰ or economic crises. Push factors include individual motivations pushing individuals for engaging in collective action, despite rational calculations that would lead them to leave the “dirty work” to a radical few. Public involvement is rare, an anomaly in most people’s lives. For it to occur, a strong motivation is required, which, according to Hirschman, is rooted in disappointment.

In *Shifting Involvements* Hirschman argues that in the lives of individuals, there are public and private phases, whereas people devote themselves either entirely to the pleasures and comforts of private consumption and the accumulation of wealth, or they turn to public involvement, voicing their concerns and taking up action.²¹ The shifts arise from push as well as pull effects, out of which Hirschman is more concerned with the first, proposing that major shifts in people’s behavior stem from a reservoir of disappointment that is inherent in consumption and public activity.

As people engage in consumption, they have certain expectations towards the product, which are contrasted by reality and have a potential to make them disappointed, unless the product in question disappears in the act of consumption (such as food).²² Since people are unlikely to react to disappointment by lowering their expectations, Hirschman stipulates that all products carry within themselves “the seeds of their own destruction.”²³

Disappointment is most painful in the case of something expensive and durable that one only gets to know by long-term usage.²⁴ In this case, the pleasure is brought back as

¹⁹ As he acknowledges that structural variables might also be important, Hirschman argues that exogenous factors, like increasing economic difficulties, repression and ideological waves can account for the timing of shifts in involvement. See Hirschman, *Shifting Involvements*, (1982): 4-5.

²⁰ See Kriesi, "Movements of the Left, Movements of the Right, 1999

²¹ Hirschman, *Shifting Involvements*, 1982.

²² Ibid, 28.

²³ Ibid, 10. From the above it follows that the extent and forms as well as the remedy to disappointment vary according to the price and the quality of the product and the time and frequency spent using it. In the case of nondurable goods, consumers have the opportunity to correct the (perceived) mistake made at the time of the purchase.

²⁴ Ibid, 34.

inhabitants repeatedly make attempts to reshape the good (such as a house) to their liking. The other case in which disappointment is most likely is long-term services, such as state services, paid for indirectly by taxes with no opportunity for opt-out. An example of such services Hirschman mentions is higher education.

While long-term services are similar to durable goods in that their disappointment potential tends to be very high, they are different in terms of the source of dissatisfaction, unreliable performance. This creates a situation whereas management is not responsive to the voice of users,²⁵ since they are only indirectly dependent on their satisfaction. As the overwhelming majority of universities are public in Hungary, and because they were mostly tuition-free up until 2012, the exit of students from higher education was unlikely to damage the institutions in terms of revenues. The management, which has ultimately been the government, failed to correct the problems that came up. Much like Hirschman predicts in *Shifting Involvements*, the source of disappointment in this case comes from the unreliable quality of education in these institutions²⁶.

A third type of disappointment is relevant here, mentioned by Hirschman in a 1973 article,²⁷ in which he argues that *truncated mobility* will also result in disappointment for those who move to the upper echelons of society, only to find out that they have progressed only along one dimension, and their new position does not entail progress along the rest of the dimensions. In the words of Hirschman, “*they feel that in spite of all their efforts and achievements, they are not really ‘making it.’*”²⁸

²⁵ Albert O. Hirschman: *Exit, Voice, and Loyalty: Responses to Decline in Firms, Organizations, and States*. Vol. 25. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1970.

²⁶ Hirschman, *Shifting Involvements*, (1973) 39

²⁷ Hirschman and Rothschild, “Changing Tolerance”, 1973

²⁸ *Ibid*, 551.

Winners and Losers

Since different social groups have different channels of interest representation within the same democracy, they will experience different degrees of disappointment, as it will vary according to their experiences in the system. For students, as for any citizen, disappointment with democracy and disappointment with the state will depend on whether these institutions accommodate their needs in terms of social policies and career opportunities on the one hand, and the availability of channels of interest representation, such as political parties that address their agenda on the other.

Disappointment is felt differently among winners and losers of the system that was established after the transition, both in terms of democratic representation and the benefits of higher education. Disappointment also varies across different groups of winners; I will argue that the current upsurge of student protests is a result of these groups' *simultaneous* mobilization, triggered by the government's aggressive reforms, a political threat that resulted in more opportunities for collective action.²⁹

Those who lost out among the young in the growth period after the transformational recession³⁰ might become disappointed, either because they feel that their values are not sufficiently present in the political discourse or because they feel that the transition process has not produced the expected results. Jobbik has always been ready to react to this type of disappointment and provide solutions for these problems (poverty, inequality, the difficulties of interest representation) on exclusionary, ethnic, and nationalist grounds.

Yet, as it has been noted before, this is the story of the elites; students could not be counted among the losers of the transition, for their access to education increased, and for a

²⁹ Tarrow, *Power in Movement*, 1994.

³⁰ János Kornai, "Transformational Recession: the Main Causes." *Journal of Comparative Economics* 19, no. 1 (1994): 39-63.

long time the state generously sponsored their studies.³¹ Somewhat later the winners of the new system have also started to mobilize, as it turned out that even a system generally favorable to them had shortcomings.

Among the winners, one can make further distinctions between different sources of motivation for public action.³² For some it is the disappointment inherent in consumption: as the pleasure wears off, consumer-citizens (in this case, students, who act both as citizens and as consumers of a service provided by the state) turn to broader concerns of democracy or express solidarity with the losers of the system. Those who would not have been able to study before but had the opportunity to do so as a result of expansion of the education system might experience a different sense of disaffection arising from truncated mobility³³. Their disappointment's source is the fact that despite their expectations, pursuing higher education is not enough to be a member of the elite.

So much for the shortcomings of being a winner: clearly, one can never be satisfied with what she has for good. Apart from this matter of changing perceptions, there is a second, objective reason for disappointment with the quality of higher education in Hungary. While educational funding was more or less constant over the past twenty years, enrollments tripled, causing higher education funding per capita to decline drastically over this period.³⁴ Institutions could not keep up with the increased enrollment numbers, and student to professor ratios worsened. This might result in even more disappointment: first, as the upwardly mobile experience that their increased access to higher education is coupled with decreased quality,

³¹ Unicef, Transmonee database: Number of students enrolled in tertiary education, 2000-2011, <http://www.transmonee.org/> accessed 15 April 2013, and KSH: Number of students enrolled in tertiary education 1989-2011, accessed 20 May 2013

³² Béla Greskovits, Jason Wittenberg, and Zoltán Várhalmi, "Civil Society and Democracy in Hungary: the 1990s and the 2000s." Paper prepared for the Council for European Studies' (CES) Twentieth International Conference of Europeanists, June 25-27, 2013 Amsterdam.

³³ Hirschman and Rotschild, "Changing Tolerance", 1973

³⁴ Unicef, Transmonee database: <http://www.transmonee.org/> Public Expenditure on Education, 2000-2011, and KSH: Number of Students Enrolled in Tertiary Education 1989-2011

and second, because it is much less rewarding to be a part of the elite if the elite has just become three times as numerous.

Disappointment with democracy is the third type of disappointment that might be the cause of increased mobilization among the young, even the oldest of whom were socialized mostly in the post-1989 system. In the Hirschmanian framework, democracy would be more similar to a durable good like a house, in that it creates the fundamentals for living one's life, a system that one gets to know by experiencing life among its boundaries. The maintenance jobs that bring pleasure back in a democracy would be voting on the one hand, and public interest representation and collective action on the other.

Voting as a "maintenance job" will only help reduce the pleasure-deficit arising from prolonged usage if one feels that there is a reasonable variety of choices that one can make, and that once elected, representatives will act in accordance with the values they represent. Collective action provides another source of pleasure, yet with a few structural conditions, such as the willingness of others to perceive the need and the opportunities for contentious action.

Education is the kind of state service where the source of disappointment will arise from the unreliable quality of the service. Accordingly, below I investigate 1. The sources of disappointment among the participants of current student protests and among the student base of Jobbik sympathizers. 2. The similarities between these disappointments that would justify treating the two groups as one generation.

I will argue that students' increased involvement stems from three types of disappointment: disappointment felt with durable goods, the disappointment with state services, and the disappointment of truncated mobility. In the interviews, I aimed for mapping these sentiments, while I also checked for similar messages in the slogans of demonstrations noted in the database of protest events.

Although *Shifting Involvements* proposes an original and sophisticated framework for understanding social mobilization, it has been criticized before,³⁵ for failing to establish a time frame for the cycles of public and private phases in the lives of individuals, as well as to bridge levels of analysis between individual and collective considerations. For solving the levels-of-analysis problem, Hirschman suggests that³⁶ different groups in the same society can be in different phases along the private/public dichotomy, depending on the satisfaction they receive from their environment, be it in terms of comfort or pleasure. As for the time frame of mobilization, in line with Inglehart,³⁷ one could argue that it is the result of the fact that a new generation has been raised since the transition among different circumstances, and that this socialization experience is the common denominator for the many individuals involved in the protests.³⁸

The Role of Pull Effects

Whereas Hirschman provides a number of answers for more public involvement at the individual level, he considers it less important to include explanations of the “collective” aspect of collective action. In order to explore the pull effects that influenced students collectively, I relied on Sidney Tarrow’s seminal work, *Power in Movement*, in which he argues that contentious collective action will arise as a result of political threats and opportunities, provided that they are duly perceived by a group with a legitimate concern.³⁹

The political opportunity structure has four dimensions: increased access to political representation, the availability of powerful allies, shifting alignments among the elites, and

³⁵ Pieter Vanhuysse, “Review of Albert O. Hirschman (2002), *Shifting Involvements: Private Interest and Public Action*,” 20th anniversary edition, *Constellations*, 12 (2005):151-153

³⁶ Hirschman, *Shifting involvements*, (1982) 33

³⁷ Inglehart, Ronald F. “Changing Values Among Western Publics from 1970 to 2006.” *West European Politics* 31, no. 1-2 (2008): 130-146.

³⁸ An important point of difference is that, while Inglehart assumes that the new generation will have post-material values as a result of their increased wealth compared to the previous generation, it is not clear whether the entire generation born around the transition lives better than their parents.

³⁹ Tarrow, *Power in movement*, 1994.

state strength. During the interviews specific questions were asked to explore to what extent each of these issues were perceived among participants.⁴⁰

An equally important structural aspect is the role that the broader ideological environment has played in the mobilization of Hungarian youths during the past two decades: as noted in the introduction, protest does not happen in a political vacuum. About this, Hanspeter Kriesi's 1999 article on new types of social movements has a number of relevant points. First, he points out that an expansion in higher education can have a liberalizing effect, which contributes to the conception of new social movements on the left. While the current student movements refused to be labeled in terms of left and right, many of the claims made by HaHa bear resemblance to the movements described by Kriesi, such as the voicing of issues of equality and solidarity, as well as the representation of minorities.⁴¹

Kriesi also argues that new identities can only emerge as old identities fade away, and as the old frames connected to the old identities lose their interpretive value,⁴² which further supports the argument that student protests accelerated because activists belong to the first generation that was raised in the post-1989 system. In the Hungarian case this can explain the anti-establishment message present in the agenda of both movements. Increased mobilization could then be partly explained by the fact that these claims could only be made by a generation to whom the already existing ideological frames did not help interpret the world any longer.

