AESTHETICS AND POLITICS OF RESSENTIMENT—THE INCONNU GROUP'S SHIFT TOWARDS NATIONAL POPULISM

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Abstract

This work examines the Inconnu Group's trajectory from the apolitical artistic radicalism through their involvement into the dissident intelligentsia of the 1980s to the national populist shift of the founders of the Group. The thesis aims to answer the puzzle that how it is possible that the Inconnu Group has not integrated into the new, liberal democracy of the 1989s but restructured its anti-communist anger against the new regime after 1989.

The thesis aims to understand the aesthetical and political roots of the founders' national populist shift and anti-establishment anger through the inquiry of the Inconnu Group's activities in the 1980s. For this reason Chapter 1 focuses on the failure of the avant-garde aesthetical project of the Group. Chapter 2 aims to understand how the Inconnu Group's interactions with different social fields shaped their position. Finally, Chapter 3 examines the transformation of the Inconnu Group's political ideologies from the anarchist vanguard position towards national populism. The thesis argues that in the 1980s the Inconnu Group's focus shifted from aesthetics to politics, and they constructed their own position as anti-communist moral crusaders. However, with the fall of the state-socialism, the Group, due its limited integration into the social fields of the 1980s and their national populist shift that happened in the 1980s, has not given up its critique but restructured it and continued its moral crusade, but now against the new liberal democracy and its former allies, the dissident intellectuals.

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Introduction

Is the national populist turn of some intellectuals a personal deviance, or is it the product of social structures? For those living in Eastern Europe the problems of rightist turns and crossover political trajectories are always relevant questions, however in this thesis I aim to go beyond the political pamphlets and to give a sociological account of one of these crossover trajectories. I will investigate the case of the Inconnu Group and I will examine the social structures that led the founders of this group towards national populism in the 1990s and 2000s. The Inconnu Group was a group of artists in Hungary that was founded in 1979 and ceased activities in 1989. During the 1980s it offered some of the most radical critiques of the state socialist regime in the political as well as the artistic field. After the political and economic transition of 1989, the founders of the Inconnu Group did not integrate into the political and artistic life of the new capitalist liberal democracy, but shifted towards national populism.

My research question is what were the reasons the members of the Inconnu Group restructured their anti-communist anger after the fall of state socialism and channeled it against the newly established liberal democracy? To examine this question I will try to map the road that led the Group towards national populism and investigate the Inconnu Group's activities in the 1980s, which were at the junction of art and politics. I will not study directly the national populist political activities of the Inconnu Group's founders that strengthened during the late 1990s and early 2000s anti-liberal cultural and political *kulturkampf* (Trencsényi 2014) and cumulated in 2002 in the re-establishment of the Group by two of the founders. Rather

The historical period of this research is the political and artistic landscape of the 1980s; the theoretical framework is how artists and intellectuals positioned themselves in society and their political shifts. The 1980s in Hungary was a decade of thaw and liberalization, in an economic and artistic sense too. In this decade the subcultural characteristics of the underground art of

the 1970s also started to thaw and the boundaries between official and unofficial art became more and more blurred. At the same time, the political critique of the regime became more organized in the 1980s, although it had no any popular mobilization. The Inconnu Group started its activities in this context and took a position in relation to the political and artistic fields that can be characterized as a subculture of the subculture. In this thesis I will examine how the members of the Group articulated their social and personal problems in the form of anger against the artistic and political scenes.

Understanding the political articulation of social anger has a central position in the theoretical framework of this thesis. Following David Ost (2005), I will investigate how the transition of 1989 changed the structure of this anger. In contrast with Ost, however, I do not identify this anger as generated only by economic sources. Moreover, I will not examine the restructuring of the working class' anger, but that of the artist-intellectuals of the Inconnu Group. Although research has been conducted on the transition of former dissident intellectuals into the political mainstream (Eyal, Szelényi and Townsley 1998; Laczó 2015), my research differs because it focuses on the problem of why the Inconnu Group kept its outsider position even after 1989. Thanks to Dick Pels (2000), there is an inspiring literature on intellectuals' crossing over from the left to right crossover, but in this thesis, in contrast with his generalizing argument, I will emphasize the importance of local artistic and political fields that I will describe with the help of Pierre Bourdieu's theory of fields.

To get a complex answer to the national populist shift of the Inconnu Group's founders I will examine the problem from three aspects. In the first chapter I will examine the Group's attempt to fuse aesthetics and politics in their art and the consequences of this for their position. The focus of the second chapter is an inquiry into changing position of the Inconnu Group' in the context of their surveillance by the secret service and their integration into and disintegration from the artistic and dissident political fields of the 1980s. In the third chapter I will focus on

the political ideologies of the Group to understand the shifts in it that prepared the ground for the national populist crossover of the founders.

On the whole I will put the case of the Inconnu Group's national populist shift into a wider context by raising questions about the exceptionality of this shift. I will try to discover whether the Inconnu Group's national populist re-politicization after 1989—instead of a liberal turn or a depoliticization—was a normal development, and if it was, in what structures of the 1980s was this shift was grounded.

History of the Group

Before starting to examine in more depth the Inconnu Group and its positions and activities that led to a situation in which their anti-communist anger was transformed into anger against the liberal democracy of the time, I survey the history of the Group. This historical overview is necessary because of the unrecognized and uncanonized status of the Group, both from the perspective of social history and art history. As the word *inconnu* (the name of the Group in French) means 'unknown in a way predicted', the Inconnu Group may ordinarily be considered outside of the canon. Nevertheless, I will not argue that the outsider status of the Group is illogical or unjust; my point is that the historical analysis is the key to the understanding of the Inconnu Group's radical shift. It poses the question of the connection between politics and aesthetics in a processual way, as examined in Chapter 1. One key proof of Inconnu Group's outsider status within social history and art history literature is that a French scholar wrote the only academic publication about the Group, the primary function of which is to examine the Group's international communication, not the local embeddedness of the Group (Debeusscher 2012). More common, non-academic articles and documentaries in Hungarian are chiefly written from a revisionist position that rails against the unjustly marginalized status of the

Inconnu Group. In contrast to these approaches, I propose that the Inconnu Group's artistic and political activities may be seen as embedded in their local context. However, they are not narrated either from the perspective of the former members of the Group, nor from dominant social history or art history literature, which mentions the Group only occasionally, but by confronting the actors narrative with the institutional history. In this sense, the conclusions produced from the application of my perspective, by remaining situated, may not be considered conclusive (Haraway 1988), but can nevertheless contribute to understanding the reasons for the uncanonized status of the Inconnu Group and may provoke further research interest. The purpose of providing a short overview of the history of the Inconnu Group is not to anticipate the conclusions of the thesis; the overview is necessary due to the need to clarify the Group's peripheral and uncanonized nature.

The Inconnu Group was founded in 1978 by three young men: Péter Bokros, Mihály Csécsei and Tamás Molnár in Szolnok, the county seat of the county of Jász-Nagykun-Szolnok in Hungary. At this time none of these individuals had any experience with higher education for visual arts, and only one of them, Péter Bokros, had a traditional artistic background due to the fact that his parents were living and working in the Szolnok Artists' Colony (Csécsei Interview 2016, Molnár Interview 2016). The founders were of the same generation (in their early twenties) and had had some shared experiences, such as participation in an exhibition by Bokros organized by Molnár (Molnár Interview 2016). The Inconnu Group's first appearance as an artistic group occurred in Cegléd on 1st May 1978 when they exhibited several graphics, statues and installations at a local festival. From 1978 they started becoming increasingly experimental, mainly moving towards the genres of body art and happening, their chief sources of inspiration being the developments of international (such as the Viennese Actionism) and Hungarian body and action art (such as the works of Tibor Hajas and Tamás Szentjóby), and the experimental avant-garde performances which made their debut at Szolnok Theatre during this period.

The Inconnu Group produced its first experimental activities during their residency at the Berekfürdő Art Camp during the summers of 1978 and 1979; they performed their first public activities in which nakedness and blood played a central role in Szolnok and Budapest in 1979-1980 (Fig. 1). At the same time, the Inconnu Group was also becoming active in the field of mail art[1] which supplied them with a wider, even international, artistic network of communication, in addition to the local art scene in Szolnok in which they were active until 1982. However, due to their activities and their illegal, samizdat publications[2] they faced an increase in police and secret service reprisals that culminated in the confiscation of their artworks and their expulsion from the cultural institutions of the county of Jász-Nagykun-Szolnok.

As a result, from 1983 the Inconnu Group operated in Budapest, and its members also changed. Mihály Csécsei, who had been forcibly recruited by the secret service and did not move to Budapest, left the Group, while Róbert Pálinkás, who had developed an extensive relationship in the political opposition and the punk-scene, and Magdolna Serfőző, who was a graphic artist and the girlfriend of Bokros, joined around 1983-1984. From 1984 the Inconnu Group became involved in the unofficial art scene in Budapest, but as early as 1982 they started to establish relationships with the state-socialist regime's political opposition. This activity was hallmarked by numerous graphic and printing tasks that contributed to the illegal publications produced by the political opposition and culminated in 1985 when the Inconnu Group started to organize weekly exhibitions and events at László Rajk's flat. In the following years the Inconnu Group became increasingly involved in dissident politics, and less present on the unofficial art scene. Their dominant form of expression remained their activities, artistic samizdat publications, stickers and exhibitions. In 1987, Tibor Phillip, a relative of the influential dissident intellectual

1 Mail art is an artistic genre focusing on sending artworks through the postal service. In the 1970s and 1980s in Hungary and in the Eastern Bloc it was a weapon of the weak, a popular alternative of the official art scene.
2 Samizdat was the reproduction of censored and underground publications in the Eastern Bloc.

György Krassó, joined the Group, and played a crucial role in one of the political events the Inconnu Group was involved in: their participation and presentation at the Conference of the British Labour Party in 1988. The activities of the Inconnu Group came to an end in 1989 when the Group carved and erected 301 wooden grave markers at the assumed resting place of Imre Nagy and other leaders of the 1956 Revolution. This initiative represented a breaking point with the dissident intelligentsia, but at the same time was clearly the most popular of all their work. After this, the Group dissolved in 1989. The historical overview positions the Inconnu Group's history in the socio-historical context of the 1980s. Although the founders came from social backgrounds in which neither dissident politics nor underground art was common, in the 1980s the Group got in touch with these fields. In the following chapters I will examine how these fields shaped the Group's position and contributed to the founders' national populist shift.

Methodology of the thesis

The fact that the subject of my research is located in the past fundamentally determines the methods that are available for use in this research effort; accordingly, I employ the methodologies of historical sociology (Hobson, Lawson, Rosenberg, 2010). For this reason, an elementary method of social inquiry—participant observation—was not possible. Nevertheless, because all the members of the Inconnu Group are alive, I was able to interview them.

During the research process I conducted six interviews (four with former members of the Inconnu Group, and two with intellectuals who during certain periods were in contact with them). I conducted interviews with Péter Bokros, Mihály Csécsei and Tamás Molnár, the three founders of the Group. I did not have time to interview the members of the circle that were loosely connected to the Group during their years in Szolnok who were called *technicians* (in contrast to the three founders who called themselves *ideologists*). Through this process I was

able to interview the key figures from the Group's founding era, but I acknowledge the methodological problem of omitting the incorporation of the perspective of marginal figures, who, from their peripheral perspective, would have different memories about the internal hierarchies of the Group. None of my interviewees were among the subordinate contributors to the Group, and I was not able to give a voice to contributors who have never been recognized as artists. However, because this thesis focuses on examining the changing ideologies and positions of the Inconnu Group and their articulation of anti-establishment anger, I consider it valid to primarily investigate the memories of the *ideologists* who shaped the directions and interests of the Group within the field.