Another issue raised by Kriesi is the role of the established left and right in shaping the perspectives of new social movements and the radical right, which could explain the time lag between mobilization of students by the radical right and the left. According to Kriesi, new social movements receive a push from the established left's resignation from

⁴⁰ Ibid. 164-167.

⁴¹ Kriesi, "Movements of the left, movements of the right (1999): 398.

⁴² Ibid. 409

government. Not only does it make the established left an available ally for them, but the threat coming from a conservative government will also make mobilization more likely.⁴³

This is less likely to be true in the case of the radical right, since under no circumstances would the established right align with the radical right publicly, not even when they are in opposition. The established right is left with two options: instrumentalization and demarcation.⁴⁴ By instrumentalizing the agenda of the radical right, the established right in fact creates a channel of representation for their claims, thereby increasing their capacity for mobilization. And so, a possible explanation for the different timeframe of mobilization in Hungary might be rooted in the fact that while the radical right's capacity has been helped by Fidesz's strategy even when in opposition, the leftist student movement only gained some strength as the leftist government resigned.

In sum, apart from historical turning points, and government actions, the political opportunity structure and the shifting ideological preferences of the young might explain the pull effects that have been instrumental in the increased mobilization of students. For exploring the shifts in ideological preferences, I will rely on Kriesi's arguments on new types of social movements, while in order to understand the reasons behind the sustained collective action of students on a systemic level, I will use Sidney Tarrow's theory developed in *Power in Movement*.

⁴³ Ibid. 413

⁴⁴ Ibid. 418

CHAPTER 2: STUDENT PROTESTS ON THE RADICAL RIGHT – JOBBIK’S EMERGENCE

Student protest events in 2012 might have been the most numerous in Hungary’s post-transition history, but it was by no means the first time that students were mobilized by a political entity. Jobbik, originally a student organization called Jobboldali Ifjúsági Közösség (Right Wing Youth Community), was remarkably successful in getting the youth vote, (the student vote in particular), and even more so in taking the young to the streets. In the aftermath of the 2002 parliamentary elections, which was lost by Fidesz by an unusually small margin, Jobbik was turned first into an association, then a party, to promote the more radical values of its members and followers that they believed lacked representation in parliament.

There have been a number of valuable contributions in the Hungarian literature on the topic of Jobbik’s road to Parliament and the quickly growing base of the radical right in Hungary. There have been attempts to find the causes for the party’s increased popularity on the supply side and the demand side, as well as in the role of the media⁴⁵, the global financial crisis, the legacy of the Kádár regime⁴⁶, and Jobbik’s ownership of the Roma issue.⁴⁷ I will not contribute to this debate because it would go beyond the scope of the present project. I will rely on the works of the authors who have, in particular Gergely Karácsony, Dániel Róna, András Bíró Nagy, Anett Sörös, and Andrea Szabó and Tamás Kern.

The question I seek to answer is: *what brought students to Jobbik’s rallies?* If students constitute a core group of Jobbik’s base and active membership, why was Jobbik more

⁴⁵ Anett Sörös, *A szélsőjobboldali ideológia reprezentációja a debreceni egyetemisták körében*. master’s., Debreceni Egyetem, Szociológia és Szociálpolitika Tanszék, 2011
http://campuslet.unideb.hu/dokumentumok/tanulmanyok1/Szakdolgozat_Sores_Aneta.pdf

⁴⁶ Andrea Szabó and Tamás Kern: “A magyar fiatalok politikai aktivitása” in *Arctalan Nemzedék*, ed. Béla Bauer and Andrea Szabó (Budapest: Nemzeti Család- és Szociálpolitikai Intézet Publisher, 2009)

⁴⁷ András Bíró Nagy and Dániel Róna, “Tudatos Radikalizmus. A Jobbik Útja a Parlamentbe, 2003-2010” in *Nemzet és radikalizmus*, ed. András László (Budapest: Századvég 2011): 242-283.

successful in mobilizing them than the left? And what explains the fact that Jobbik supporters maintained an active presence in the streets even as a right-wing party won a supermajority in Parliament, whereas the left was incapable of mobilizing the young while a left wing government was in power?

Based on interviews with Jobbik's founders in two TV documentaries and other secondary sources, I will argue in this chapter that one of the reasons why Jobbik could mobilize students and the young is that a greater shift towards more public involvement has occurred, starting in the early 2000s and continuing to this day. As Hirschman argues in *Shifting Involvements*, this shift began as a result of the disappointment of Hungarian students: with *democracy* on the one hand, and with *truncated mobility* on the other, which I will explore in greater detail below.⁴⁸

These push effects did not operate in isolation; there were other pull effects accountable for the evolution of the movement on the radical right, which I will also touch upon in this chapter.

As it has been noted in Chapter 1, I consider students the representatives of the young. Nonetheless, there are issues of definitions that need to be clarified. First, the use of the one-dimensional scale of ideological preferences between left and right that I will use might seem simplistic to some, especially because it mitigates the differences between the radical right and the mainstream right. I believe that it is justified in this particular case, mostly because, as demonstrated by Karácsony and Róna, an overwhelming majority of young Jobbik supporters had previously been a supporter of Fidesz.⁴⁹

Second, my goal is not to identify how many young people and how many students participated in protests organized by the radical right, but to understand *why they decided to*

⁴⁸ Hirschman, *Shifting Involvements*, 1982

⁴⁹ Gergely Karácsony and Dániel Róna: "The Secret of Jobbik: The Reasons Behind the Rise of the Hungarian radical right" *Journal of East European and Asian Studies* 2(2011) 1

participate. It is crucial to take into consideration the preferences of this group, since they are the core basis of a radical party that gathered almost fifteen per cent at the first elections where it ran alone (the 2009 European Parliament elections).

In the following I will also argue that alongside the many differences between the student movement today and the earlier movements on the radical right, there are some important similarities that are rooted in the characteristics of the age group they appeal to, which allows me to talk of the “shifting involvement” of a generation.

Naturally, there are important differences between the two movements, and not just in terms of values. While the student protesters today might be driven to demonstrations by disappointment with the Hungarian system of education, in 2002 when Jobbik as a party was founded higher education was by no means in a dire state. In fact, the students who mobilized then must have been the beneficiaries of the expansion of the education system. Enrollments between 1991 and 2002 more than doubled, but teacher/student ratios had not started to drop drastically yet.

Right wing supporters among students might have however sensed that their road to the higher echelons of society was blocked, because the “left liberal elite,” in power for eight consecutive years dominated positions in politics and in the media; at least this opinion was often voiced in interviews with Jobbik activists. Also, as indicated in a thorough study of the attitudes of Debrecen university students by Anett Sörös, social mobility was indeed a priority for the majority Jobbik supporters, whose main reason for enrolling in tertiary education was that it increased their chances of getting a job later on.⁵⁰ Because job prospects started to worsen around 2004 even for higher education graduates, it is possible that this type of disappointment further increased. (Especially since many of them enrolled in the smaller universities of Eastern Hungary, which further worsened their prospects.)

⁵⁰ Sörös, *A szélsőjobb oldali ideológia reprezentációja a debreceni egyetemisták körében*, 2011

Jobbik as a Student Movement and its First Years as a Party: Structural Causes

Originally Jobbik was founded as a student organization at the Humanities Faculty of ELTE University to create a community for discussing conservative politics. Many among the founding members used to be active in student organizations – some as student union representatives, some as members of the youth section of the radical right MIÉP. The goal was to create a space for discussing right wing issues of identity and politics, and to work towards keeping “communists” out of power and ensuring Fidesz’s victory at the next elections.⁵¹ As indicated by activists in interviews in 2003, they felt like there was a need for more civic involvement among right wing youths, and they quickly found that there was indeed a demand for such an initiative as membership reached about 1500 people (almost ten times more than the official membership of Hallgatói Hálózat currently).

By the 2002 elections, Jobbik was a valuable ally to have during the campaign, and knowing that, they offered their services to all three parties on the right, purposefully working on unifying them in order to improve the chances of winning the elections. As a result, right wing party representatives had easy access to university audiences in Budapest, and regularly organized campaign events at ELTE. While Jobbik had no resources of its own, this proved an important asset.⁵² Nevertheless, the elections were lost, and Jobbik’s activists were bitterly disappointed, not the least because soon they felt betrayed by Fidesz.

The lost elections were the first important turning point in Jobbik’s history. As Fidesz demanded a recount, Jobbik took to the streets and clashed with the police demanding it, only to realize that Fidesz was not ready to endorse their radical actions. Shortly after the elections, Fidesz made an attempt to maintain their support in the population by creating a movement in

⁵¹ Bíró Nagy and Róna, “Tudatos Radikalizmus”, 2011

⁵² István Jávör "Jobb egyetemisták" Recorded 2003. Fekete Doboz. Web, http://film.indavideo.hu/video/f_jobb_egyetemistak.

civil society top-down, called the movement of “citizens’ circles,” with Viktor Orbán personally establishing his own circle called the Alliance for the Nation Citizens’ Circle, where Gábor Vona, a Jobbik founder and the party’s current leader, was personally invited.⁵³ To the disappointment of Jobbik’s membership, as the newly created movement gained strength, the Fidesz administration let it die down, (presumably out of fear that it was going to spiral out of control).

In May 2002, Jobbik’s core members, convinced by Gábor Vona, decided that they were going to need their own party in parliament in order to gain access to decision making. MIÉP fell out of parliament, and they no longer believed that Fidesz was going to represent their interests. In a 2003 interview, Dávid Kovács, the party’s first president pointed out that issues such as protecting Hungary’s sovereignty within the EU and anti-abortion arguments were missing from public discourse, and that they felt there was a societal demand for representing them.⁵⁴ This was before Jobbik’s anti-Roma campaign started, and so the claims they made resembled more those of other, progressive radical right movements in Europe. Anti-Semitism was then largely absent from their agenda, and issues such as elite corruption, privatization to foreign owners, anti-abortion claim, and the responsibility towards Hungarian minorities abroad dominated.

Based on interviews⁵⁵, it seems that in the second phase of the movement, between 2002 and 2006, the political opportunity structure was dominated by threats rather than opportunities for Jobbik. The elections were lost for the right, but it was also increasingly difficult for them to get access to media representation. The reason for this is primarily what Kriesi predicts: while the mainstream left can normally align with the new left in opposition,

⁵³ "Polgári Körök: Első csapás." *origo.hu*, , sec. Itthon, 11 June, 2002.

<http://www.origo.hu/itthon/20020611polgari.html>, Accessed 20 May 2013.

⁵⁴ Kovács, Dávid. Interview "Kérdések órája.". Accessed 20 May 2013.

http://jobbik.hu/rovatok/rolunk_irtak/interju_kovacs_daviddal_hir_tv_-_1resz.