Besides the three founders, among the members of the Inconnu Group who later joined I conducted an interview with Róbert Pálinkás, but I could not find contact details for Magdolna Serfőző, although her perspective on the masculinity of the Inconnu Group might have opened up new, promising research directions that I cannot now examine within the frame of my thesis. Although an interview was not conducted with Tibor Philipp, who was the third member of Inconnu after the founders, the Oral History Archive undertook a narrative life story interview with him to which I obtained access. In the 30-40 pages of transcription he talks about his activities within Inconnu. Moreover, I interviewed two dissident intellectuals who were close to the Inconnu Group at specific times. Although the dissident intelligentsia of the 1980s recognized the radical anti-communist politics of the Inconnu but not its art, my two interviewees, the art theoretician Sándor Radnóti and the art theoretician and painter Gábor Zrínyifalvi, stood at the intersection of the artistic and the political field of the 1980s so I was able to incorporate their dual perspective.

The interviewees were generally open towards me, thus I was able to carry out the inquiries I had planned. Nevertheless, the oral history interview, as a tool of sociological research is accompanied with numerous methodological challenges (Thompson 2000). I conducted semi-

structured interviews in which I focused only on the years 1978-1989 when the Inconnu Group was operational, thus my aim was not to produce narrative life story interviews. Thus my thesis does not embed the Group's activities into the previous and later parts of the members' lives, but refers to the years that were so decisive in all of their lives. Because of this, I decided to take a risk and first embed the Inconnu Group into the context of the 1980s, not into the life of its members. Furthermore, there were practical reasons that supported this approach: limited time was available for conducting the interviews, and undertaking more embedded interviews would have taken significantly more time. My research interviews not only serve as personal narratives about historical facts, but due to the unresearched status of the Inconnu Group, all the interviews are now also primary sources of information. In the interviews the focus was both on personal narratives and on the collection of new information. Even a semi-structured interview—for which I prepared an interview guide, but remained open to new lines of inquiry too—is clearly not able to cover every point of interest, but the method is useful for revealing the personal positions of interviewees.[3]

The last important issue that concerns the interviews is that they relate to the past. An interview, as a tool of research, can never cover the immediate present, only the embodied past. Nevertheless, I asked the interviewees to recollect the events that happened thirty-forty years ago. These memories are very strongly limited by being deeply embedded in the personal memories and are thus strongly narrated from a personal angle. However, I asked my interviewees about situations that are no longer directly part of their lives. Therefore, the semi-external position they represent is the most important strength of these interviews, because partial self-reflexivity can emerge as the histories of the past are narrated according to the

[3] One of the methodological challenges which I was faced with during the research was that interviews not only influence the position of the researcher but also the interviewee. A few weeks after I conducted an interview with one of the founding members of the Inconnu Group, they gave an hour-long interview to the Hungarian far-right party Jobbik's online television channel (Molnár 2016). In this interviewee mentioned that I had interviewed him for this thesis which he interpreted it as a sign that the Group had not been totally forgotten, and evidence that there is a slight chance that their activities may be rediscovered.

speakers' current positions. Although this does not ensure the objectivity of the interviews, but created interview situations in which the actors had a limited level of reflexivity towards their own past.

Besides the oral history interviews, archives were additional fundamentally important sources for my research. I used four public archives: the Historical Archives of the Hungarian State Security, the archival sources of the Artpool Art Research Center, the Budapest City Archives and the Open Society Archive. I also obtained access to some documents held in the private archives of my interviewees. It is important to remark here that archives are not sources of pure knowledge, but are rather institutions that exercise power through the collection and ordering of knowledge according to their own system of logic that is the most evident in the case of Historical Archives of the Hungarian State Security. The logic by which archival content is collected does not necessarily overlap with the logic of the researcher: public archives, just as the members of the Group archived the activities of the Group from their own perspective, so taking a critical approach towards archives is indispensable.

In the last decades a rapidly growing academic discourse has emerged about the role and use of archives, but within this frame I focus on the methodological problems of the most sensitive part of my archival research—the ethics and approaches to the use of secret service documents (Kotkin 2002). While in Hungary secret service files have been extensively researched in the last two decades, the fine art scene was barely touched by this research (Szőnyei 2012). In my research I did not reject the use of the secret service reports simply because they were produced without the consent of the subjects, by surveillance. The inquiry of these sources was indispensable, because until today the secret service produced the largest amount of documents on the Inconnu Group: thousands of pages compared to the dozens written by academics. In my research I approached these sources as a form of embodied knowledge produced by the state apparatus, comparable to colonial archives (Roque Wagner 2012). From a broader perspective

it may be noted that that the use of such sources does not differ decisively from the use of anthropological sources before their ethical turn in the 1990s (AAA 1998; Caplan 2003), and it is no accident that in state-socialist societies the role of anthropologist and secret agent were interrelated in some cases (Kovai 2009). The reporting of the secret services served not only to accumulate and produce knowledge, but also to interpret it, just like the work of inquisitors and anthropologists (Ginzburg 1992:156-164). However, there is a crucial difference between the anthropological approach and the practices of the secret service. In the case of the secret service, action followed the interpretative process in many cases, and secret surveillance activities do not claim to sympathize (or remain neutral towards) the subject of the 'research', unlike in anthropological research (Verdery 2014:74-75).

The parallel and reflective use of the different types of archival sources produced by the secret service and by the members of the Inconnu Group, and the interviews with the former members and with dissident intellectuals mean that the secret service reports are not only the means of inquiry, but act to reaffirm the original sources as the subjects of the research (Kotkin 2002). This is crucial because the secret service reports are not merely external, descriptive sources, but also preparations for action that decisively shaped the positions and ideologies of the Inconnu Group. To summarize, archival sources are offering a detailed and precise institutional history of the Group, while the interviews, although these are less precise, are providing a challenge for the institutional perspective and are giving more space for the personal motivations, relations and emotions of the members. Therefore the variety of sources used in my research can contribute to revealing their situated nature; in this way they are not contradictory but complementary.

Chapter 1—Art and Politics

Pierre Bourdieu argued that sociology and art do not make good bedfellows (1993a:139); in this chapter I show that likewise the relationship of aesthetics and politics is also problematic. I investigate how the Inconnu Group tried to fuse revolutionary aesthetics and politics through art and examine the reasons this attempt failed. The main goal of my inquiry is to understand how this failure influenced the restructuration of the Inconnu Group's anti-establishment anger after 1989, and the rightwing turn of its founders.

When we discuss the relationship between aesthetics and politics we should recognize that the two main academic traditions can be distinguished by their recognition or denial of aesthetics as an autonomous sphere. In the aesthetic tradition debates about aesthetics and politics are closely interlaced with an inquiry into phenomenon that was once called *avant-garde*. This tradition is hallmarked by authors such as Theodor Adorno and Walter Benjamin, but the most influential work in this area, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, was written by Peter Bürger (1984). This direction of research, sprouting from the intellectual atmosphere of the Frankfurt School, was mainly concerned with the question of identifying how art can be revolutionary. This interest motivated Benjamin (1968) to differentiate between communism (that politicizes aesthetics), and fascism (that aestheticizes politics)[4], and Bürger (1984) to distinguish avant-garde art (whose goal is to revolutionize life through the reintegration of art and life) and neo-avant-garde art (that aims only to revolutionize art as an autonomous sphere). In contrast to this tradition, which always kept aesthetics as its focus, sociological approaches such as those of Pierre Bourdieu (1992) argue strongly against the existence of pure Kantian, disinterested aesthetics. According to Bourdieu, aesthetics concern the social structuring of taste, and pure aesthetics not only distinguish, but through their purity, legitimize social differences. Between

[4] In my thesis I will not more deeply engaged with the angle of Walter Benjamin, because my position is that other authors can more fruitfully contribute to the understanding of the political shift of the Inconnu Group.

the aesthetic and sociological approaches the concept of autonomy can reveal the decisive differences. In the aesthetic approach, the autonomy of art is a baleful phenomenon that reveals the separation of art and life, in parallel with the Marxian concept of alienation. From this perspective, the most important, unsuccessful but glorious task of the historical avant-garde was to reconnect art and life through progressive, leftist politics (Bürger 1984). From the perspective of Bourdieu, the autonomy of art does not refer to the autonomy of the artwork itself, but to the autonomy of the field of art which, for him, is not a value-loaded term but rather a phenomenon that appears in *developed capitalist* societies, and which has its own logic that not only reflects but indirectly follows the happenings of the external world (1993a:142-147). In this sense, while from the aesthetic perspective the autonomy of art is a threat against which avant-garde struggled but failed to overcome, from a sociological perspective it represents a new social phenomena that can be capitalized on even by artists. Nevertheless, it should be remembered that these theories were written in the context of Western capitalist societies which primarily understand art production and reception as something that is shaped by the state and the market (Sapiro 2012:31), meaning that there have been very few attempts to implement them in a state-socialist context (Bourdieu 1991a). For this reason I argue that the struggle for the fusion of art and politics emerged differently in the state-socialist context, in which the main target of the fusion of art and politics was only the state, not the market.

This introductory theoretical landscape and the presentation of the different perspectives about the autonomy of the artistic field is indispensable because in the following section I examine how the Inconnu Group aimed to integrate aesthetics and politics in its own practice. Besides this, I examine the factors that hindered this fusion and lead the Group to articulate their anger not only against the state-socialist regime, but also towards the liberal democracy that emerged after 1989. To investigate this question, I confronted the approach of Bourdieu, who strongly limits the agency of individual artists by arguing that the origins of artworks are neither

individuals nor social groups but the field of artistic production as a whole (1993a:142). This problematique can be resolved in different ways; for example, by more art-sensitive modifications of Bourdieu's theory (Zolberg 2015), but also by examining the inconsistency in Bourdieu's theory that, despite his relatively structural theory of the fields, he allowed individual artists (such as Manet, Baudelaire or Flaubert) quite extensive independent agency (1996). However, in my argument I prefer not to reproduce this inconsistency but I rather embed an examination of the Inconnu Group in the network relationships between artists and other agents active in the production of an artwork's social value (Bourdieu 1993a:140). Nevertheless, by examining both the Inconnu Group's attempt to merge art with politics and its failure, my goal is to show the dialectics generated by the confrontation of the Group with the political and artistic field.

The Inconnu Group politicized its own art in the way that they tried to maintain their own artistic radicalism, both politically and aesthetically. The literature is strongly divided about the compatibility of artistic and political radicalism. Bourdieu offers Manet as an example of this (Saunier 2015), although other authors such as Poggioli argue that Manet does not meet these criteria (1968). The American art sociologist Diana Crane, in her book on the New York Art World, also highlights the exceptionality of a combined political and aesthetic radicalism (Crane 1987:43), and Berger puts forward the same argument in his book about the survival of the 1960s counterculture, emphasizing that the struggle against a dominant culture and a dominant class usually originate in different forms of excess (Berger 1981:200-202). Nevertheless, the Inconnu Group (in their first manifesto in 1981) wrote that "Art=philosophy has ceased to serve as a progressive theory, instead of this the group prefers the equations art=politics and power politics≠art" (1981a:69-75). In this way the Group aimed to reach beyond the Bourdieusian model in which artists intervene in political debates from their own, autonomous positions (*art=philosophy*), or serve politics in a heteronomous mode (*power*

politics≠art). Instead of these traditional roles of art in society, the Inconnu Group propagated an avant-garde artistic credo in the style of Bürger by promoting the fusion of art and life. However, this radical program contains an eternal dissident position, because when the Group manifested that *power politics≠art* they constructed a position in which their group could only play only a position of underdog.

I believe, in their rejection of both *the art=philosophy* and the *art=power politics* constructions, that the goal of the Inconnu Group was to reach beyond the binary division that Bourdieu described; the contention that autonomous art follows its own internal logic, and that heteronomous art is subordinated to other social fields. Despite these models, the Group's desire was to achieve the ideal model of the historical avant-garde, in which art is equal to and fused with politics. As Peter Bürger (1984) has argued, "historical avant-garde movements negate those determinations that are essential in autonomous art: the disjunction of art and praxis of life, individual production, and individual reception as distinct from the former" (p. 53). In this sense, the struggle of the Inconnu Group is certainly not unique, but the fact that they attempted to fuse art and life not in the early but the late 20th century, and not in a capitalist but in a state socialist society make it worth examining. The Inconnu Group's attacking of the autonomy of art was, not surprisingly, unsuccessful, just as the historical avant-garde's attack on the institution failed (Bürger 1984:57). Nevertheless, the Inconnu Group did not achieve institutionalized success and canonization, in contrast to the general tendencies of avant-garde art, in which anti-institutional tendencies were usually incorporated by the expanding art world. In this context, we may argue that the Inconnu Group's attempt to fuse art and life in the 1980s was an inadequate endeavor, much more similar to the artistic tendencies of the 1910s and 1920s than to the tendencies of the 1980s.

Nevertheless, this approach was not present in the first year of activity of the Inconnu Group. The Group started its activities in the traditional genres of art, such as graphics and enamel, but

by the end of the 1970s were involved in genres such as mail art, performance and body art. Their body-based rough and bloody performances were influenced first of all by the Hungarian Tibor Hajas and the Austrian Hermann Nitsch, while in their mail art practice they were influenced (and were included in the mail art network) by the artist György Galántai, from whence the group's name originated. It is symptomatic that the first criticisms of the Group were not focused on the political nature of their art (because it was not political at the time), but on the aesthetical radicalism of their art, particularly on the appearance of sexual perversions in it (Csécsei Interview 2016).

The Inconnu Group's struggle for the de-autonomization and politicization of art started in the early 1980s, and was strongly provoked by the strengthening of the bureaucratic and political restrictions and surveillance against the Group. While political control of the art scene and the banning of exhibitions was not uncommon in Hungary during the period, these may have lead the Group towards politicization because the members originally had no artistic or intellectual background. Their lack of incorporation in the artistic field and the intelligentsia—caused by the fact that the Group emerged from Szolnok, not from Budapest—may be the main reason that they made such devoted attempts to fuse art and life. The Inconnu Group had outsider status in the art scene of Budapest; as a result, the preservation or the development of the autonomy of the artistic field was not a goal worth fighting for. Therefore, while in the 1980s the artistic field—among the conditions of as-it-existed socialism—tried to achieve autonomy in respect to the state status awarded it, the members of the Inconnu Group, by becoming mavericks, were not obliged to kowtow. Therefore, for the Inconnu Group the attempt to fuse aesthetics and politics was present both in their orientation towards dissident politics and in their attack on the institutions of art. As they wrote: "unfortunately artists still believe that »art is art« and that it is an external, sovereign field that has nothing to do with the political situation" (Inconnu Group, 1982b:3-5). They were much more interested in stirring up the art scene, which is why

two members, Bokros and Molnár attempted to gain admission to the University of Fine Arts "to provoke not only the police, but also the nerdish academic art scene" (Molnár Interview 2016). By its confrontational aesthetics and politics, the Inconnu Group not only refused to acknowledge the emerging apolitical 'New Painting' tendencies of the 1980s, but also offered a critique of the position of the 1970s neo-avant-garde art that prioritized the establishment of its own antipolitical lifeworld (Kemp-Welch 2014). In this sense, the Inconnu Group's critique of neo-avant-garde art is very similar to Bürger's (1984) who criticized it because neo-avant-garde art appeared to want revolution within art itself. Nevertheless, the Inconnu Group's almost total rejection of the local art scene also determined their own position.

Through their non-integration into the artistic field, the Group's network was built up to include the political opposition of the 1980s that appreciated its activities in the political struggle, but far from represented the aesthetical radicalism of the Inconnu Group itself. In this sense, political engagement was the reason that the Group could not integrate into the art scene, and artistic radicalism was among the causes of their partial integration into the political opposition. Nevertheless, a theoretical question may be raised about Inconnu Group's struggle against state power and their struggle against the separation of art and politics. Typically, artists' struggles against political control and restriction is interwoven with a defense of the field's autonomy, although this struggle is usually subordinated to the political struggle according to Gisèle Sapiro (2012:33).We can apply this argument only partially to the case of Inconnu, because the defense (or establishment) of the autonomy of the artistic field clearly contrasts with Group's project of questioning the separation between art and life. Drawing attention to the second part of Sapiro's argument, we may argue that, especially in the second half of the 1980s, the Group's artistic activities were usually subordinated to political ones.

This political turn—notably, the joining of the Group by Pálinkás and Phillip who were politically active—was among the reasons that one of the founders, Mihály Csécsei, quit. This

shift away from an aesthetics that, by its radicalism, was political, to a politics that used art as a tool in the political struggle is also demonstrated by the fact that from the mid-1980s onwards Inconnu used its exhibition space and its printing devices in the service of political acts. The members screen-printed t-shirts for different dissident organizations and hosted in their exhibition space several different programs and exhibitions. The clearest example of the conscious subordination of aesthetics to politics was the Fighting City exhibition in 1987. For this exhibition, organized by the Group for the 30th anniversary of the 1956 revolution, exhibitors were selected from the pages of the New York Review of Books. As a consequence, the artworks which were submitted had no aesthetical similitude, and were not consequent either with the early, body and action-based, nor with the late, sticker and poster-based aesthetics of the Group. However, before the opening of the exhibition the police confiscated the artwork, so the Group exhibited the confiscation documents instead. This highlights that the most important principle of the Group was neither aesthetic, nor political, but was provocation which could be undertaken through either field of action. In this sense, both radical aesthetics and politics served for the Inconnu Group as tools of provocation: as a sphere through which they could articulate anti-establishment anger. Moreover, the attempt to fuse art and politics was also a gesture of provocation which, by not respecting the relative autonomy of either the artistic or political field, provoked both spheres. In proof of this provocative agenda it is easy to select examples from almost any of their manifestos, such as: "1. Confront! 2. Document! 3. Publish! In other words: practice the forbidden! Collide head on! Mount an offensive! Bruise! Be active! Remind! Record! Review! Inform! Revolutionize! Influence! Don't be afraid! Give examples! Be actual!" (Inconnu 1983).

The failure of the Inconnu Group's attempt to fuse art and politics arose from the condition that, in contrast to their aims, their art became heteronomous by serving the goals of the political opposition, and also from one of the basic contradictions inherent to their aesthetics and politics.

While the Inconnu Group aimed to engage in populist politics (this is examined more deeply in Chapter 3), it was difficult to conciliate between populist politics and avant-garde aesthetics. While populist politics are easily understandable, avant-garde art is usually understandable to a limited audience; moreover, one of its goals is to shock. Only a few examples of the Group's work could move beyond this contradiction, such as their experiments with punk and industrial music—which although subcultural modes of expression had more popular meaning than body and performance art.

The Inconnu Group aimed to resolve this contradiction by formulating a more popular aesthetic language dominated by the printing of stickers, posters and silk screening, but this new artistic language that emerged in the second half of the 1980s mainly remained in the service of the political opposition. In the mid-1980s, even when producing work with dual meanings, such as stickers with the monogram BM that could mean either Scandal Art (*Botrány Művészet*) or Prison Art (*Börtön Művészet*), its potential meaning was clear and limited. Examples include the Mona Lisa in police uniform created in protest against the European Cultural Forum held in Hungary in 1985 (Fig. 2). Although these works maintained the provocative nature of the Inconnu Group's early works, the target of the provocations was no longer good taste, but state power.

By comparing two of the actions they undertook in the summer of 1989, we may understand the difference between the very few actions of the Group that were able to promote the fusion of art and politics, and the ones that led towards the heteronomization of their art. By carving and erecting 301 wooden grave markers in the assumed resting place of the martyrs of the 1956 Revolution, the Inconnu Group created an installation in which art and death became indiscernible, and which interlaced the action-based nature of the avant-garde and the visuality of popular aesthetics (Fig. 3). However, this action did not become heteronomous because it followed a political agenda defined by the Inconnu Group, and competed with the official

commemoration (co-organized by the former political opposition and the cadres of the state-socialist regime). In contrast with this artwork, the one that the Inconnu Group performed few weeks later in a political protest organized by oppositional parties against the Tiananmen Square massacre exemplifies how their art became heteronomous. During this protest the members of the Inconnu Group used only the visual impact of their art while formal speeches were given and goals defined by the parties (Fig. 4). Therefore, we can argue that the turn of the Inconnu Group away from traditional avant-gardist language was a successful move against the autonomization of the Group's art, but at the same time it led towards its heteronomy, and the cases in which art and politics moved closer together as equal players were very limited.

To conclude, in this chapter I have argued that the avant-gardist attempts of the Inconnu Group to fuse aesthetics with politics were not successful because the Group did not identify a mode of expression that was permanently revolutionary in both a political and an aesthetic sense. The Inconnu Group behaved as a real vanguard, and their activities were able to provoke and expand the traditional actors and activities of the artistic and the political field, but they were not able to fuse them into a status in which art and politics were indistinguishable. In this sense the Inconnu Group attempted to resurrect the main goal of the historical avant-garde in a different social and historical context, but even the historical avant-garde's attempts were unsuccessful in their time (Bürger 1984; Falasca-Zamponi 1996). The Inconnu Group, in contrast to their rhetoric, in practice could not move beyond the binary of autonomous and heteronomous art, although their politically and artistically revolutionary vocabulary succeeded in expressing their anti-establishment anger. While they struggled against both the heteronomy and the autonomy of art, in the second half of the 1980s their own art remained in the service of the dissident intelligentsia that for the Inconnu Group served as an audience towards which they could articulate their anger in the form of artistic provocations.

Nevertheless, with the political changes of 1989 the power and importance of political provocation disappeared, and the aesthetics of the Group lost their power to shock. The fact that neither the artistic nor the political radicalism of the Inconnu Group was canonized after 1989 opened a path for them to continue their radicalism in the political territory of the radical right. As Dick Pels (2000) argues, the radicalism of an intellectual—including artistic radicalism—is a key factor in the emergence of crossover intellectuals for whom radicalism is a more fully defining trait than the ideological position of this radicalism. My point is that this model is relevant to the Inconnu Group because their artistic radicalism (that appeared both in the radical aesthetics of their art and the failure of their radical goal of fusing art and politics) was among the factors that prepared the ground for their political crossover. Although the Group could not fuse art and politics, their constant attempt to do so created a position in which they maintained their anti-establishment radicalism. Therefore, from the perspective of the Group's attempt to fuse art and politics, the heteronomization of the Group's art in the late 1980s and their maintained militant radicalism are the crucial points. The heteronomization of the Group's art led the founders towards political modes of self-expression, while their inherent radicalism—a crucial component of their attempt to fuse art and politics—cleared the path for them to move towards the radical right; a move not incompatible with their avant-garde heritage (Hewitt 2000).