⁵⁵ Jobbik nemzedék. Documentary presumably produced by Jobbik, 2010. Available at <http://www.vonagabor.hu/jobik-nemzedek>, 17 May 2013

this is normally considered “unseemly” on the right due to the taboos around the radical right.⁵⁶ In the above cited TV documentary, one of the party leaders mentioned that the conservative elites excluded them because it was visible from early on that they might steal a substantial share of the youth vote, as it later turned out to be the case.⁵⁷

This threat soon turned into opportunity. Because Jobbik could not get access to the mainstream media as much as other parties, they had to create their own online media outlets, which were better suited for the young audience they targeted. Kuruc.info was founded in 2004, and soon became the engine of mobilization on the radical right, along with other forms of representation, in particular in the social media. As a result, this switch to online forms of communication happened much faster on the radical right than it did for other parties.⁵⁸

The second turning point came with 2006 and the leaked Őszöd speech by Prime Minister Ferenc Gyurcsány.⁵⁹ Jobbik took up an active role in organizing the protests, and felt betrayed by Fidesz for not cooperating enough. Some protesters were gravely mistreated by the police, which created a sense of victimhood among Jobbik supporters, and helped promote the message that the socialist government was continuing communist legacies. This later contributed to Jobbik’s image as not only the representative of the people against communist terror, but also as the promoter of (certain) human rights, such as the freedom of speech and the freedom of assembly.

⁵⁶ Kriesi, "Movements of the left, movements of the right." 1999

⁵⁷ Jobbik nemzedék. Documentary, 2003

⁵⁸ According to Róna and Sörös, university students on the radical right are most active in online communication among university students, which helped Jobbik reach groups previously unavailable to politics, the young in particular. This outlet-ownership also meant that Jobbik did not have to make concessions towards the mainstream media: they could be as vulgar and as radical as they wanted, they would not be censored. See Dániel Róna and Anett Sörös, “A kuruc.info nemzedék: Miért népszerű a Jobbik a fiatalok között?” in *Racionálisan Lázadó Hallgatók*, ed. Andrea Szabó Budapest: Belvedere Meridionale, 2012

⁵⁹ In the speech that later leaked, the Prime Minister admitted that in order to win the elections the government had been lying to the public day and night” about the actual shape of the economy. BBC translation of Őszöd Speech, excerpts. *Excerpts translated from the Hungarian by BBC World Service Monitoring* <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/5359546.stm> (May 20, 2013)

It was in 2006 and 2007 that demonstrations on the right (mostly driven by the radical right) peaked, and since the prime minister refused to resign until March 2009, the mushrooming NGOs and associations created a subculture on the radical right that, according to some are responsible for Jobbik's popularity today.

Unlike HaHa, a bottom-up organization, Jobbik, as soon as it realized the failure of Fidesz's strategy building, started to build its organization top-down. It does not mean that they maintained control on all local issues; Bíró Nagy and Róna, based on an interview with Gábor Szabó party director, argue that the party structure has the characteristics of a cartel party⁶⁰, meaning that national issues are handled by a strong central leadership, which grants a great degree of autonomy to member organizations in local issues.⁶¹

Another important top-down strategy was Jobbik's "occupation" of already existing student unions, as it famously happened in the case of the humanities department at ELTE University, where, as discovered by the media in early 2013, student union representatives gathered information on freshmen on their ethnic and religious affiliations in a list. Most of the alleged contributors of the list were affiliated with Jobbik.

Sources of Disappointment

Pull effects have been important in shaping the movement between 2003 and 2008 on a macro-level. Yet other causes should be explored in order to find an explanation for increased political participation among university students. They might have had certain values that created a demand for Jobbik as indicated by Bíró Nagy and Róna,⁶² and they might have gotten an overwhelming part of their political socialization reading *kuruc.info*. It is also true

⁶⁰ Richard S. Katz, and Peter Mair. "Changing Models of Party Organization and Party Democracy The Emergence of the Cartel Party." *Party politics* 1, no. 1 (1995): 5-28.

⁶¹ Bíró Nagy and Róna, "Tudatos Radikalizmus" (2011) 7

⁶² Ibid.

that the young are prejudicial, as demonstrated by Political Capital,⁶³ but, as Bíró Nagy and Róna point out in the above cited article, they are less, rather than more prejudicial than the rest of the Hungarian population.⁶⁴

I propose that, apart from these explanations, there was growing disappointment among university students, which in turn created a potential for public involvement. This disappointment was two-fold: with truncated mobility, as explained in Chapter 1, and with democracy at large.

Disappointment with Truncated Mobility

In *Changing Tolerance* Hirschman argues that social mobility can give rise to disappointment, as those who arrive at the higher levels of society realize that they only advanced along certain dimensions, but not others. Based on the findings of the Ifjúság 2008 project and a study by Anett Sörös, this seems to be one of the main sources of disappointment for those university students who became Jobbik's sympathizers in the mid-2000s.⁶⁵

The early 2000s brought the expansion of the education system in Hungary. A greater shift in social mobility had occurred since the transition, which can be summarized as a one-step social mobility process across the board: if one's father went to professional school, one got a high school diploma, if one's father graduated from high school, one went to college. This can lead to a sort of "degree inflation;" while children have access to higher level education, this does not make them eligible for a higher social standing than their families'.⁶⁶ Furthermore, this in itself is enough for feeling the kind of disappointment mentioned by Hirschman in the article: the sheer fact that you are rising together with everyone else

⁶³ Marketing Centrum: Demokrácia és a radikális jobboldal. Történelemszemlélet, vélemények és attitűdök research project, 2009

⁶⁴ Sörös and Róna, Kuruc.info nemzedék, (2012) 5

⁶⁵ Hirschman and Rotschild, "Changing Tolerance", 1973

⁶⁶ Hungarian Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor, Ifjúság 2008, oktatási helyzetkép, (2009) 26

discounts the fact that you are rising. Such an experience would be similar to being promoted together with everyone else in the firm.

Second, higher education was rendered even more of a necessity by the discriminatory nature of the Hungarian public education system, which greatly increases the chance of the children of the poorest families staying poor.⁶⁷ For the few among the poorest who can get access to higher education, for the most mobile, higher education has a very high “entrance fee,” similarly to an elite club. They will be the ones to expect most in return for their efforts, and they will be the ones who are most outraged in case job prospects worsen for their chosen professions, harboring a greater potential for mobilization than others. Sörös’s findings underpin this argument: based on extensive research among Debrecen university students, she found that over sixty-two per cent of students who fully identify with Jobbik are first generation intellectuals.⁶⁸

Third, Jobbik’s promotion of the anti-Roma agenda might indicate that truncated mobility is felt in another sense too by these socially mobile students, because of the frustration with the high taxes that hit them when they are first hired. It seems plausible that the anger that is channeled toward minorities by Jobbik is really felt with the responsibility of having to provide for large groups in the population.

Finally, as it was mentioned in most interviews in Jobbik’s early years, some of the activists felt that their prospects were limited, because the left-liberal Budapest elite dominated the media and politics. As Gábor Szabó, Jobbik’s party director mentioned in an interview, this was most felt after Jobbik was founded as a party in 2003, as he claimed that a “media blockade”⁶⁹ was organized by mainstream parties to keep them from being advertised.

⁶⁷ Ibid. 29

⁶⁸ Sörös, *A szélsőjobb oldali ideológia reprezentációja*, (2011) 35

⁶⁹ Jobbik nemzedék. Documentary, 2010

While it is possible that this was no more than an identity-forming strategy on Jobbik's part to create enemies, the fact that they decided to push this message indicates that there was a potential demand for it. In a 2000 interview, when asked about the reliability of the Hungarian media, Gábor Szabó, (then twenty) answered:

GSZ: *"It is linked to the party elite of the former system, MSZP and SZDSZ, by at least eighty per cent via economic and personal connections."*

Reporter: *"Which one is the greater adversary?"*

GSZ: *"SZDSZ is more anti-Hungarian."*⁷⁰

Disappointment with Democracy and the Transition

Disappointment with democracy is another important push effect for mobilization among university students, one that supporters of the radical right and the activists of HaHa seem to share, however surprisingly. Clearly, the solutions offered by the two movements differ to a great extent, but they both have a strong anti-establishment agenda. While in HaHa's case activists often voiced concerns about the imperfections of representative democracy, Jobbik supporters frame the problem differently: approximately twenty percent of young Jobbik supporters believe that democracy is not always the best way to rule a country, and dictatorships are sometimes better suited for societies.⁷¹ This anti-establishment attitude among Jobbik supporters is coupled with a demand for a law and order society and militarism.⁷²

The issue of the transition is treated by the two groups similarly, both of them making the point that the transition never really happened, and it is a job waiting to be finished.

⁷⁰ Szilvia Varró: "MIÉP-leltár: a magyarság utolsó állapota" Magyar Narancs, November 16, 2000, accessed May 17, 2013 http://magyarnarancs.hu/belpol/miep-leltar_-ii_resz_a_magyarsag_utoolso_allapota-61329,

⁷¹ Bíró Nagy and Róna, "Tudatos radikalizmus", (2011): 11-12.

⁷² This is in accord with an overall mistrust of democratic institutions among the young in Hungary. See Hungarian Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor, "A fiatalok társadalmi közérzete, politikai kérdésekhez való viszonya" in Ifjúság 2008 gyorsjelentés, 2009

(Jobbik pejoratively calls it merely “change of method” rather than “system change”). The difference is that in Jobbik’s case this stems from an anti-communist sentiment. Their main argument is that the communists transformed the system in order to maintain their power and wealth into the new system, and there was never an attempt to include newcomers.⁷³ (For HaHa, the transition is considered a failed attempt.) In the words of Gábor Vona:

„We don’t trust this Hungarian elite, who basically managed the past two decades. They privatize the profits and collectivize the damages. This system needs to be fundamentally changed.”⁷⁴

From early interviews with the founders, another curious aspect of Jobbik’s agenda becomes clear. Partly because they felt excluded from politics and mistreated by the police from early on, they developed an argument for a functional civil society, where participation is possible without entrenchment in the party system, and where citizens are conscious about politics and human rights are protected. This is also associated with a critique of parties who are out of touch with the demands of their own voters. The freedom of assembly and the freedom of information are the two principal human rights issues of the movement, partly because of kuruc.info’s conflicts with state authorities⁷⁵. It is such a central issue in fact that during the Wikileaks scandals Julian Assange emerged as a kind of hero for the movement.

Finally, an often-voiced concern and the main reason for founding a party in 2002 was disappointment in the mainstream right. Even though Jobbik first became involved in politics to help the Fidesz campaign, shortly after the elections, as they violently protested demanding a recount of the votes and clashed with the police, they became disappointed in Fidesz, and even more so as legislation started.

⁷³ Jobbik, Founding Statement, 2003 Accessed 28 May 2013 <http://jobbik.hu/jobbikrol/alapito-nyilatkozat>

⁷⁴ Jobbik nemzedék, Documentary, 2010

⁷⁵ The conflicts were by the triggered inappropriate anti-Semitic and anti-Roma content published on kuruc.info. The Hungarian authorities tried to prosecute the site, whose management is unknown. They argued on the basis of the freedom of speech, and later moved to a proxy server in the states. See Sörös, Szélsőjobboldali ideológia reprezentációja, (2011) 38-39.