Chapter 2—Getting Stuck Among the Fields

In this chapter I examine Inconnu Group's position in the artistic and political fields of the 1980s. Among the changing ideological and political positions of the Inconnu Group we can identify one that was decisively present through their ten-year-long span of activity; namely, their total opposition to the state-socialist regime and to any established social hierarchy. In this

chapter I investigate the changing forms of the Group's confrontation and integration into the artistic and dissident political fields of the 1980s by closely examining their relationships with the Hungarian secret service and to the artistic and dissident political field.

This inquiry into the Group's integration into and disintegration from the different fields is crucial to the current research, because only by embedding the Group into the political and artistic fields can we map the origins of the Group's critique of the political transition in 1989 and the founders' right-wing turn after that date. Therefore this chapter also serves as context for understanding the Group's attempt to fuse art and politics, and to the formation of their political ideologies. In this chapter I examine the structures and the depth of the Inconnu Group's integration into the artistic and political field. The chapter thus addresses how the Group's position evolved in the 1980s and concluded in 1988 in a position that the members characterized as the *opposition of the opposition* (ÁBTL 30 December, 1988).

To understand the structuration of these fields and the position of the Inconnu Group within them, following Bourdieu I examine the fields not as fixed entities but as spheres that are in motion (1993b:30-31). According to Bourdieu, the field of cultural production in practice enjoys limited autonomy (1993b:39) in contrast to the Marxist-realist approach that extracts the artwork's content from the social characteristics of its audience, and the aesthetic perspective that focuses only on the internal history and meaning of an artwork (1993a:140). Bourdieu argues that the processes which occur in the field of cultural production are the reverse of those which take place in the economic world, because, were the artistic field to be totally autonomized, it would entirely disregard economic rules (1993b:39). Nevertheless, we can apply Bourdieu's model to state-socialist societies such as 1980s' Hungary only in a restricted sense, because in this particular context the autonomy of the artistic and dissident political fields was structured in relation to state-power, not to the market. The Bourdieusian model of the political field may also be usefully applied (also with restrictions) by recognizing that Bourdieu

described the political field as a field based on representation (1991b:171-202). One crucial difference is that the 1980s' Hungarian political dissident scene lacked delegation, and acted generally as an avant-garde splinter group, bringing the logic of the intellectual field into the political one (Bourdieu 1991b:189).

In this chapter my primary goal is not to directly apply Bourdieu's theory to the position taken by the Inconnu Group, but rather to examine how the Group's position was shaped in and by the state apparatus, by dissident intellectuals and by the art scene. Thus this chapter examines how the Group's anti-establishment anger was structured and channeled by these fields, how the Group's positions in these fields overlapped, how the Group's anger turned against these fields from 1989 onwards and how it eventuated in the founders' expression of anger from the right of the political landscape.

2.1. From discipline to punishment—The political turn and the rise of the counter-documentation practice of the Inconnu Group

In this subchapter I investigate the role of the secret service in the Group's political and artistic position-taking, and in the formation of their position within political and artistic fields. The Inconnu Group was followed by the secret service and the state bureaucracy from 1979 to 1989, and the activities and interventions of the secret service profoundly shaped the political positions of the Group. Although the secret service led a decade-long investigation into the Inconnu Group's activities, these files were likely destroyed in the wake of the political regime change of 1989.[5] I map not only the activities of the secret service but also the reactions of the Group to the secret surveillance, house searches and enforced military conscriptions and propose an approach in which the activities of the Inconnu Group and the secret service are

[5] Information given by Tamás Szőnyei. At this point I would like to thank him for his help orienting me within the Historical Archives of the Hungarian State Security.

embedded in a dialectical relationship which constantly and mutually shapes the actors involved. My approach will also involve Michel Foucault's theory as outlined in *Discipline and Punish* by arguing that the state's attempt to control, immobilize and individualize the Inconnu Group clashed with the activities of the Group and their attempt to gain agency over their activity (Foucault 1995:205).

The first secret service report about the members of the Inconnu Group was written in the summer of 1979 by agent Faragó when the members of the Group were working at the Berekfürdő Art Camp. This report concluded that there was no hostile atmosphere (ÁBTL 24 July, 1979.).[6] The works the Group created in those years provoked social norms such as taste and morality by (mainly) focusing on the artists' themselves, their egos and bodies, and by creating art in which vulnerability, nakedness and self-torture played a central role (Fig. 5), but which was without direct political content. Although the term 'illegal' sometimes appeared in the work, it arose mainly in the context of 'unknown-ness' (in French: *Inconnu*) and not in direct reference to political illegality. Despite the indirectly political action of the Group, retaliatory action started to affect them from 1979 onwards when their activities, performed in a camp for university students, were categorized as scandalous, meaning the members had to leave the place in haste (Bokros 1983); during the same year, they were also barred from the Berekfürdő Art Camp. However, these forms of retaliation had not captured the attention of the secret service, and the next reports about the Inconnu Group were written in 1981 by the same agent who had framed the Group's actions as artistically radical but strictly apolitical (ÁBTL 23 November, 1981). Until 1981 the Group was still present at official institutional events such as a local amateur film festival (Szolnok Megyei Néplap 1979), although the members had

[6] The real name of the agent Faragó was István Tóth, a public educator who invited the Group to the Bekesfürdő art camp, and who was also was their first mentor.

turned away from canonized avant-garde aesthetics (Fig. 6) towards more radical forms of expression.

The first policing measures against the Inconnu Group did not stem from the political position of the Inconnu Group, but did move them to adopt a more radical and more politicized position. In this transition a key point was the conscription of Péter Bokros to the penal battalion of Kalocsa (Inconnu Group 1988). This activity (conscription) was a tool rarely used by the state socialist regime in this context; the usual responses to artistic radicalism being the banning of exhibitions, firings by employers or the withdrawal of passports. As a consequence, by the early 1980s the Inconnu Group were framing their radicalization as a reaction to state oppression. They wrote in 1982 that "everyone will be as radical as the circumstances make them" (Inconnu Group 1982b:4). To the statement of a cultural bureaucrat of Szolnok "Inconnu should be exterminated from the town" they responded that "the reaction will be similarly sharp. Aggression produces aggression, and in this game we have never been the initiators" (Inconnu Group 1982b:4). In this statement the Group positioned itself not only as being oppressed, but also as an entity that, due to its counter-aggression, was able to challenge state power. According to their own narratives the Inconnu Group did not provoke the state, but after facing oppressive reactions were forced to defend their own lifeworld and also attempt to counteract and challenge the hegemony of the state socialist regime.

When in January of 1982 the secret service recruited Mihály Csécsei, one of the founding members of the Inconnu Group, as an agent, their attitudes towards the Group changed. While previously the government had built on the reports of the agent Faragó who described the Group as non-hostile and apolitical, talented and interested in artistic genres not *yet* accepted by a wider audience (ÁBTL 23 November, 1981), after the recruitment of Csécsei the secret service reports started to frame the Inconnu Group as a strictly anti-communist group by arguing that their actions were a response to a consolidated society, accompanied by the holding of a position

hostile towards the Party. The report categorized Inconnu as an anarchist group that desired to struggle, not only theoretically, but also physically (ÁBTL 19 January, 1982).

Inconnu Group's reaction to state- oppression entailed an inversion of the positions of the active state and the should-be passive citizen when the Group posted invitations to the court trial of Tamás Molnár on the 10th of June 1983, and positioned him as the plaintiff, and the state as the defendant (Fig. 7). Through this inversion of roles the Inconnu Group framed its illegal activity as being imbued with moral content, and from this moral perspective claimed the right to accuse the state of activities comparable to the use of trials by the workers movement for propaganda purposes. This trial, the consequence of the confiscation of some of Molnár's prints, fueled the Inconnu Group's development of a radical critique of the executive and juridical branches of the state. Therefore, the politicization of the Inconnu Group and the secret service's framing of them as a hostile anarchist group were not independent processes but shaped each other dialectically.

After the trial, the Group published the bureaucratic materials related to it in a samizdat publication, entitled *Történések és dokumentumok* (Events and documents, 1983). This publication, starting with the motto: *Confront! Document! Publish!* crystallizes the strategy of the Inconnu Group, by which they appropriated the classificatory power of the state and used it as a counter-hegemonic tool. By publishing the documents from the trial, the Inconnu Group took power over the documents produced by the state and made visible the invisible operations of power—thus they stood up against the disciplinary power that is based on the automatic functioning and invisibility of the power, and on the visibility of individuals (Foucault 1995:201). Through initiating a court trial they eroded the surveillance and observation-based panoptical power that aims to foster immobility and individualization, and provoked the state to use punishing power—such as enforced military conscriptions and short-term police custody —instead of disciplinary forms. Therefore the Inconnu Group successfully forced the state to

use a direct form of power against them and by doing so their artistic and political activities successfully capitalized on their oppressed position.

As a consequence, it can be argued that in the 1980s the activities of the secret service and the Inconnu Group mutually shaped and constituted each other. By turning the classificatory power of the state against itself, Inconnu appropriated its practices of documentation and used them for counterhegemonic goals, thereby provoking the state to leave aside the soft tools of surveillance and classification and use punishment against them. Besides the politicization of the Group, continuity can be identified with their early, masochistic body art practices (the replacement of self-hurt in the early artistic activities with the provocation of state power for the purpose of inciting hurt and punishment). Inconnu members could display the wounds caused by the state—such as the above-mentioned *Events and documents* publication—and in this way make visible the existence and the oppressive nature of state power. In this project the transparent, non-panoptical nature of the state-socialist state played into the hands of the Group (Bunce 1999:30) who were able to channel the anger generated by the regime towards itself (Ost 2005:21). The visibility of power gave the Inconnu Group a chance to express their anger against it; this was a successful strategy that the Group continued pursuing until 1989.

The end of the transparent state-socialist state and the emergence of an opaque capitalist state meant that it became more difficult for the Group to express their anger. As a result, they had to restructure it in a way in which the founders could maintain their position as victims. This victim-positioning by the Group was indisputably the product of secret service surveillance and repression and became a core element of the Group's identity at the end of the 1980s. The political and artistic strategy of the Group was also adapted to this position and granted them a moral authority, a pastoral power within the dissident political field. The founders of the Group completely identified themselves with their victim position and continued their anti-hegemonic struggle even after 1989, but turned it against the new elite which emerged in the 1990s. This

new elite (which was dominated by their former allies, the dissident intelligentsia) became the target of their critique due to their position of power and their compromises, and the post-communist technocracy (Eyal, Szelényi and Townsley 1998). Ultimately, it was easy for the former members of the Group to reformulate themselves.

2.2. Partial integration into the dissident political field

In this subchapter I examine how the Inconnu Group became involved in the political opposition to the regime, how their relationship changed during the 1980s, and how these factors influenced the position the Group took after 1989. However, in this subchapter I do not have the opportunity to analyze the establishment, the political ideologies and strategies of the political opposition of the 1980s, thus I can only refer to some of the key points in the literature (Csizmadia 1995). I argue that the Hungarian political dissidents of the 1980s, who usually called themselves the *democratic opposition,* functioned not as a typical political organization, but rather as an intellectual field that took up the burden of political opposition and also the moral values associated with this position (Eyal 2000).

Examination of the intellectual trajectories of the Inconnu Group shows that the Group's integration into the dissident political field was not an automatic process, partly because of the habitual differences between the members and the core of the dissident intelligentsia. The dissident intelligentsia of the 1980s—an informal network that included not more than several hundred people—was generally organized by intellectuals, and in this context the Inconnu Group members were outsiders, not only because they had never completed higher education, but also because of their social background. The founders of the Inconnu Group came from the rural lower-middle class.