“There was a grave sense of bitterness and disappointment. Fidesz talked about election fraud, and asked for a recount. And when a few radicals tried to do something, and were later joined by several thousands of people who risked their wealth and personal safety for this, parties made the wrong statements, and later backed out from behind the people. In short, they encouraged them, and then betrayed them”

Activists felt that not only is Fidesz not radical enough, but it fails to represent conservative and nationalist values in the Parliament. In a 2002 speech, Gábor Vona put it as such: *“We expect them to be more efficient in politics, and what’s more important, we expect more credibility. The ranks of the right have to be cleared.”*⁷⁶ Whereas originally they blamed the leftist government for running in the face of right-wing values, they soon started to blame the mainstream right just as much. The most commonly made arguments were that Hungary is giving up all its sovereignty as it enters the European Union, that Hungarians accept everything western and fail to preserve their Hungarianness; that Hungarian minorities in neighboring countries are left to themselves, and that Christian values are not represented in the Parliament.

To illustrate the above, on the European Union, Dávid Kovács, then party president, made the following points in 2003:

*“In the past months political forces against the EU accession did not have an opportunity to make their point. (...) On the last week (before the referendum) I could not give a TV interview, because these arguments were not allowed in the media. Politicians were trying to manipulate us into thinking that there were only these two alternatives: the EU on the one hand, and outsider life without the EU on the other, which equals being outside of Europe and some sort of Balkan-style isolation for the Hungarian nation. Like an iron curtain at our western borders. (...) I think we should have joined the European Economic Area, but not the EU.”*⁷⁷

Another activist summed up his concerns as follows:

⁷⁶ Jobbik Nemzedék, Documentary, 2010

⁷⁷ Dávid Kovács. Interview "Kérdések órája.". Accessed 20 May 2013.

http://jobbik.hu/rovatok/rolunk/irtak/interju_kovacs_daviddal_hir_tv_-_1resz

“We take everything that is coming from the West without the slightest criticism. Instead, we should establish a new way of Hungarian thinking, that puts the emphasis on Hungarian values and Hungarian culture that should also be coupled with some kind of Christian thinking and solidarity. We should be proud of what is ours.”⁷⁸

In sum, it seems that disappointment with democracy was an important motive for mobilization in Jobbik’s early history. This disappointment was manifold – Jobbik activists were disappointed not only with the transition and politics at large, but also with the lack of civil society and the mainstream right, or its failure to promote right-wing values in society.

In conclusion, whereas some pull factors, such as the 2002 elections and the 2006 elections, and the lack of representation in the mainstream media influenced Jobbik’s early history to a great extent, push factors need to be taken into consideration to understand the personal motivation of students who decided (and continue to decide) to participate in protests. Based on secondary research, I found that mobilization in Jobbik’s case stemmed from two sorts of disappointment: disappointment with democracy and disappointment with truncated mobility.

In the following chapter, HaHa’s emergence will be discussed, which will point to the differences and the similarities between the two movements, among them the shared disappointment with democracy.

⁷⁸ Jávör, *Jobb Egyetemisták* Documentary, 2003

CHAPTER 3: THE EMERGENCE OF HaHa AND THE STUDENT MOVEMENT 2010-2013

As it has been noted before, the increased mobilization of students can be explained on two levels; on a macro-level, by examining government policies and the political opportunity structure for sustained collective action⁷⁹ and on a micro-level, in Hirschmanian terms, by attributing increased civic action to a larger shift toward more public involvement rooted in individual disappointment with private activities. After an analysis of student mobilization on the radical right, in this chapter I will first point to the structural variables as I recount the events that led to the protests in December 2012, then offer an analysis of push effects.

In the case of the leftist student movement since 2010, the most puzzling aspect is the time lag of eight years that passed between 2002 when mobilization started on the right and extreme right, and 2010, when the left started to successfully mobilize. This time lag, as I will argue, can in large part be understood in terms of two sorts of disappointment among students on the left: disappointment with the quality of education, and disappointment with democracy.⁸⁰

Some might argue that it is unclear whether the evolution of the youth movement on the far right can be compared with the history of HaHa, the one being a political party and the other a relatively young student movement. Also, HaHa activists so far rejected boxing their movement in terms of left or right, so my labeling them as a leftist movement requires justification.

⁷⁹ Tarrow, *Power in Movement*, 1994

⁸⁰ It might be argued that in order to learn about the increased involvement, interviews should be conducted not with activists but those who constitute rather the audience than the hard core of protests. Nonetheless, since the organization's membership increased manifold as the movement progressed, it would be hard to tell the hard core from those who joined later. The group of interviewees turned out to be very diverse, ranging from those who were members of the original Hallgatói Hálózat in 2006, to those who only became active in December 2012.

So why is a comparison with Jobbik relevant here? First, because regardless of whether it has ever been a student movement, it has generally appealed to the young, or at least enough so to significantly contribute to the noticeable rise of youth protests from 2002. Second, it is a matter of definition whether a movement that turns into a party should still be considered a movement. It is even more difficult to distinguish the two in the case of radical parties, where bringing people to the streets is a frequent method of mobilization. Jobbik never stopped acting like a social movement as regards their repertoire of actions.

As for HaHa's leftist orientation, I suggest that on a one-dimensional ideological scale, they would be not only on the left, but closer to the radical left. The movement prioritizes values of equality and solidarity, as it is manifest in the sixth point of their claims: "comprehensive reform should guarantee access to higher education for the children of lower class families." Based on conversations with activists, it seems that their reluctance to frame the movement as a leftist one is based on strategic rather than ideological considerations. Many members had an anarchist background, with some founders living in a commune. HaHa's bottom-up organizational structure also reflects an anti-establishment attitude that is specific to leftist organizations; whenever an activist left the organization, she did so in order to join one of the newly formed parties on the left. And so, in the forthcoming I will regard HaHa as a leftist movement, although not one linked to any party on the left.

An Account of the Events

Before an analysis of the movement and the application of Hirschman's theory of shifting involvements to this case, I will provide a summary of HaHa's history up to April 2013. The student movement can be described in three waves. The first wave lasted from the first events in 2010 and the establishment of the "Helyzet Van" group to May 2011 when HaHa was formed at a student forum, while the second one lasted from September 2011, the publication of the official concept of the higher education reform, to March 2012, President Pál Schmitt's

plagiarism scandal. The third one went from December 2012, the publication of new quotas for state-funded scholarships, to March 2013, when the occupation of the humanities faculty at ELTE University ended.⁸¹ As I discuss the three waves of HaHa's formation, I will point to the arising opportunities (and threats) that influenced the events.⁸²

The Beginning

The students who later founded HaHa first started organizing as a reaction to a government proposal that sought to restrict the powers of the Constitutional Court. In the fall of 2010, a few months into the new Fidesz government, the Court ruled that a bill that would subject public-sector severance packages to a ninety-eight percent special tax was unconstitutional.

A Fidesz MP in turn proposed a constitutional amendment that would curb the powers of the Court. Amid widespread criticism from human rights organizations⁸³ and representatives of national and international media outlets⁸⁴, the amendment passed on 16 November 2010. A group of students soon formed the "Helyzet Van" (It's time to act) Facebook group,⁸⁵ and organized a protest against the government's measures,⁸⁶ an event that was widely publicized and received favorable media coverage across the board.

⁸¹ Parts of the chronology are based on Csaba Jelinek's lecture on HaHa's history at an event organized by Helyzetműhely called "'Ideológiai metázás' és stratégiaalkotás" on April 7, 2013. Facebook event: <https://www.facebook.com/events/429636103793219/>

⁸² For the chronological account of events that I am going to provide, I relied on a database of protest events, interviews with activists, and the articles published on the HaHa blog between its establishment in November 2011 and May 2012.

⁸³ The Hungarian Helsinki Committee, Eötvös Károly Policy Institute, Hungarian Civil Liberties Union, "The second wave of legislation by Hungary's new Parliament – Violating the rule of law." Last modified Dec 13, 2010. Accessed May 6, 2013. http://helsinki.hu/wp-content/uploads/Hungarian_NGOs_assessing_the-second_wave_of_legislation_December2010_1.pdf.

⁸⁴ Fehér, Margit. "Hungarian Government's Strike at Constitutional Court Triggers Popular Outrage." *Emerging Europe, Wall Street Journal Blog*. Accessed May 6, 2013. <http://blogs.wsj.com/emergingEurope/2010/10/29/hungarian-governments-strike-at-constitutional-court-triggers-popular-outrage/>

⁸⁵ <https://www.facebook.com/helyzetvan>

The majority of organizers came from colleges for advanced studies - in particular Rajk and TEK, institutions that provide extra courses and housing for students of Corvinus University and ELTE University in the fields of social sciences and economics. These are institutions famous for their democratic organizational structure: they are governed by the student body, which is also responsible for admitting new members. Classes are conducted in small groups and require intense participation; teachers, usually renowned professors who teach these courses as a favor, require research-intensive papers to which they try to give extensive feedbacks.

In short, these colleges provide services unavailable to most university students and not only that: they also promote participation and democratic decision-making. The demands of the student movement were centered on problems of representation in politics and quality concerns of mass education. Unsurprisingly then, the hard core of the organizers came from these colleges that provided a solid basis for critiquing the shortcomings of both the political and the education system.

The member organizations of “Helyzet van” gathered as the concept for a new Education Bill was leaked on 4 May 2011. The concept contained a decrease of the number of state scholarships to 30,000, (down from 56,000 in 2010) and the reorganization of universities that would reduce the number of universities drastically. There were rumors that Corvinus might be one of the institutions to lose their autonomy.⁸⁷

In the negotiations, several organizations participated, including the official student union at Corvinus, as well as Rajk and TEK. A few divisive issues emerged among the organizers and the debate ended in a split: some proceeded with organizing a panel discussion

⁸⁶ Bence Gáspár Tamás, "Nem ciki politikailag aktívnek lenni" Recorded Dec 13 2010. Index. Web, http://index.hu/video/2010/12/03/nem_ciki_politikailag_aktivnak_lenni/.

⁸⁷ Hajnalka Joó, “Megfelezné az egyetemek számát a kormány” Origo, May 4, 2011 accessed April 10, 2013 <http://www.origo.hu/itthon/20110504-a-felsooktatas-atalakitasarol-szolo-kormanyzati-terv.html>

with experts and state representatives, while others, mostly from TEK, went on to organize a demonstration and a forum that would be held at night at Corvinus, an event later banned from the university by the management.

The Second Wave

A second wave of organization started as the Parliament passed the concept of the new bill on higher education in September 2011. For the first time the government introduced the notion of student contracts, and with them the institution of “rooting” (*röghözkötés*), which would oblige students studying on a state budget to repay their tuition in case they decide to leave the country, a threat that was enough to trigger activism among students. At a demonstration organized by the official student unions, students protested together with representatives of teachers’ unions, rectors, and PhD students, although without any long-term cooperation in sight.⁸⁸

The HaHa blog was started in November 2011, with a manifesto called “The University is Ours!” modeled on “Indignez-Vous!” urging for peaceful resistance.⁸⁹ In January 2012, when the government announced the planned numbers for state-funded scholarships, a handful of activists gave a live microphone performance at an education fair – a performance that was later nicknamed “Occupy Educatio.”⁹⁰ The speech was a declaration of outrage, with a clear anti-government message, criticizing decision-makers for the lack of

⁸⁸ Dóra Matalin, “Több ezren tüntettek a felsőoktatási törvény ellen” NOL, October 28, 2011 accessed April 12, 2013 http://nol.hu/belfold/tobb_ezren_tuntettek_a_felsooktatasi_torveny_ellen?ref=sso

⁸⁹ “Az Egyetem a Miénk! - A Hallgatói Hálózat kiáltványa.” *Hallgatói Hálózat official blog* (blog), November 14, 2011. accessed May 7, 2013 http://hallgatoihalozat.blog.hu/2011/11/14/az_egyetem_a_mienk_a_hallgatoi_halozat_kialtvanya. See English translation in the Appendix.