The first connections between the Inconnu Group and the democratic opposition occurred around 1982, but the trial of 1983 was the event that stabilized both the Inconnu Group's anti-regime self-identity and their relationships with the dissident political field. Although the Group's publications were sold at the so-called *Rajk butik* as early as 1982 (ÁBTL 19 January, 1982), due to the trial of Molnár and the process of consciously documenting it, the Inconnu Group gained recognition from the dissident intellectuals of Budapest. The Inconnu Group and these intellectuals started cooperating at this time: the members of the Group printed and illustrated illegal publications such as edition no. 8 of *Beszélő* which was confiscated from members at the end of 1983 (Kőszeg 2009), while the dissident intellectuals offered the Group recognition and extensive international support. However, the fact that Tamás Molnár, a member of the Group, and Ferenc Kőszeg, the editor of Beszélő, were fined exemplifies the habitual differences between the members of Inconnu and the core of the dissident intellectuals. While Kőszeg paid the fine, Molnár sent the payment notice to the Minister of Interior and decided to go to jail instead (ÁBTL 4 May, 1984). This act reveals the conscious position taken by the members of the Inconnu Group—which may have its roots in their unusual social background—to categorize themselves as militants and distinguish their modus operandi from the moderate habitus of the dissident intellectuals.

During the mid-1980s the Inconnu Group became well connected and established within the circles of the dissident intelligentsia of Budapest, fostered partly by the fact that the founders moved to Budapest because in Szolnok they did not have the opportunity to exhibit and perform. Their move to Budapest was followed by the secession of Mihály Csécsei, who due to his recruitment by the secret service had less capacity to politicize, and by the joining of Róbert Pálinkás, who had a background both in the dissident intelligentsia and in the punk scene. As a consequence, although a state of mutual dependency developed between the Inconnu Group and the dissident political field, it was an unequal one. For the dissident political scene the

Inconnu Group provided material contributions by printing flyers and samizdat, and served also as an example of artistic dissidence. For the Inconnu Group the integration into the dissident political field was more crucial. Due to the weakening of their embeddedness in the artistic field during the mid-1980s, the Group became increasingly dependent on the dissident political scene. Members of this scene visited their exhibitions, helped the Group financially by providing them with housing (Zrínyifalvi Interview 2016), and supported their political recognition. This catalysed the international network of dissident intelligentsia and was embodied in the frequent news about the Group in Western media, and in their exhibition *Fighting City*, which included Timothy Garton Ash, Danilo Kiš, György Konrád and Susan Sontag on its advisory board and was advertised in *The New York Review of Books* (Debeusscher 2012). Recognition was awarded the Group for its political position, not its artistic quality, but it represented a development compared to the early 1980s when only a few members of the artistic field recognized the Group.

In the dissident political field several intellectuals served for shorter or longer periods as mentors or spokespersons of the Group. This fact reveals both the marginal, subordinated status of Inconnu, and also their need for role models and recognition from the prominent actors in the field. While in the early 1980s György Galántai was a role model for the Group, in the second half of the decade numerous dissident intellectuals such as Gábor Zrínyifalvi, Ferenc Kőszeg, and György Konrád, but most importantly, György Krassó, played the role of advisor, exemplar and spokesperson. These relations with influential actors in the field took different forms, such as an open letter addressed to György Konrád describing how the members of the Group had started to apply the hateless, moral-superiority-based attitudes towards the police that he had suggested (Inconnu 1984:6-7), theoretical texts written about the Group by Gábor Zrínyifalvi (1986:1-5) and mentoring by Ferenc Kőszeg (Molnár 2012). Nevertheless, the most important spokesperson and mentor of the Inconnu Group was György Krassó, whose

confrontational radicalism and populist political views in no way corresponded to the general political attitudes of the dissident intellectuals.

In the third chapter of the thesis I examine more extensively how Krassó's populism influenced the political ideologies of the Inconnu Group, but here—in relation to the field of political dissidents—I argue that Krassó's position, similarly to that of the Inconnu Group, had a dual, internal and external position in the dissident political field that cumulated in their marginalization. Both Krassó and Inconnu belonged to the radical wing of the dissident intelligentsia, both in the sense that they totally rejected the state socialist regime and were attracted by the idea of militant resistance, and in a sense that they were interested in opening up art and politics towards the whole of society. As a consequence, the Inconnu Group's appreciation of Krassó fueled their controversial relationship with the intelligentsia, but while Krassó, who came from an urban, Jewish middle-class family, despite many conflicts remained an integral member of this field, the members of Inconnu largely stayed outsiders due to their lack of cultural and social capital.

The political dissidents' recognition of Inconnu was partial because they recognized only the political radicalism of the Group, while the Group aimed to fuse this with an aesthetical radicalism, as described in the first chapter of this document. Nevertheless, this partial integration of the Group did not eliminate their anti-establishment anger but rather amplified it by showing its legitimacy, and its international recognition. As a consequence, and due to their partial integration into the field, the Inconnu Group was remained more loyal towards its own anti-establishment ideas—that were strengthened by Krassó—than to the internal logic of the field. Thus, when in around 1989 the key dissident intelligentsia started negotiating with the state-party about the "velvet transition", the Inconnu Group continued to follow its earlier strategy by which they had accumulated moral capital through their confrontation with state power and through their self-sacrifice (Eyal 2000). The Inconnu Group continued their dissident

strategy of the 1980s even in 1989, and their radicalism determined their strategy more fundamentally than their embeddedness in the arena of dissident politics; in this way their radicalism ultimately turned against their former allies (Laczó 2015:39).

2.3. Integration into and disintegration from the art field

While the Inconnu Group's partial integration into the dissident political field was the trend in the mid- and late-1980s, the Group integrated into and disintegrated from the artistic field at an earlier period. The Inconnu Group was in touch with some members of the artistic field, such as the art critic László Beke and the mail art artist György Galántai, as early as the late 1970s. Nevertheless, these connections did not lead the Group into a central position within the field. The limits of their integration were not only created by the attitudes and values of the field, but also from the Group's aversion to the established hierarchies of the unofficial art scene. It is not accidental that the Group's first encounter with László Beke—the most influential art critic to actively shape the non-official canon of the period—ended in a debate about the appropriateness of the representation of sexual perversions in the performances of the Group (Csécsei Interview 2016). These conflicts and the Group's critical approach to the hierarchy of the field limited their integration into it. As one of the founders recollected, their motivation to perform was that they saw an artistic display by the Yugoslavian-Hungarian artist Katalin Ladik, and they felt that they could perform better (Csécsei Interview 2016). This indicates that the Inconnu Group consciously distanced itself from the core of the artistic field. This outsider position was reflected even in the investigation carried out by the secret service in which the Inconnu Group was surveilled under code name *Amateurs* [Amatőrök].

Due to the outsider position of the Group, their recognition by the influential actors of the field such as Gábor Bódy and György Cserhalmi after the Group's performance at the Psychiatric

Institution of Budapest in 1982 was crucial to the members (Molnár Interview 2016). It is not accidental that the Group consciously established an artistic canon in which they positioned themselves as the link to the radical performance art of the 1970s. In a letter sent to György Galántai in 1980, the members of the Group asked for the addresses of László Najmányi, Péter Halász and Tamás Szentjóby, who were the central and radical figures of the 1970s Hungarian neo-avant-garde art scene (Fig. 8). Two years later, two members of the Group organized a dinner, and on the menu created for the event they consciously and humorously referred to several figures from the unofficial artistic canon such as György Galántai, Miklós Erdély, László Beke and Zsigmond Károlyi (Fig. 9).

The letter in which the Inconnu members asked Galántai to forward the addresses of the central figures of the 1970s' neo-avant-garde scene relates to a phenomenon that has played a role in the partiality of the Inconnu Group's integration into the artistic field. Szentjóby, Halász and Najmányi represented the most radical elements of the 1970s neo-avant-garde scene, and by the end of the 1970s all of them had emigrated from Hungary (Forgács, 2008). Therefore there were no similar artistic agendas—i.e. those interested in the politicization of art and the merging of performativity, art and music in a radical unity—present in the artistic field of the 1980s, and thus the Inconnu Group lacked context. However, the militant language of the Group evoked some earlier attempts at fusing art and politics such as fascism and socialist realism. The Inconnu Group—similarly to the Slovenian NSK art group and the Laibach band—used the visual and rhetorical language of totalitarianism to express its vanguard position (Monroe 2005). By mimicking the revolutionary aura of early state-socialism the Group positioned itself as a revolutionary force and confronted state power with its non-revolutionary nature. It is clear that the Group replicated some kind official language that manifested itself in the printing of cards with Shadr's *Stone as a weapon of the proletariat* sculpture, and this language and this politicization of the Group caused aversion in the art scene (Fig. 10). This aversion manifested

in the words of the guru of the neo-avant-garde, Miklós Erdély's, who, according to a member of the Group, once labeled them fascists (Pálinkás Interview 2016).

At the turn of the 1980s in Hungary, political and artistic dissidence which in the 1970s had created a subcultural community cased a split. Political dissidence became more organized and anti-systemic, while a good part of the unofficial art scene accepted the depolitization of their art in return for an extension in the autonomy of their activities (Kemp-Welch, 2013). However, the Inconnu Group, being involved in the artistic field and engaged with the idea of artistic autonomy, sought to defend themselves. In the minutes taken after the confiscation of several of the Group's artworks, Tamás Molnár answered an interrogator's question about an artistamp with a penis by saying that "in the current state of art I don't find it unacceptable" (Inconnu Group 1983). This use of the ideology of artistic autonomy is exceptional in the history of the Group, because while the local artistic field primarily tried to achieve a certain level of autonomy for itself, the Inconnu Group, due to its lack of cultural and social capital, did not seek to defend its autonomy and instead of being satisfied with an indirect, metaphorical, ironic critique of the regime chose the path of direct, militant confrontation.

In the mid-1980s the dissident political field deeply incorporated the Inconnu Group, and their presence in the artistic field decreased. The audience for their exhibitions also changed: while in their early performances—such as the most monumental one at the Young Artists' Club (YAC) in 1980—representatives of the art scene were present, their exhibitions in the late 1980s were visited by the dissident intelligentsia, and their personal relationships within the art scene weakened. The spaces in which their activities were located also changed; instead of using underground exhibition spaces such as the YAC or the Bercsényi Club, the activities of the late 1980s took place in private flats and in public spaces. The Group departed from the artistic field in the second half of the 1980s not only in a practical sense, but also in terms of their morals

and attitudes, and kept in touch only with the actors of the field who were also active, like them, in the dissident political field.

To summarize, the Inconnu Group's dialectical relationship with the artistic field fueled their position-taking: they held critical attitudes towards the hegemonic structures of the field yet had a desire for recognition at the same time. Due to their outsider status, in contrast to the other actors of the field, the members of the Inconnu Group spoke directly about politics and did not engage in 'double speech' because they did not have an established position to defend in relation to the autonomy of the field. Although the artistic field of the 1980s offered the Inconnu Group limited recognition, the radical artistic context of the 1970s that could have emancipated their art no longer existed. Therefore, in the mid-1980s the Group started to leave the field and strengthen its activities in the dissident political field that offered them more direct recognition and a better means of channeling their anti-establishment anger directly against the state-socialist regime.