⁹⁰ Find Translation in the Appendix.

consultation and the atmosphere of uncertainty surrounding the reforms. The slogan that this is the voice of a generation surfaced again, this time with an anti-establishment undertone.⁹¹

Although this point membership was still low, interest in the movement was clearly on the rise, which is apparent from the statistics of HaHa's official blog, where the page downloads went from zero to 935 a few days after "Occupy Educatio" and a record 9300 on the day of the occupation of the law faculty on 15 February 2012. (Figure 3)

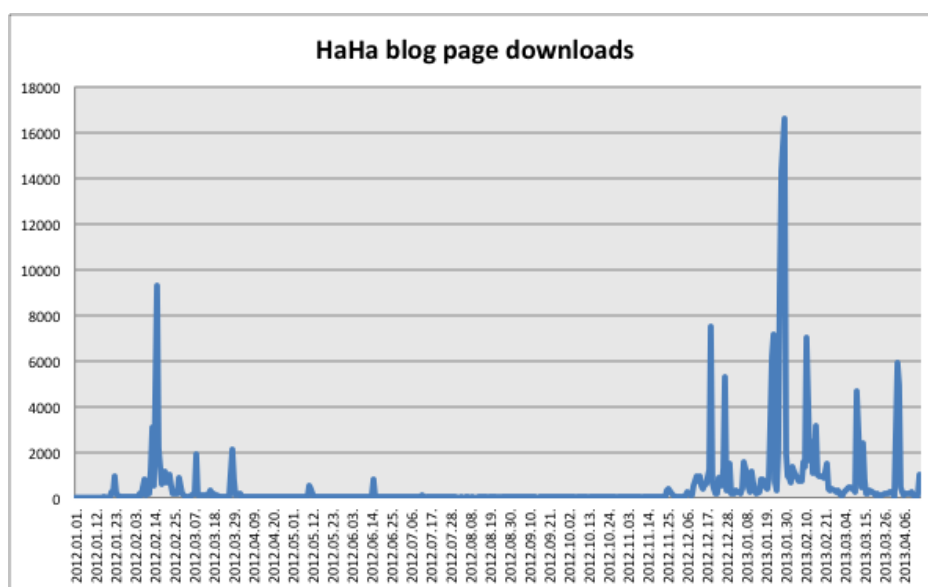


Figure 3: Page downloads from the HaHa blog, source: Hallgatói Hálózat. April 15, 2013.

The president's plagiarism scandal provided an opportunity for more mobilization, temporarily drawing attention to the deficiencies of the current education system. Activists declared a sitting strike in the rector's office at Semmelweis University, which resulted in the rector submitting his resignation in reaction to the plagiarism scandal.

Interviewees recounted that the following months were characterized by passivity and disappointment in what they had managed to achieve. The government proceeded with the

⁹¹ "Egyetemisták és gimnazisták tiltakozása az Educatio kiállításon" Youtube video, posted by MOHAonline January 20, 2012 http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MUK_QF5octg

reforms, and HaHa no longer had leverage over decision-makers because university applications had ended. One of the interviewees summed up the disappointed atmosphere:

*“What I really hated from the start is that we were expected to make a miracle happen. I can’t do that. I guess what freaked me out was that we were like twenty, we organized a f*** demonstration and occupied an auditorium for a total of three hours, and everyone went ‘oh the young have finally spoken’ and everyone expected a revolution – including us. It didn’t happen, of course, but we also started to believe that it is that easy. We started to have unreasonable expectations towards ourselves and in the meantime we were completely unable to appreciate our successes.”⁹²*

Out of the four dimensions of political opportunity structure, it is *divided elites* that played a role during the first two waves. At the 2010 elections, the left suffered a crushing defeat, which resulted in a split of the Socialist Party in October 2011. SZDSZ, the liberal party disintegrated shortly before the 2010 elections. LMP, a new party, somewhat surprisingly gathered 4.15 percent of the mandates.

The most important change for the movement in the second wave was the greatly increased media coverage. Most interviewees mentioned that following the occupation of the law faculty building the media jumped at the subject and HaHa became known as an opinion maker in issues related to higher education. XKK, an NGO that specializes in helping other NGOs with PR activity, took HaHa on as its first project, helping them shape their message to target wider audiences.⁹³

⁹² Interview with activist on 9 April 2013, Frisco

⁹³ Ibid.

The Third Wave

During the third wave the movement gained legitimacy and popularity: in December 2012 a critical mass of students joined the protests, membership reached over 180 members, cells in the country (in Pécs, Szeged, Debrecen, and elsewhere) were founded, high school students joined the protests, and the movement was endorsed by powerful allies.

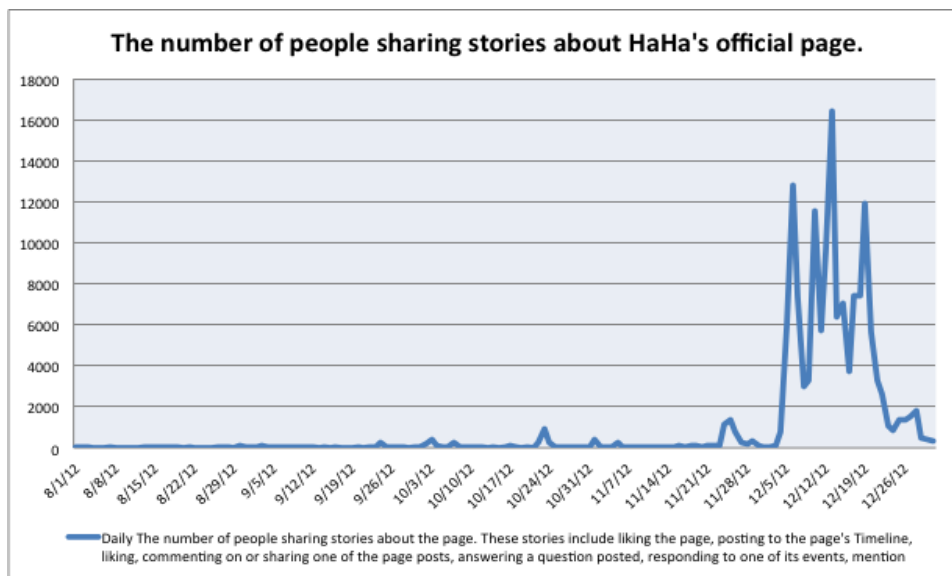


Figure 4 : Number of people sharing stories about the official HaHa Facebook page daily. Source: Hallgatói Hálózat. April 15, 2013

Figure 4 shows the growth in the number of daily shares of HaHa's official Facebook page. Shares started to grow noticeably when the quotas were leaked and peaked at 16,424 on 13 December. Another sign of growing interest is that while the HaHa page was "liked" by only 4,880 people on 1 December, this number more than doubled in a month, reaching 13,571 "likes" by 1 January.

The third wave was triggered by the radical cuts announced in the number of quotas for state scholarships in early December and the austerity measures introduced at major universities. HaHa announced a forum that was endorsed by all the allies the activists could dream of: not only Oktatói Hálózat (Instructors' Network), Hálózat a Tanszabadságért (Network for the Freedom of Education), and Szülői Hálózat (Parents' Network), but also

HÖÖK, (National Conference of Student Unions), the official student representative organization that was traditionally HaHa's rival, and the Rectors' Conference. The demands were put forward in the form of six points that are as follows:

1. We demand a comprehensive reform of the systems of higher education and public education.
2. Restore quotas to the 2011 level at the minimum.
3. Stop pulling out funds from higher education and compensate for the cuts already implemented.
4. Abolish student contracts.
5. Do not restrict the autonomy of universities.
6. Comprehensive reform should guarantee access to higher education for the children of families from lower classes.

For a brief moment the student unions and HaHa joined forces, which helped them achieve an unprecedented turnout at the December protests. While the honeymoon proved short-lived, it was strategically important, for both organizations helped legitimize the other in the eyes of students and negotiating partners. HÖÖK was the official organ for student representation, somewhat behind in advocating the interests of students vis-a-vis the government; HaHa was regarded as a marginal actionist group that aspired to become a legitimate alternative of interest representation. HÖÖK came looking for HaHa when it was leaked that the government planned to finance only 10,480 scholarships in 2013 and HaHa quickly accepted their approach. As one activist recalled:

*"We never for a moment believed that these guys took a 180' turn and they are now the future of this generation, but if this agreement had not happened, those five thousand people would have never been there."*⁹⁴

⁹⁴ Ibid.

Turnout at demonstrations reached several thousand participants, one of them resulting in the spontaneous occupation of a bridge. Unlike in February, the government tried to react quickly to the events. Following four demonstrations between December 10 and 15, (accompanied by numerous local protests and sitting protests in high schools), the prime minister claimed that there would be no quotas, and minister of Human Resources Zoltán Balog initiated negotiations with HÖÖK. In a few days, quotas were announced, signaling the government's decision to pursue the planned reforms. More protests followed, and a national strike alert was announced in secondary schools. On 19 December, a mass demonstration was held, later nicknamed Student Revolution of the Winter Roses (Télirózsás Diákforradalom)⁹⁵ with several thousand participants. (According to Facebook, 5,537 people attended.)

On 7 January, HaHa gave a six-week ultimatum to the government to fulfill the six demands. When the government ignored it, protests followed, one of them ending in the occupation of an auditorium at ELTE. In March, the planned fourth amendment to the Basic Law caused the students' claims to drift from public attention, although representatives of HaHa gave speeches at the protests against the amendment. In the meantime, HÖÖK entered talks with the government, and when an agreement was reached on the provisions of the new student contracts and *rooting*, the proposal for the amended education bill was finalized on 12 April, leaving HaHa's membership disillusioned again. The university administration decided to ignore the occupation of the ELTE auditorium, which ended due to lack of participation on 26 March 2013.

During the third wave, influential allies became more important. It also seemed like the media's attention increased HaHa's access to decision-making. As an interviewee revealed, with every new event covered by the press, it seemed like Zoltán Balog had more

⁹⁵ Named after an 1919 revolution that ended in Hungary's secession from the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy at the end of World War I.

room for maneuver in his negotiations with minister of National Economy György Matolcsy.⁹⁶ In this sense the movement generated opportunities on the way.

An activist mentioned that from the moment the media covered the occupation of the law faculty, HaHa started to prosper, but in the meantime they became hostage to their own strategy. The organization was always reactive, and they remained reactive because they needed to shape their message so to keep the media's attention. In the absence of political threats, their objective to reform civic activism among the young and make political decision-making more inclusive remained difficult to get across.⁹⁷

The relationship with the media created divisions in the movement on two grounds: because the more radical branch rejected the idea of catering to the needs of the establishment by cooperating with the media, and because media coverage meant that the movement needed spokespeople, which soon became regarded as a threat to the principles of participatory democracy, since there was always a risk that the spokespeople, already in a more influential position than the rest of the membership, would abuse and formalize their positions.

The increased media representation might be regarded as increased access to political decision-making; the availability of influential allies (cooperation with partner organizations and rectors) also impacted greatly on the movement, so much that once organizations drifted apart, HaHa lost momentum. Divided elites remained important too; LMP fell apart in the autumn of 2012, and several new parties were established on the left, with little hope of cooperation.

Individual Motivations

This is as far as pull factors can explain the growing interest in the movement and the increased participation. The legitimate concern was given as “government sought to mend its

⁹⁶ Interview with activist on 16 April 2013, Zappa Cafe

⁹⁷ Ibid.

ways;” access to decision-making increased; and there were newly available allies. All this, however, is rarely enough for sustained collective action, because participants have to decide, one by one, to voice their concerns outside the umbrella of party representation, a rare instance in Hungarian politics.

As it has been mentioned in Chapter 1, Hirschman argues that public involvement is rooted in the disappointment with the pursuit of private happiness. As previously argued, three types of disappointment played a role for students, who are by and large the winners of the transition. These are the disappointment with the system of higher education, the disappointment with democracy, and the disappointment with truncated mobility.

Importantly, Hirschman argues that for such a shift to occur if it seems like a viable alternative to private life; when consumers also identify themselves as responsible citizens who perceive their own role in shaping the society around them.⁹⁸

The Disappointment of Students on the Left

There are two questions that I aim to answer here: why the increased involvement of students beginning in the early 2010s; and why the time lag between mobilization on the radical right and the left?

Based on interviews with activists, I argue that there are two kinds of disappointments that had been building up in students and led to increased public involvement on the left: disappointment with democracy and disappointment with higher education. Democracy in this sense is similar to a durable good, with the modification that for students now, it is as if their parents had made the mistake “at the time of purchase.” It does not have to lessen the dissatisfaction of the younger generation; on the contrary, because they were not the ones who participated in the transition process, they are more likely to perceive its shortcomings and act

⁹⁸ Hirschman, *Shifting Involvements*, (1982) 74-75

upon them. Higher education is more specifically discussed in *Shifting Involvements*: it is state services, whose unreliable quality might cause disappointment.

Disappointment with Higher Education

As the hard core of the organizers came from colleges for advanced studies in the fields of social sciences, it seems that Hirschman's condition, that civic action has to be a viable alternative is fulfilled: for the selected few at the best universities, who devote their extra time to study social sciences, the drastic reforms have added insult to injury.. Hence, the fact that they saw public involvement as a compensation and a remedy for the dissatisfaction felt over university services and issues of segregation in public education, is not surprising after all.

According to Hirschman, disappointment with state services is especially likely when the state makes an effort to make them more widely available. Average quality will decline because it is unlikely that all the necessary inputs needed for high quality services can be put together all at once. In his own words, *“higher education services can be and typically are offered in spite of unresolved bottlenecks, that is, unprepared teachers, impossibly crowded classrooms, or other such imbalances.”*⁹⁹

In Hungary, there has been an effort on the part of the state to increase access to higher education, which has, indeed, contributed to a decline in average quality. While this was not yet the case in the early 2000s when radical right students started to mobilize, the decline was remarkable by 2010. Enrollments in higher education more than tripled over time since the transition, going from approximately 76,000 full time enrollments in 1990/1991 to approximately 240,000 by 2011/2012.¹⁰⁰ Much like Hirschman predicts, this could not be

⁹⁹ Hirschman contrasts higher education with aviation, where everything must be in place for service to start. See Hirschman, *Shifting Involvements*, (1982): 41.

¹⁰⁰ KSH "Felsőfokú oktatás" accessed May 28, 2013
http://www.ksh.hu/docs/hun/xstadat/xstadat_eves/i_zoi007a.html

coupled with the necessary capacity building, as investments in higher education remained roughly the same over time, with teacher-student ratios dropping noticeably.

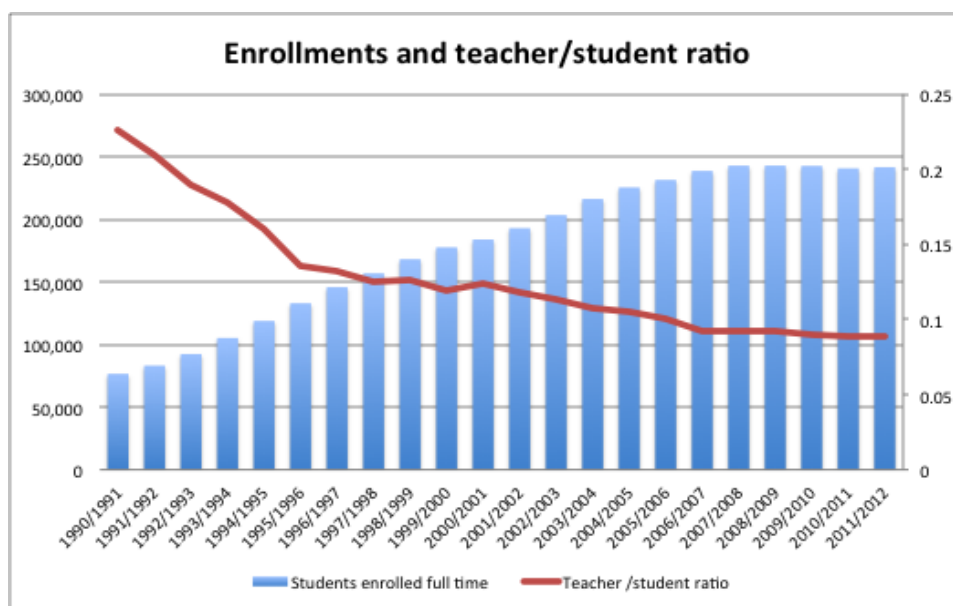


Figure 5: number of students enrolled in tertiary education and teacher/student ratios. Source: KSH and Felsőoktatási Ténytár (Higher Education Database) [https:// sites.google.com/site/felsooktatastenytar](https://sites.google.com/site/felsooktatastenytar)

This type of quality decline contributes to the disappointment of the winners of increased access to higher education: especially that of the quality-conscious students, loyal to their institutions. As quality matters to them, they are ready to raise their voice in the hope that the administration will be responsive to their grievances and improve conditions at the university.¹⁰¹

Plümper and Schneider suggest that increasing access to higher education can be a means of hiding unemployment by decreasing it without extra expenses for the state.¹⁰² For this, the state has to increase quotas for programs that require little equipment or investment, mostly within the realm of social sciences and humanities. This seems beneficial for all: by pursuing a degree, the young enhance their job prospects, and by letting them enroll, the state

¹⁰¹ In Exit, Voice, and Loyalty, Hirschman calls such costumers “alert costumers.” They are the ones who, by reacting instantly to quality decline, can contribute to a recuperation mechanism.

¹⁰² Thomas Plümper and Christina J. Schneider. “Too Much to Die, too Little to Live: Unemployment, Higher Education Policies and University Budgets in Germany.” *Journal of European Public Policy* 14, no. 4 (2007): 631-653. I thank Pieter Vanhuysse for bringing this article to my attention, and for discussing these ideas with me.

lessens the burden of unemployment without much (short term) extra investment. The quality decline for the government is a reasonable price to pay, especially since by the time the shortcomings of the system become salient, there might be another government in power.

In Hungary, the difference between job prospects with a degree and without one is substantial: while unemployment with a high school degree is around 10 percent, it is only 3.4 percent for university graduates. Similarly to the German example, as enrollments rose, unemployment of the young dropped from 53.4 percent in 1998 to 33.4 percent in 2012¹⁰³. This suggests that higher education is not merely a service but a survival strategy for the young, which should worsen the disappointment felt over its bad quality. If enrollments are constantly growing, this leads students to expect that their strategy might not succeed – the more of them follow this path, the worse their employment prospects become.

Negative remarks about the quality of education were often made during the interviews. An interviewee reflected on his experience at ELTE's program for library studies:

*"It was complete chaos. When we started, there was an IT guy, but then he was let go and there wasn't one any more. I don't even know if computers have been replaced since 2005. Things just faded away around us at the department so that once something was broken, it was broken forever. In the beginning we had a homepage, later we did not have one any more."*¹⁰⁴

Another interviewee mentioned that they started protesting because it seemed like the government was going to lower the already dismal quality of higher education, and make the already exclusive public education even more exclusive.

"I have studied drums at the pop music department of the jazz faculty of the Music Academy, I have studied philosophy and aesthetics in Pécs, and now I am studying social sciences at ELTE. I have seen quite a number of programs, and it is safe to say that all of them were of atrocious quality. Without exception, I found all of them terrible. (...) Good thing I would like to become

¹⁰³ KSH: "A Munkanélküliek száma korcsoportok szerint, nemenként" accessed May 29, 2013 http://www.ksh.hu/docs/hun/xstadat/xstadat_eves/i_qlf010.html

¹⁰⁴ Interview with activist on 17 April 2013, interviewee's apartment

an expert on higher education, 'cause this way I can be confident that quality is terrible basically across the board.' ”¹⁰⁵

The president's plagiarism scandal drew attention to an important source of disappointment: the problem of assessment at universities. If someone plagiarizes and gets caught by the media, it discounts the efforts of the others, a painful reminder of the lack of attention in a system of mass education.

Another activist brought up that she was outraged by the fact that one could start multiple programs simultaneously for free. Especially in comparison with her experience at Science Po, Paris, this seemed to her an unreasonable feature of the system.

High school students too voiced complaints regarding the quality of education:

“I think the matter is that students are not socialized to take issue with what they hear, to argue. When students are in class, the teacher gives a lecture, and they take notes but do not ask back, or ask why things are the way they are, or why they are told what they are told. And when something happens around them, or the government makes a decision, they do not feel that they have to react, or that they can (...). This has been going on forever, and this is a huge mistake, that everybody is raised this way, and the whole society is just... passive.” ¹⁰⁶

And so, it seems that increased involvement partly stems from disappointment with higher education. This is part of the explanation for the time lag between mobilization on the left and the right as well: students were doing relatively well up to recent years. As the leftist government was ousted, and the new government started to cut their funding, some of the students tipped over and started to organize.