2.4. Interplay and intersections between fields

In the previous three subchapters I analyzed the position of the Inconnu Group in the context of secret service activities and the dissident political and the artistic fields of the 1980s. Nevertheless, these 'different' fields of society are not independent from each other, either according to theory (e.g. Bourdieu), or practice. The Inconnu Group's position-taking in one field lead to impacts on the other. In my conclusion I further specify these interactions to obtain a more complex picture of the position of the Inconnu Group.

While the persecution by the secret service of Inconnu Group gained them entrance to the dissident political field, this did not advance their status within the artistic scene in which they tried to gain recognition through the construction of their own artistic prehistory. However, the

Group's attempt to fuse artistic and political radicalism was supported neither by the political nor by the artistic field. For the artistic field that gradually achieved more autonomy in the 1980s, the Inconnu Group's anti-autonomy stance was an attack on their achievements. For the field of dissident politics, the "political art" of the Group had negative connotations because it differed from the models employed by Western democracies in which, since the end of the 19th century, artists acted as public intellectuals only by formulating positions from their autonomous, separate artistic positions (Bourdieu 1996). Besides this, many of the core actors in the dissident political field were pupils of the philosopher György Lukács, whose realist and anti-avant-gardist aesthetic position conflicted with the Inconnu Group's militant position, sprouting from an avant-garde heritage (Radnóti Interview 2016). However, in the second half of the 1980s, in contrast to the actors in the broader artistic field, the opinion leaders of the dissident political field such as György Bence and Sándor Radnóti at least awarded the Group political recognition, while their aesthetic approach was not recognized either by the dissidents generally nor by the actors of the artistic field. Therefore the dissident political field provided a more efficient and direct way for the Group to express its anti-establishment anger, and which it was able to successfully capitalize on for its own purposes. Thus the art of the Group became subordinated to the political goals of the dissident political field, and their exhibitions and spaces increasingly became hubs for dissident politics rather than expressions of their own artistic originality.

As one of the Inconnu Group's manifestos stated: "the actual counterhegemonic totally political nature of the art is supplied by the apparatus. By the apparatus, which through this act elevates the marginal activities of the avant-garde into the ranks of grand art" (1982b:5), the Group's main goal was to express their anti-establishment anger, not only against the state-socialist regime, but against any type of establishment. Therefore, the Inconnu Group's primary engagement was not with the rules of these fields—to which they were only partially

integrated—but with the radical expression of anger. The fact that the Group did not integrate completely into any of these fields cleared the path towards their rightist turn after 1989, because in rightist politics they were able to channel their anger more efficiently, while the fields to which they belonged in the 1980s had become incorporated into the new liberal democracy.

Chapter 3—The Ideologies of the Inconnu Group

In this final chapter of my thesis I am going to examine the political ideologies of the Inconnu Group. The focus of my inquiry is how these ideologies contributed to the shift of the founders, to their becoming crossover intellectuals, and finally to their shift to the right side of the political landscape.

It is not a given that a group of artists should have a deliberate and well-articulated political ideology, but it is worth examining it in the case of the Inconnu Group, who took a militant position. This inquiry is particularly important for understanding the Group's rightist shift after 1989, which according to my assumption, should in some way be consistent with their political position taken in the 1980s. However, I will argue that the Inconnu Group's ideology was in constant transformation and shaped by different actors and experiences during the 1980s, as even the members reflected on it: "The Manifesto of the Political Art, published in this issue has become outdated and almost all of its statements lost its actuality in the last years" (Inconnu Group 1982). Moreover, I will give space to the internal inconsistencies within the Group's political ideology because the goal of my inquiry is to understand how these ideologies were cemented together in a way that was consistent for the members.

In the following chapter I will approach the Inconnu Group's ideologies through three categories: anarchism, populism, and nationalism. However, it is important to note that these

categories are retroactive, neither the Group nor its context used them in the 1980s to define their art—except the category of anarchism, which repeatedly turned up in the early phase of the Group. Nevertheless, I will argue that these can be useful categories that can reveal both the continuities and the ruptures in the ideologies of the Inconnu Group. They can therefore contribute to understanding why the founders' rightist turn in the 1990s was not unexpectable and unreasonable, but rather a logical turn in the Group's ideological formation.

3.1. Anarchism

Among the three categories that I analyze in this chapter, anarchism was the only one that appears in the documents written on and by the Group in the 1980s. For this reason we should make a distinction between the academic use of anarchism, the use of it in the self-identification of the Group, and its use in police and secret service documents, because we cannot expect the academic use of the term in these sources.

In the official ideological map of state socialism in which the Inconnu Group began its activities, anarchism was clearly a pejorative category, confronting the constructive building of socialism (Bozóki and Sükösd 2006). In this context both the Inconnu Group's self-identification with anarchism—as they wrote around 1980: "the intellectual-artist is an anarchist" (Inconnu Group 1979:22)—and the secret service labeling them anarchists is a clear distinction which both of them used consciously as a classification that refers to an outsider, maverick position in society (Bourdieu Distinction). Nevertheless, the Inconnu Group's anarchism label was more than a self-classification for the purpose of provocation; it also arose from their outsider status, which they described as a mixture of individual and social problems, such as broken families, loneliness, aggression, greed for power, and their jobs as workers (Inconnu Group 1982a:105). The Group's early interest in anarchism was a central element of

their struggle against the state, and it opened paths towards both a leftist-anarchist and a libertarian-capitalist direction, although there is only one example of the latter, their publication entitled *Dangerous Capitalist Commonplaces* (ÁBTL 22 June, 1983). Anarchism's leftist anti-statist direction was the most prominent in the Group's activities. In the second issue of their illegal publication they translated Terry Smith's article entitled "Without Revolutionary Theory" (Smith 1976; Smith 1984) and they also wrote a film script based on the anarchist poems of the Hungarian poet Sándor Petőfi (Csécsei Interview 2016). In 1982, for an exhibition they wrote a list in 82 point type on the possible anti-statist, anarchist use of money, such as: "I split on it and I stick it on a policeman's forehead or I bring it to a madhouse and I look at it as value" (ÁBTL 14 June, 1982).

In the mid-1980s, with their integration into the field of political dissidents, these anarchist traits of the Group became rarer but did not disappear completely. The political dissidents' field offered new forms of political expression for the Group. By integrating into this field their anti-hierarchic anger decreased because it did not fit into the strategy of the dissident intelligentsia that from late 1970 had criticized the regime mainly on human rights issues (Bunce 1999:61). Nevertheless, anarchist references did not disappear totally from the language of the Group; in 1985 they performed an action entitled *Revelation—In Memory of Mikhail Bakunin* in which one of the members used a red rod to try to drive a mouse into a trap that contained a national tricolor instead of cheese while an assistant read out details from Bakunin's *Statism and Anarchy* (Fig. 11) (Inconnu Group 1986:4-5). This shows that the anarchism of the Group had not ceased to exist after their integration into the dissident political field, it just quieted down because they became able to express their anti-establishment anger in new ways. The Inconnu Group's aversion to the state and its revolutionary commitment became central again during the Group's disintegration from the political dissident field. For example, in 1989 at the reburial of the martyrs of 1956 the evolving coalition of post-communist technocrats and dissidents

aimed to remember 1956 by distancing it from the present, while the members of the Inconnu wanted to react and actualize its revolutionary meanings (GYP). At the end of the 1980s, according to a secret service report, they harshly criticized their former allies, the central figures of the dissident political field, for their political ambitions: "János Kis aims to reform the communist party, Demszky wants to be a millionaire, while Kőszeg and Solt seek power" (ÁBTL 30 December, 1988). Therefore, after 1989 the members of the Group reconfigured their aversion to the state and their revolutionary desires in the form of rightist politics because their anger could no longer be expressed as they had articulated it in the 1980s. This raises the question, however, of why they restructured their anger in the form of popular, nationalist rightist politics? In the next subchapter I will try to answer this question through an inquiry into the Inconnu Group's populism.

3.2. Populism

While anarchist traits remained in the Inconnu Group's politics, in this subchapter I will examine how populism appeared in their politics and art and how it opened paths towards the founders' rightist turn after 1989. In my argument I will define the term of populism according to the concept of Ernesto Laclau. According to Laclau, although the term populism is usually used to denigrate the masses, populism is the real logic of politics (Laclau 2007:117). Populism is a self-construction of the "people" as a totality through a chain of unfilled popular demands. This self-construction takes place only among some of the people and at the same time is a construction of an internal frontier dividing society into two antagonistic camps. The Inconnu Group actively practiced populist politics, although they had limited opportunities to articulate themselves towards a wider audience. However, the Group taking an avant-garde position—which I examined in the Chapter 1—had a contradictory relation to populism. While populist politics practices a certain kind of spokespersonship by crystallizing unfilled popular demands

into one central issue or person (Laclau), the avant-garde takes a position not focused on popular demands, but rather it positions itself as a vanguard. This vanguard position was present in the early statements of the Inconnu Group, such as "the vanguard of the political art is the marginal autodidact, who is both mentally and financially independent, is located in class relations and by their own acts serves the dialectic process of change" (Inconnu Group 1981a)., while their position—coming from the lower middle class and having a working class identity while also being avant-garde—was self-contradictory even in itself. Although the social background of the members would have made them ideal subjects for populist politics, in this early phase avant-garde traits characterized the Group. However, the contradiction of their social and artistic position was present already at that time in their complaints about working class people's uninterest in their works (ÁBTL 14 December, 1983).

From the mid-1980s the Inconnu Group made several attempts to reformulate its art and politics in a form more appropriate for populism. As they became integrated into the field of dissident politics, as I argued earlier, they subordinated their art to political struggle. This was the turning point when the anarchist traits of the Group became less pronounced and their shift towards a more popular aesthetic language such as printing posters, stickers, and silk-screened t-shirts. The Group did not limit the use of these works to the artistic and dissident political scenes; they tried to bring them into the streets of Budapest by spreading flyers and stickers during the nights when there was agitation against the Hungarian boycott of the 1984 Summer Olympics. The Group's opening towards the punk scene—in which Róbert Pálinkás played a central role—is also an example of their attempt to get closer to the forms of popular dissatisfaction and anger.

Populism was not the usual political language of the dissident political field, but the Inconnu Group's populism was compatible with expertise-based dissident politics against their common enemy, the state socialist regime. However, in this period we can observe an internal contradiction between the Group's populism, anti-communism, and avant-garde aesthetics.

Their self-sacrificing political struggle for the Group provided recognition of their moral duty and a moral crusader status for them within the dissident political field (Becker 1963:152-155; Eyal 2000), but their confrontational anti-communism was not followed by the 'people', although the Group's aim was to give example for the marginalized ones (Inconnu Group 1981a:70). As a consequence, the Group had to perform its populism from a vanguard position. However, on the periphery of this field, the Inconnu Group found its most important political mentor, György Krassó, who even in the early 1980s had criticized the elitist political position of the dissident intellectuals, and whose political trajectory emphasized the popular nature of 1956 and the idea of workers' councils. These ideas were rich ground for populist politics and 1956 became the most important topic of the Inconnu Group's art and politics in the late 1980s. The Group's graphic, which represented Lajos Batthyány, the executed prime minister of 1848, and Imre Nagy (Fig. 12), the executed prime minister of 1956, beside each other demonstrates how the Inconnu Group utilized the memory of 1956 and embedded it into the history of the struggle for national independence.

While 1956 as the insurrection of the working class fitted into the Inconnu Group's discourses, in which they imagined their 'people' as workers, embedding 1956 into the narrative of the struggle for national independence was also a turning point towards the nationalization of the Group's populist discourses. In the 1980s there was no conflict between the Group's class- and nation-based definition of 'people', and the Group organized memorials for 1956 and performed in punk clubs as well. Thus, the shift of the Group's focus from the working class to the nation did not mean a refusal to identify the 'people' as workers, rather a shift that was reconcilable by imagining their people as a 'proletarian nation' (Pels 2000:xvi).

The populist turn of the Group went hand in hand with the abandonment of the avant-garde genres of art that were not capable of speaking for the 'people' and chain their unfulfilled popular demands. With the rise of their own populist art and politics, the Inconnu Group became

better able to interweave these popular demands and the personal anger stemming from their own personal and social traumas into their activities (Inconnu Group 1982a:105) However, precisely this adaptation of populist politics—which achieved its peak in 1989 when, by a public donation, the Group was able to erect 301 wooden grave markers in the assumed resting place of the martyrs of the 1956 Revolution—was among the central reasons for the founders' rightist turn and the Group's critique of the political transition of 1989.

In Hungary, the transition from state socialism to liberal democracy was achieved through roundtable talks between the opposition and the state party, and the compromises of the political transition were optimal targets for the Group's populist critique, formulated in their self-identification as the *opposition of the opposition* (ÁBTL 30 December, 1988). The Group's struggle fits to Bourdieu's definition of politics, which "takes the form of a struggle over the specifically symbolic power of making people see and believe" (1991b:181) and in this specific case the Inconnu Group's critique was manifested through a struggle over the reordering of post-socialist morality (Verdery 1999:111).In the early 1990s the local political scene in Hungary was crystallized in the binaries of the democratic anti-populism of the Liberal Left and the antidemocratic populism of the Right (Gagyi 2014). In this context, due to the importance of populism in their ideologies, the paths leading towards rightist antidemocratic populism were paved for the Inconnu Group. Due to the insignificance of the Non-Post-Communist Left in Hungary (Gagyi 2015), the personal and societal angers of the Group were articulated decisively in the language of the right, while the earlier primary context of the Group, the field of dissident politics, became the ground of liberal democratic anti-populism and the target of the founders' restructured anger.

3.3. Nationalism

As I mentioned above, in the second half of the 1980s the subject of the Inconnu Group's populism gently shifted from the working class to the nation. While in the early 1980s they were discussing how they were not appreciated among the exploited workers, and even wrote a drama on their experience of working in a sugar factory (Inconnu Group 1981b:16-27), around 1988-1989 the Group primarily thematized national independence through evoking the heritage of 1848 and 1956. Although the members of the Group belonged to the dissident intelligentsia, they expressed their outsider status through the anti-bourgeois and national commitment of their art. Thus, the nationalism of the Group was more a way to express their populist politics than a consciously followed political ideology—as Anderson argues, the idea of nation is closer to kinship and religion than to liberalism or fascism (2006:5), and it was efficient precisely because the nation, just as any other political community, is: *an imagined political community* (Anderson 2006:6).

In the second half of the 1980s, the non-nationalist nature of the Hungarian regime—in contrast with the regime in Romania (Verdery 1991)—and the struggles of the Hungarian minorities in the neighboring countries offered opportunities for the Group to express populist nationalism that was inseparable from both their human rights activism and from the left-leaning threads of the Group's populism. Framing their populism as nationalism, the Inconnu Group was able to utilize a framework that efficiently addressed collective identities and which was not used by the regime, in contrast to a class-based framework that was used by the regime. The Group's first works thematizing the national identity were made for the exhibition *Hungary Can Be Yours!* in 1984, such as a map of Hungary surrounded by red paint and stabbed with red nails (Fig. 13). In the following years the Inconnu Group used several opportunities to express its populist politics through national issues. Their plan *to look for trouble* in Ceausescu's Romania (ÁBTL July 19, 1989), the imprisonment of the Hungarian dissident, Miklós Duray, in

Czechoslovakia, the building of the Gabčíkovo–Nagymaros Dams and the Romanian Systematization offered opportunities for the Group to criticize the communist regimes of Hungary and the neighboring countries at the same time due to their uninterest in the preservation of the national landscape (Fig. 14). Similarly to these cases, the sticker produced by the Group with a pigeon caught on barbed wire, with the caption *proli-berate*, interlaces their proletarian self-identification with human rights issues and national interest (Fig. 15). The Group's last and most important action, the carving and erection of the wooden grave markers, was also a nationalistically articulated populist gesture that seemed dilettantish to the artistic and political experts among the dissident intelligentsia (György 2000:287). The reaction of the dissident intelligentsia to the erection of the wooden grave markers shows that the Inconnu Group could not articulate its anger and interest in populist nationalism through the dissident political or artistic fields from the moment of the dissident intellectuals' rise to power (Ost 2005:184). Therefore the Group's anger started to find paths on the political right and turned against their former allies, for whom—due to their more cosmopolitan background—the question of the nation was much more peripheral.

As a consequence, we can argue that the Inconnu Group's attempt to speak to and for the people and create provocative revolutionary situations was realized in the triangle of anarchism, populism, and nationalism. The most important impact of the Group's anarchist orientation was their aversion towards the state and any established hierarchy. Similarly, their interest in subversive, revolutionary activities made it difficult to integrate them totally into any social field. The members' personal backgrounds were not negligible in the formation of the Group's populist position. Even in the early 1980s the Group felt an urge to speak to people that was hardly compatible with the vanguard position the Group took. However, to realize this goal, in the mid-1980s the Group started to turn towards popular artistic genres at the expense of the

avant-garde ones and also shifted its focus from the working class to the nation as a more stable imagined community.

Nevertheless this shift of the Inconnu Group is not a unique phenomenon; there were numerous crossover intellectuals in the 20th century who, as Dick Pels argues: "bode farewell to the Proletariat in order to engage themselves as spokespersons for the (proletarian) Nation" (2000:xvi). Pels's model describes the space of such intellectuals as a horseshoe placed between the left-right and radical-reformist axes; he argues that the more radical an intellectual, the easier it is to cross the left-right boundary (2000:119-124). By taking a look at the intellectuals Pels examined, who crossed from the radical left to the radical right (2000:119), we can argue that the nationalist shift of the Inconnu Group was not a denial of their leftist, anarchist ideas, but rather a reformulation of their intuitively outsider, bohemian radicalism into a more efficient form in which the militant revolutionary ideas focused on the people of the nation. This reveals how this shift was consistent from their perspective; they continued their opposition with the center that they first identified as bourgeois and communist, and later as bourgeois and liberal-capitalist. At the same time, this shift and the revolutionary and populist interests of the Inconnu Group came into conflict with the dissident intelligentsia that preferred a peaceful transition and compromise with the post-communist elite. This conflict from 1988-1989 pushed the Group towards the right side of the political field where they found space to express their anti-establishment anger that in the 1990s targeted primarily their former allies, dissident intellectuals.

Conclusions

In the early 2000s the two members of the Inconnu Group who had been active from the foundation to the dissolution of the Group became involved in the radical rightist part of the

Hungarian political scene and had a direct confrontation with the majority of the former dissident intellectuals of the 1980s. In this thesis I have argued that the national populist shift of the Inconnu Group's founders cannot be simplified to a *degeneration*, rather, I argue, it can be understood as a consequence of the position the Group took in the 1980s: their artistic and political ideologies and their relation to different social fields.

For this reason in this thesis I examined that how the Group's anti-establishment anger and radicalism were produced and shaped by their aesthetics, by their politics, and by the position they took in the social fields of the 1980s. In the Chapter 1, by examining the art of the Inconnu Group, I argue that their primary attempt was to fuse radical aesthetics with radical politics by going beyond the duality of autonomous and heteronomous art. The Group constantly transgressed the traditional boundaries of the artistic and political fields, but in the second half of the 1980s, even their own art was altered and became heteronomous by serving the political goals of the dissident intelligentsia, which went hand in hand with their turn towards more popular artistic genres. For the late 1980s the Inconnu Group were provocative only in a political sense, but the political transition cleared away the target of the Group's critique, the state socialist regime. Thus, the Group's radical project to fuse aesthetics and politics in their art was unsuccessful; due to the subordination of their art to politics, the founders could only restructure their inherent radicalism in a political way.

In Chapter 2 I examined how the Inconnu Group's ressentiment was affected by their relations with the different social fields of the 1980s. Although both the artistic and the dissident political fields offered a critique of the regime, the Inconnu Group's criticism was more fundamental. As the secret service reported on them:

> The Group opposes not only the official bodies, but also the whole culture and morality [...] and they deny the ideals on which the society is based. This reveals

> that the Group would not find a role model even in the capitalist system, and its anarchism is against all consolidated social systems. (ÁBTL 19 January, 1982)

The Group's radical critique was also fueled by the secret service surveillance and police measures, which pushed the Group into a position in which they consciously provoked the state power and took the position of victims. This confrontational position as victims contributed to the Group disintegrating from the artistic field and integrating into the dissident political field, which recognized the Group's moral crusade. Nevertheless, this integration was only partial because due to their radicalism and their social background the members of the Group remained outsiders in this field. These differences became crucial during the political transition of 1989, in which the dissident intellectuals played a central role, but the Group's critique targeted the compromises with the state power.

The secret service report quoted above also reveals the anarchist, anti-hierarchical traits of the Inconnu Group's radicalism. In Chapter 3 I argue that in the mid-1980s the Group—due to their involvement in the field of dissident politics—shifted their earlier artistic vanguard position towards populism. The Group's focus shifted even further within the political idea of populism, from the working class towards the nation. This shift was bridged by the idea of a proletarian nation that was efficient because it was not used by the state power and offered a strong imagined community. In the 1990s the Group's populism and nationalism became breaking points with their former allies, the dissident intellectuals, whose aversion to these ideas gave way to the Group towards rightist anti-democratic populism.

The Inconnu Group's shift from the dissident political field towards national populism is an atypical case in the Eastern European political transitions, in which the liberal and the depoliticizing shifts were usual, and concerning which the previous literature focused on the rightist shift of the working class or on the formation of new elites. I argue here that the Inconnu

Group's marginalization within the artistic and political fields of the 1980s is a normal exception. While in the 1980s the common enemy—the state socialist regime—compressed the political radicalism of the Inconnu Group and the dissident intellectuals, in the 1990s the former members' militant radicalism revived and was articulated as national populism. The secret service report predicted well: the founders of the Group did not find their place in the new, capitalist Hungary.

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Illustrations

Fig. 1. The performance of the Inconnu Group at the Young Artists' Club, in Budapest, 1980. Courtesy of Artpool Art Research Center, Budapest.

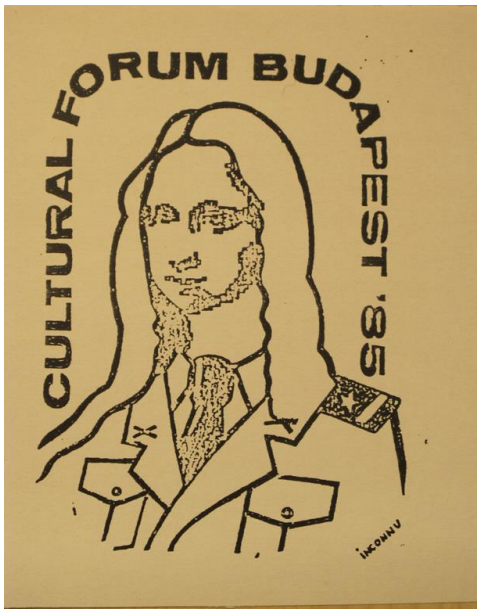

Fig. 2. Mona Lisa in police uniform. Graphics produced by the Inconnu Group on the occasion of the European Cultural Forum, held in Budapest in 1985. Courtesy of Budapest City Archives, Budapest.