¹⁰⁵ Interview with activist on 16 April 2013, Zappa Cafe

¹⁰⁶ Interview with activists on 29 March 2013, Csinos Presszó

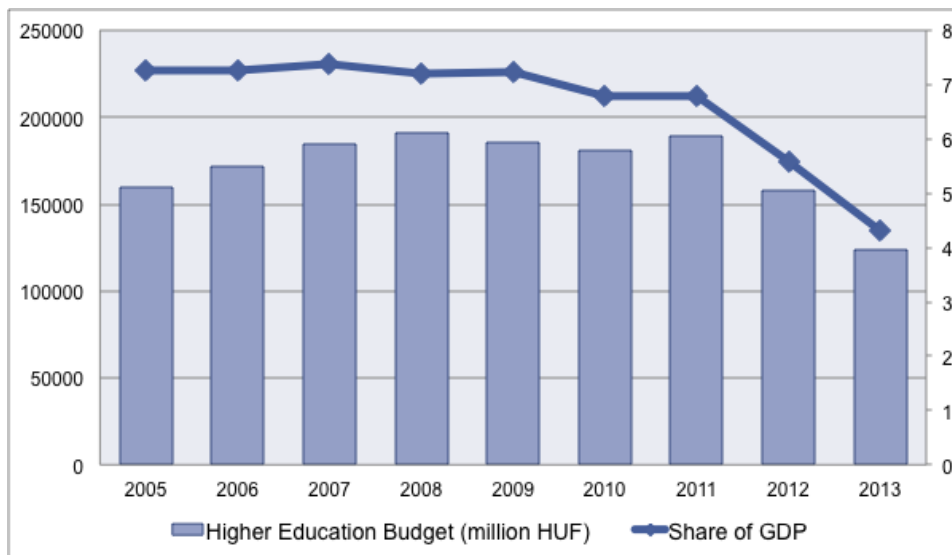


Figure 6: Government Spending on Higher Education, source: Felsőoktatási Ténytár

Disappointment with Democracy

Disappointment with democracy seems to be one of the main issues for this movement. This type of disappointment is threefold: interviewees expressed dissatisfaction with the achievements of the transition, with the ruling elite and the system of representation in general.

Dissatisfaction with the transition went so far that many among the interviewees expressed concerns that it never even happened; their argument was that while the economic transition took place, society was never transformed. As one of them described:

“I have always taken pride in the fact that I was born in 1989 (...). Now I’m starting to see that it has not really happened. In retrospect, what I see is that, in the words of Ghandi, the suffering was missing from it. (...) it was a pact of the elites, who sat down behind closed doors and decided that it was best for them and for us too... and this is awful. If I had to picture it now, it would be Bajnai, Gyurcsány, and Orbán sitting down behind closed doors to strike a deal.”¹⁰⁷

As for issues with the ruling elite, this is manifest in HaHa’s reluctance to accept the approaches coming from various political parties for fear of discrediting themselves. Activists

¹⁰⁷ Interview with activist on 9 April 2013, Frisco

from KiHa told me that they were originally puzzled over the fact that everyone seems to attribute them to a party.

“To the ‘grown-ups’ it might not be evident, but it is to us, that we are free of any links to party politics. We don’t understand, and we don’t want to understand this. For one, I am representing my own views, and I don’t want to limit my views just because I want to belong to the left, the right, the liberals, whoever.”¹⁰⁸

Activists did not feel sympathy for almost any party or politician (LMP being a rare exception). Most of them mentioned Ferenc Gyurcsány, Viktor Orbán, András Schiffer in the same category of corrupted politicians, who have been leaders in the current establishment ever since they were twenty, shaping the system to their liking.

Parties are so corrupted in the eyes of HaHa members that most of them agreed that there was an atmosphere of suspicion towards partner organizations, as they could not be sure that others did not want to establish parties. *“It was also worrisome, because if you have a party, it also means that you have (...) money. And then where does this money come from, if not from George Soros?”¹⁰⁹*

There were several blog posts dedicated to this matter on the HaHa blog, with titles like “Go f*** yourselves – The Political Elite’s Efforts at Taming Us”¹¹⁰ in an attempt to distance HaHa from all parties. What made this difficult was that both left and right were interested in pushing HaHa to the right. This was one of the reasons why HaHa’s members could not come to an agreement regarding their role in the upcoming elections: had they decided that one of their objectives was the ousting of Viktor Orbán’s government, they would have had to align with the rest of the opposition, something many members were reluctant to do.

¹⁰⁸ Interview with activists on 29 March 2013, Csinos Presszó

¹⁰⁹ Interview with activist on 21 April 2013, Kino

¹¹⁰ Gergő Gy Birtalan, “Menjetek a p***ába - a politikai elit idomítási próbálkozásai.” *Official blog of Hallgatói Hálózat* (blog), January 26, 2013. http://hallgatoihalozat.blog.hu/2013/01/26/_menjetek_a_p_ba (accessed May 11, 2013).

Finally, partly as some of the membership had an anarchist background, a strong recurring theme in the interviews was the complete rejection of representative democracy. One of the idols of the movement is Gáspár Miklós Tamás, a philosopher and frequent speaker at demonstrations, who often makes similar points.¹¹¹ In one of his speeches, often quoted by activists, he argued that there was a need for building a parallel system next to the existing system of representative democracy, based on social discourse and participation.¹¹²

The following quote from two high school students sums it up well:

“ – I’m telling you had we been around during the transition, we would have founded a party, because this is what people did then. When there have been a number of governments in power, only then it became visible, that not everything works perfectly: either the system has burned out, or we didn’t implement it well, but most probably it’s not even that perfect in the west either. (...) Clearly something needs to change, we just have to figure out how.

*Now it looks like this responsibility fell on our generation. You could ask why people haven’t mobilized sooner... well, because it is by now that things have arrived at this point, and so it fell on us.*¹¹³

‘ - O cursed spite/That ever I was born to set it right’¹¹⁴ ... ”

When asked about the kind of party they would vote for, activists most frequently mentioned that it should be a party that is accountable, representing the interests of its voters; that it should concentrate on social issues, especially poverty and segregation; that its main leader should be a person who is unknown in politics; and that it should make it appealing to be Hungarian again, without going back to the obsolete frames of national tragedies. One activist emphasized that he could only vote for a party that finds the right balance between economic integration and safeguarding Hungary’s interests.

Environmental concerns came up only once in the interviews; gender issues did not come up at all. On the other hand, it seems to be a common trait among the interviewees that

¹¹¹ His name was brought up in roughly half the interviews, more than anyone else’s (apart from Viktor Orbán’s and Rózsa Hoffmann’s)

¹¹² Gáspár Miklós Tamás, "Tamás Gáspár Miklós @ Az alkotmány nem játék" Recorded March 9 2013. HCLU Film. Web, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kl7uGTLxosU>.

¹¹³ Interview with activists on 29 March 2013, Csinos Presszó

¹¹⁴ William Shakespeare: Hamlet Act I. scene v.189–190.

being a patriot is important to them, and when asked about the possibility of leaving the country later, none of them said they planned to do so for a longer period. (One of them added that he does not think “*it is him who should leave.*”) One activist actually said that she was planning to apply to Scotland to law school, and after doing all the necessary preparations, when she just had to push the “submit” button, she could not do it, because “*her country does not know it yet, but it needs her.*”¹¹⁵

Findings

In conclusion, while pull factors, such as the role of the media, the radical measures of the government, and later the availability of powerful allies like HÖÖK and the Rectors’ Conference can account for the timing of protests, push factors are equally important in explaining individual motivations of students for joining the movement.

Drawing on the interviews with activists, it seems there are two sorts of disappointments that can lead to more public involvement: disappointment with democracy, and disappointment with the system of education, which can explain both the increased involvement, and the time lag between mobilization on the left and on the right. For those who were disappointed with democracy, either representative democracy at large or the achievements of the transition, the 2010 elections meant an important historical turning point, because a two-thirds majority on any side is a major defeat for supporters of participatory democracy. For those dissatisfied with the transition, the fact that a supermajority on either side could emerge was further proof that things were never set straight in the early nineties.

The introduction of the reforms constituted a threat and an opportunity at the same time for those disappointed in the higher education system. It was a threat because as a survival strategy to avoid unemployment, choosing higher education (in the short run) is only

¹¹⁵ Skype interview with activist on 18 March 2013

appealing as long as the costs of attending university are lower than the costs of searching for a job. It was also a threat because the introduction of tuition was imminent without the corresponding service improvement. Meanwhile, reforms could be regarded as an opportunity because as they started, access to decision-making increased.

The time lag between mobilization on the left and the right can also be understood along the above lines. There were few objective issues to raise on the left until the austerity measures were introduced in the system of higher education in Hungary, for the first fifteen years following the transition were characterized by an expansion of education, with continuously growing enrollment numbers. Similarly, as long as the mainstream left was in power, as Kriesi would predict, mobilization on the left was hindered, as a leftist agenda was present in parliament.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁶ Kriesi, "Movements of the left, movements of the right (1999): 412.

CONCLUSION

Youth protest events in total, and especially protest events on the right started to grow drastically in the mid-2000s. In light of the overall passivity of the young I have looked at this puzzle through the lens of shifting individual motivations and involvements. The decision to become politically active for Jobbik supporters seems to be rooted in different kinds of disappointment: disappointment with social mobility and disappointment with democracy, transition, and the mainstream right.

The time lag between mobilization on the left and right can also be understood along the same lines. There were few objective issues to raise on the left until the austerity measures were introduced in the system of higher education in Hungary, for the first fifteen years following transition were characterized by an expansion of education, with continuously growing enrollment numbers. Similarly, as long as the mainstream left was in power, as Kriesi would predict, mobilization on the left was hindered as a leftist agenda was present in parliament. When a right wing government came to power, the disappointment felt over representative democracy and the system of higher education tipped over, and made students receptive to the pull effects of collective action.

During my research I have found some similarities between the two movements. When they were founded, they both lacked organizational resources: for Jobbik it was the lack of media representation, for HaHa the lack of funds. Neither group felt represented in party politics, and voiced concerns that politics is exclusive. Therefore both the early Jobbik and HaHa had to engage in unconventional politics and in building a functioning civil society that would allow them to influence decision-making from outside of Parliament. Although for different reasons, both movements indicated disappointment with democracy and with the transition, which explains the anti-establishment attitude they share.

They also share disappointment with democracy to a great extent. Democracy to them is dominated by party politics and is out of touch with the realities of the voters; the ruling elite is corrupt and disinterested in representing the preferences of their constituencies. As it is visible from interviews and manifestos, both groups take issue with the outcomes of the transition, thinking that it either never happened or it failed.

Naturally, differences arise in the solutions offered by the two movements: Jobbik seems to promote the idea of a revolution to reverse the system and oust “Communists” from power, and almost fifth of them would accept a dictatorship to replace the current regime. HaHa’s activists in turn acknowledge that there was an attempt at transition, although it failed.

Further, the two movements seem to have vastly different organizational structures. Jobbik, in line with its authoritarian ideals has a top-down hierarchical structure, although it grants autonomy to local sections in making decisions on local issues; HaHa is trying to organize bottom-up, urging students at universities to start their own movement. They are leaderless and, for the moment, reject the idea of forming a party.

Szabó and Kern make the argument that currently one cannot speak of one generation in the political sense, because those born near and after transition lack the common experience of socialization that would hold their political preferences together. I believe otherwise. Even if the overwhelming majority of the young in Hungary are politically passive, the ones who are not (particularly students), have shown an increasing interest in unconventional politics, a trend that started on the radical right but by 2012 has been matched with one on the left.¹¹⁷

My findings are relevant in a Hungarian context because, if across the political spectrum all Hungarian student protesters share an anti-establishment attitude and disappointment with the transition, lessons should be learned: apparently Hungarian democracy fails to cater to

¹¹⁷ Szabó and Kern: “A magyar fiatalok politikai aktivitása”, 2009

students. It does not offer enough representation of their identities and interests, neither the hope of social mobility. The real relevance of these findings is however on a regional level. Shared historical legacies and similar social policies would predict similar developments in Central Eastern European states too. Whether or not this is the case is subject to further research.