Fig. 3. The Inconnu Group erects wooden grave markers in the in the assumed resting place of the martyrs of the 1956 Revolution, 1989. Photo: Piroska Nagy, Courtesy of 1956 Institute, Budapest.

Fig. 4. The Inconnu Group's action in a protest organized by oppositional parties against the Tiananmen Square massacre, 1989. Courtesy of Historical Archives of the Hungarian State Security, Budapest.

Fig. 5. Inconnu Group: Unknown Sensation, photo, 1981. Courtesy of Artpool Art Research Center, Budapest.

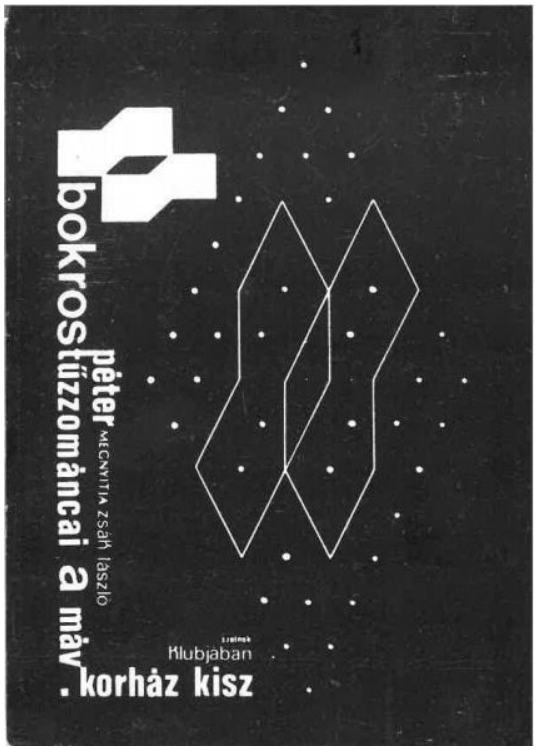

Fig. 6. Invitation Card to Péter Bokros's enamel exhibition, 1978. Courtesy of Artpool Art Research Center, Budapest.

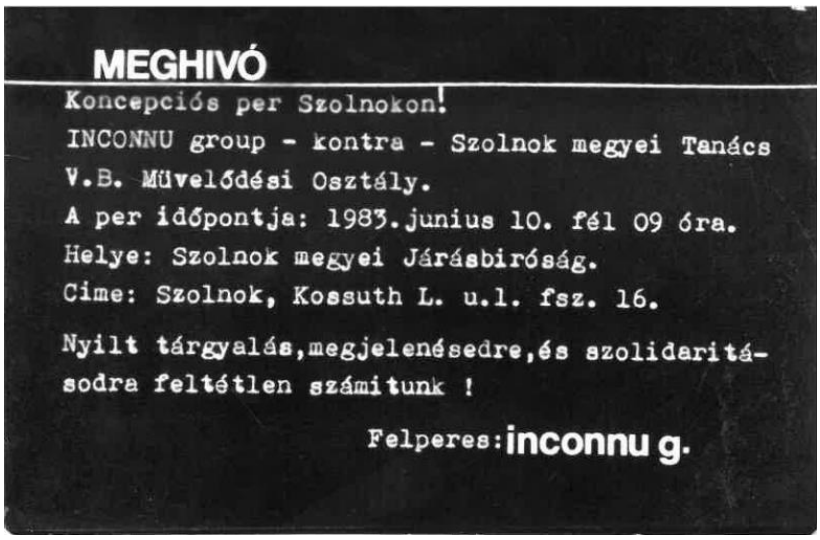

Fig. 7. Inconnu Group: Invitation to a show trial, 1983. Courtesy of Artpool Art Research Center, Budapest.

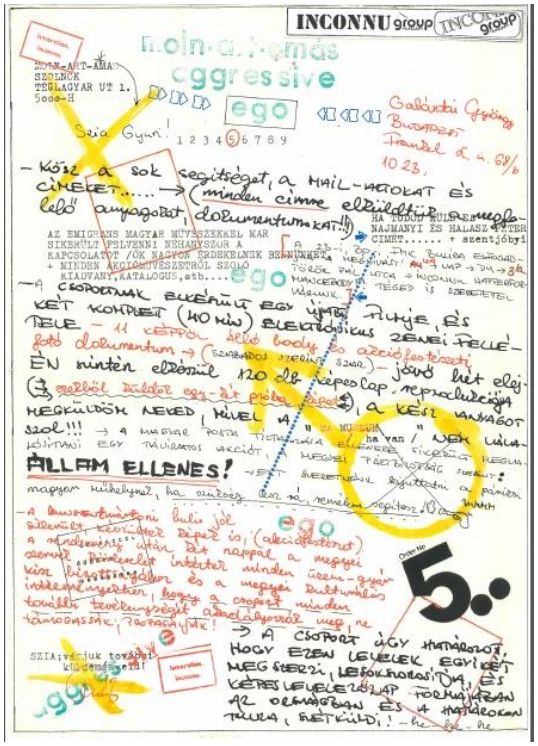

Fig. 8. The Inconnu Group's letter to György Galántai in 1980. Courtesy of Artpool Art Research Center, Budapest.

Fig. 9. Art menu, created by Péter Bokros and Magdolna Serfőző, 1982. Courtesy of Artpool Art Research Center, Budapest.

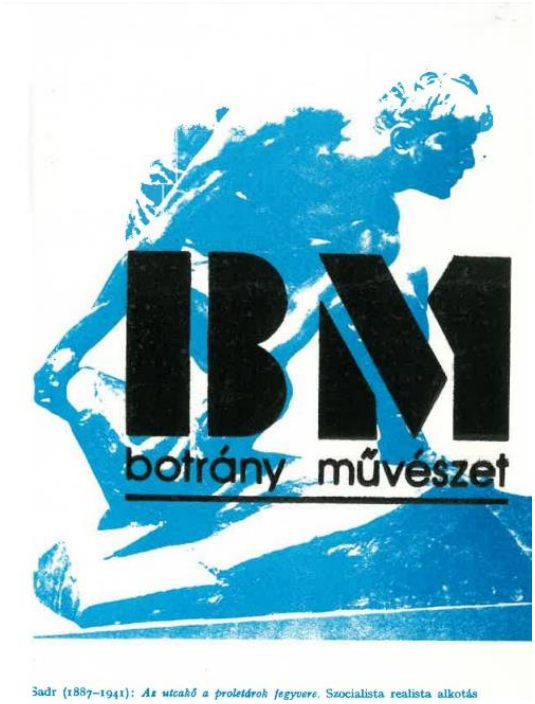

Fig. 10. The Inconnu Group's BM Scandal Art (*Botrány Művészet*) stamp on a reproduction of Shadr's *Stone as a weapon of the proletariat*, mid-1980s. Courtesy of Artpool Art Research Center, Budapest.

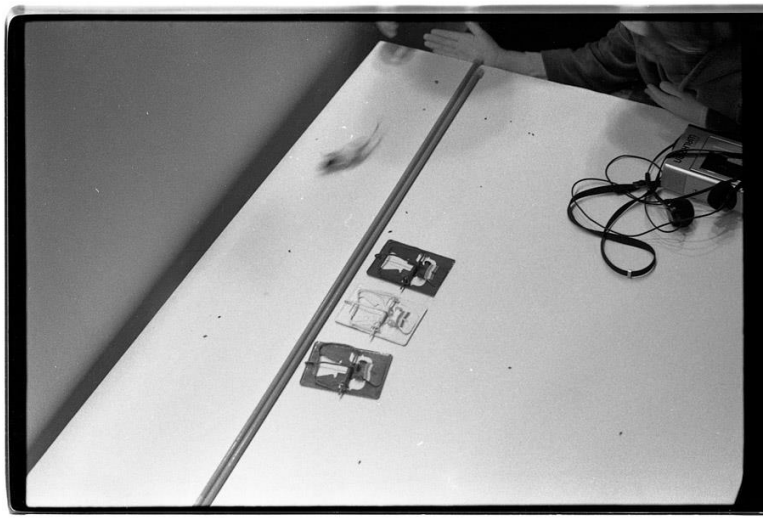

Fig. 11. Inconnu Group: Revelation—In Memory of Mikhail Bakuni*n*, performance, 1985. Photo: Attila Pácser, Courtesy of Artpool Art Research Center, Budapest.

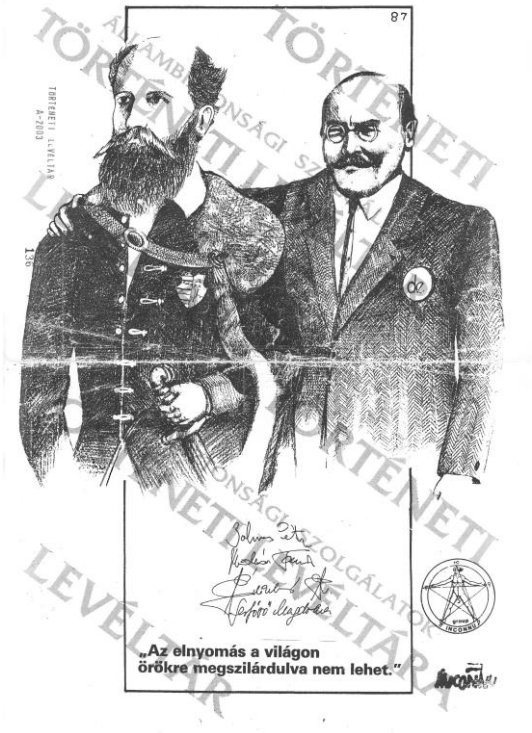

Fig. 12. The Inconnu Group's graphics on Imre Nagy and Lajos Batthyány, 1988-1989. Courtesy of Artpool Art Research Center, Budapest.

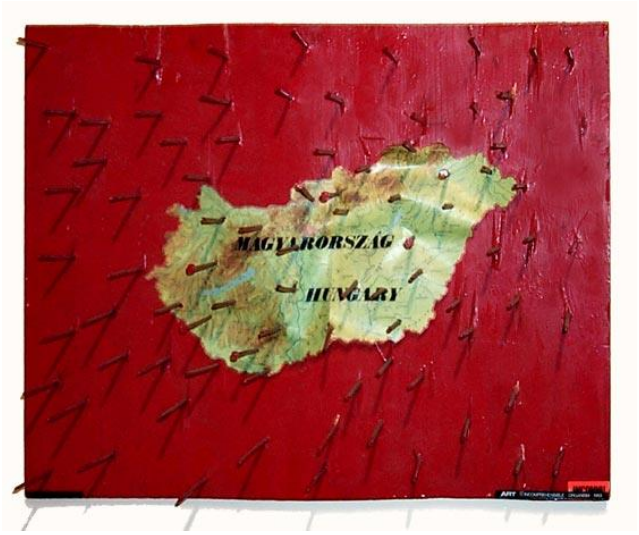

Fig. 13. The Inconnu Group's work, produced for the exhibition *Hungary Can Be Yours!* in 1984. Courtesy of Artpool Art Research Center, Budapest.

Fig. 14. The Inconnu Group's sticker, protesting against the Romanian Systematization around 1988-1989. Courtesy of The Vera and Donald Blinken Open Society Archives, Budapest.

Fig. 15. The Inconnu Group's stickers. Courtesy of The Vera and Donald Blinken Open Society Archives, Budapest.