A related question is whether the findings would be similar in a Western European context, in an atmosphere of disillusionment caused by the global financial crisis and a presumed hollowing out of democracy conditioned by what Peter Mair called the growing gap between responsible and representative government¹¹⁸; or if the disappointments that led to a shift in students' involvement are particular to Hungary or the region.

Exploring the exit option for disaffected students today¹¹⁹ might also be the subject of further research. Exit could be carried out in different forms: in the form of leaving the country (exit from Hungarian democracy), or in not applying to university or dropping out of university (exit from Hungarian higher education). While student emigration from Hungary is too recent a phenomenon to be researchable, there has been an increasing trend among students to go abroad to study, and there is reason to believe that this trend increased in the past year. In the meantime, the number of university students decreased substantially since 2010. On the other hand, none of my interviewees planned to leave the country for a longer time, which suggests that voice might indeed be an alternative to exit.

While Szabó and Kern come to the conclusion that the young do not form a generation, I believe that on the contrary, there is a key common feature that makes them one generation, namely, their anti-establishment attitude also manifest in their turn to

¹¹⁸ Peter Mair, "Representative versus Responsible Government", working paper, Cologne, Max Planck Institute for the Study of Societies, 2009

http://edoc.vifapol.de/opus/volltexte/2010/2121/pdf/wp09_8.pdf

¹¹⁹ Hirschman, *Exit, Voice, and Loyalty*, 1973

unconventional politics. As to the attitude of the youth towards democracy, the above authors propose that the lack of a shared socialization experience prevents them from accepting and practicing it. Again, my own findings suggest a different interpretation. Young Hungarians of the right and the left alike have grown up in a democracy, they just might not like it as it is. They are experiencing a large shift towards public involvement to change the status quo, even if in partly conflicting and unclear directions. The generation born around the transition is a disappointed; and chances are their disappointment will affect the country's future development.

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Number of students enrolled in tertiary education, 2000-2011

Public Expenditure on Education, 2000-2011

APPENDIX

- I. Sources and methodology of protest data
- II. Chronology of events
- III. “The University is Ours!” Translation of Hallgatói Hálózat’s Manifesto
- IV. Occupy Educatio Speech Translation

I. Sources of Protest Data

The protest event data used in this thesis were collected for the ongoing comparative research project on “The Logic of Civil Society in New Democracies (Hungary, Poland, South Korea and Taiwan)”, conducted by Grzegorz Ekiert (Harvard University), Jan Kubik (Rutgers University), Michal Wenzel (SWPS Warsaw), Béla Greskovits (Central European University), Jason Wittenberg (Berkeley University), Sunhyuk Kim (Korea University), and Yun-Han Chu and Chin-En Wu (Academica Sinica). I thank Béla Greskovits for allowing me to access the data, and Zoltán Várhalmi for explaining them to me.

When collecting student protest events in 2012, I relied on the Hungarian coding instructions of the same project. I considered a protest a “student protest” if one of the sponsors was a student organization and if it was explicitly mentioned in the text that (high school) students were present. I also considered events whose description contained the words “students protested”.

When I coded youth protests, I considered a protest a youth protest event in case one of the following organizations was among the sponsors:

4K!	Fiatal Baloldal
64 magyar vármegye	FIBISZ
A Szocialista Egyetemisták és	Fidelitas
F?iskolások Szövetsége (SZESZ)	Hallgatói Hálózat
Árpád vérei (MG)	HÖÖK
ATTAC	Ifjúsági Demokrata Fórum
Balansz	Jobboldali Ifjúsági Közösség
Baloldali Ifjúsági Társaság	Kommunista Ifjúsági Szövetség,
Baloldali Munkás Ifjúsági	Demokratikus Ifjúsági
Szövetség	Világszövetség
Civil jogász bizottság	Külföldi és magyarországi fiatalok
Critical Mass	a Hazáért Egység Mozgalom

kuruc.info
Magyar gárda
Miép Ifjúsági Tagozat
Milla
Roma Ifjúsági Konferencia
Romaversitas
Societas
SZDSZ Ifjúsági Tagozat
SZDSZ Új Generáció
Szövetség a Nemzetért Polgári Kör
Teljes Evangéliumi Diák és Ifjúsági
Szövetség (TEDISZ)
Új baloldal
Van Más Egyesület

II. Chronology of Events

The First Wave

Date	Government action	Student action
October 26, 2010	The Constitutional Court repeals law on 98% special tax on public-sector severance packages that had entered into force on October 1	
November 16, 2010	Parliament passes bill curbing the powers of the Constitutional Court: the Court no longer has the right to decide on issues on which there is no possibility for referendum either	
December 2, 2010		Helyzet van! (It's time to act) group established against curtailing the powers of the Constitutional Court
May 4, 2011	Origo leaks a proposal that would suggest the closure of Corvinus university	
May 10, 2011		Live Chain at Corvinus
June 16, 2011	University bans demonstration from Corvinus	HaHa is formed/"Night for Higher Education"

The Second Wave

Date	Government action	Student action
September 7, 2011	Details on new education bill, student contracts first mentioned	
September 14, 2011	Concept of new higher education bill passed by the parliament	
October 20, 2011		Haha distances itself from Dóra Polgár who joined DK
October 27, 2011		Student demonstration against the reforms organized by HÖÖK, symbolic burying of the future of Hungarian higher education
November 14, 2011		HaHa blog is formed, first post: The university is ours!
December 23, 2011	Parliament passes bill on higher education	
January 20, 2012		Occupy Education
February 15, 2012		Occupy the Law Faculty (Utolsó nyílt nap - Last Open Day)
February 22, 2012		Student forum
March 15, 2012		HaHa activists speak at March 15 Milla demonstration
March 27, 2012	Fact-finding committee finds that Pal Schmitt is guilty of plagiarism	
March 28, 2012		HaHa issues statement on plagiarism scandal and 9 activists spend the night at the rector's office
July 3, 2012	Constitutional Court declares student contracts unconstitutional	

The Third Wave

Date	Government action	Student action
November 9, 2012		V.E.R.Z.I.O screening of Croatian student blockade of universities - strike group is formed with the intention of organizing university occupation
December 3, 2012	There will only be 10480 state funded scholarships at universities, National News Agency learns	
December 6, 2012		HaHa issues statement against cuts in the number of full scholarships
December 10, 2012		
December 10, 2012		Demonstration at ELTE Social Sciences Faculty, Occupation of Petofi Bridge+ HaHa publishes 6 points (6 demands) for the first time
December 12, 2012		Demonstration at BME campus
December 14, 2012		High school students' protest
December 15, 2012	Viktor Orban announces that there would be no quotas	
December 16, 2012		HaHa publishes video against Viktor Orban's informal negotiations with unknown students
December 17, 2012		Demonstration together with partner organizations organized by Human Platform: participants included Intstructors' Network, Network for the Freedom of Education and HaHa
December 18, 2012	Zoltan Balog, Minister of Human Resources invites professional organizations for consultation	

December 19, 2012	Quotas are published, Demonstration together w partner organizations, number of scholarships can be no less than 55 000 like in 2011	National strike alert announced, demonstration ('téli rózsás diákforradalom')
January 7, 2013		HaHa gives ultimatum to the government: in case no substantial measures are taken by, taking into consideration the 6 points 11 February, permanent demonstrations and more radical acts can be expected
January 19, 2013		High School Students' Network is formed
February 9, 2013	Proposal for 4th Amendment of the Basic Law of Hungary published	
February 11, 2013		Ultimatum expires, demonstrations end in the occupation of three Budapest Universities: Corvinus University Budapest, ELTE and the Academy of Drama and Film
February 25, 2013	Due to budget cuts, the Humanities Department at ELTE lets go several professors	Students demonstrate for keeping professors with live chain
March 11, 2013	4th amendment passed	HaHa endorses demonstration against amendment
March 14, 2013		HaHa and Instructors' Network (OHa) issues open letter to the President, asking him not to sign the amendment
March 26, 2013		Occupation of ELTE ends
April 12, 2013	Official student representatives and government agree on student contracts, proposal for amendment of higher education bill submitted by Zoltán Balog, Minister of Human Resources	

III. “The University is Ours!” Translation of Hallgatói Hálózat’s Manifesto

Hallgatói Hálózat was originally born out of the outrage felt over the proposal of the Higher Education Bill. Coming from a wide range of colleges and universities, we students and professors joined forces to protest against the government’s antidemocratic decisions. These measures are made with the exclusion of student unions and professional organizations, and are largely based on fiscal considerations. Our goal is to establish real participation, because we cannot be excluded from decisions about us. The university is ours.

Clearly, this is not only a question of legislation. HaHa’s goal is to mobilize students, so that we are able to recognize our shared interests and act upon them. We are fed up with the obscure hierarchy of institutions; with bureaucratic mechanisms making any kind of innovation impossible. Why is that that the depressing emptiness of our common spaces is protected by business interests? Instead, we could reclaim them and fill them with content we like or organize events bottom-up. Why aren’t there bike sheds, while the dean has his own parking lot? The university is ours – let’s shape it to our liking!

For all of this we need cooperation, where everyone who identifies with our goals can find their role. HaHa is open to any local initiative coming from students or instructors. Our goal is to collect, discuss, and support such initiatives, ideas, plans or proposals. We would like to see groups working on every campus, university or even department, which would act towards the common representation of local interests, knowing the local context. Because the university is ours.

IV. “Occupy Educatio” Speech Translation

(Read in unison by about a dozen activists, who interrupted an education fair on 20 January 2012)

I am a high school student
I studied in vain; I struggled in vain.
I am a teacher.
I might lose my job.
I am a university student.
I was still free to choose my future.
I did not have to choose between being stuck and getting indebted.
There are fewer and fewer people who can afford a life like ours.

The government takes away the future of the next generations!
They passed a law without asking anyone
Neither experts, nor teachers
Nor the students, or their families.
But it's their future!
Because of your laws, hundreds of people's future has become uncertain.
They can all just throw away the hard work of the past years,
together with their dreams.
You took away their faith in the future!

You are afraid to train economists and sociologists.
Why, because they would figure out that your policies are failing?
You are afraid to train lawyers.
Why, because they would hold you accountable for deconstructing the rule of law?
Why are you supporting fewer engineers, when you say they are needed?

Those who are applying to university now don't know if there will be a place for them.
If there is, they don't know how many hundreds of thousands they will have to pay for it.
If they get a state-funded place, it is unclear for how many years they will be tied down here.
Universities will go bankrupt before the students can graduate.
Crowds of professionals will lose their job.

Why are you punishing the next generation for your own mistakes?
Why are you forcing them to leave their country?
What have they done to you that you are taking their dreams away?
We want better education, but the government is ruining even the one we have.
We cannot let you destroy our future!
We cannot let you destroy our universities!
The university belongs to us and the generations to come!