Potholes, Bus Shelters and the Four-Color Theorem: the Politics of Infrastructure in Contemporary Hungary

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ABSTRACT

The political environment in Hungary after the 1989 democratic transition has become more and more polarized which created cynicism among citizens about democracy and democratic processes. The Hungarian Two-tailed Dog Party is a mock political party that started off as a social movement challenging cynicism as well as the political status quo by focusing on hyperlocal issues. Based on data obtained with a mixed methodology of ethnographic interviews and participant observation, I demonstrate that the party is able to create mechanisms and processes of contentious politics by drawing attention to the failures of infrastructure using humor, street art and do-it-yourself urbanism. Recently, the party started running at elections, and since late 2019, several members of the Hungarian Two-tailed Dog Party are working in local governments in political positions. This new period in the life of the movement is slowly shifting its position and tactics, and it is making the process of institutionalization more visible.

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"The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath.
So the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath."
Mark 2:27-28

INTRODUCTION

In this thesis, the broader context I am looking at is the city which is home to the fight over the locality and its politics and at the same time it provides a ground for grassroots initiatives to contribute to the public discourse in many ways from fighting and creating policies to protesting in the physical space: painting on walls, building blockades or tearing them down. In order to show how public spaces become spaces of contention, and what mechanisms can drive a process of long-term contention, I am going to analyze the street interventions of the Magyar Kétfarkú Kutya Párt (abbrev. MKKP) or the Hungarian Two-tailed Dog Party. The MKKP is known in Hungary as a *viccpárt* or mock political party. The reason for being labelled as a mock political party is their heavy use of puns, witty jokes, funny street art, and hacking the media via absurd interventions. In the following, I am going to introduce the political context the party operates in, its actions, the way the party recruits new sympathizers, and the grounded ideology it promotes. I am going to demonstrate that the party goes much further than joking for the sake of having a good laugh, albeit that is also very important in their activities, humor has a very specific role in the party's activities. In addition to humor, the party is using unconventional methods of engaging people based on street-level, local issues. These interventions involve a range of activities from painting pavements, do-it-yourself fixing of potholes, or running at local elections. I interviewed several followers and members of the MKKP. In the past decade, the Hungarian Two-Tailed Dog Party developed a methodology that with the help of politicizing seemingly apolitical pieces of infrastructure such as pavements and bus shelters, pushed citizens towards democratic participation. I hypothesize that MKKP have a clear idea of why street interventions of beautification and drawing attention to the failures of infrastructure are a good tool to do contentious politics in Hungary. As a conclusion,

I am going to show these methods are now being institutionalized with the evolution of the party into a real political party with real councilors and even a deputy-mayor in local government.

Politics in Hungary

The best way to understand the operation of the Hungarian Two-tailed Dog party, is to first understand the political context that gave space to the emergence and rise of the party. After being part of the so-called Eastern bloc for over 70 years, Hungary has peacefully transitioned into a market-oriented democracy in 1989. Contemporary thinking would phase the period after the transition into three parts. 1990 to 2000, 2000 to 2010, and after 2010. This is partly based on a general perception I developed as a Hungarian citizen more or less attuned to following politics, and it is also based on the political trends one can identify based on ruling parties and looking back at these periods historically. After the transition democracy and the market-oriented mode of exchange was absolutely new to people, people had to learn working and living in a completely new system, and in the grand scheme of things, the country had to adopt a new mode of working, too, with new laws being drafted, the legal system amended to fit this whole new world where the global context has become much broader than the neighboring countries and Russia-friendly diplomacy. In fact, in many aspects the first period for many was characterized by a strong rejection of the past, and a strong hopefulness induced by this new regime of democracy. In her article on how "coloniality of power" affected Hungary in East Central Europe, Ágnes Gagyi highlights that Hungary has adopted to symbolic frameworks of inferiority in the process of integration into the global democratic community and also in the European Union (Gagyi, 2016, p. 351). Hungary's accession to the European Union was in 2004, in an interview just a year before, László Sólyom, the first head of the Constitutional Court and later a president of Hungary, who was active in the forming of the

legal frameworks during the 1989 transition process, already complained about the vanishing of a formerly important "European" values (Bundula, 2003). Very early on after the transition, Ágnes Gagyi explains, political polarization started by liberal elites promoting a pro-democracy discourse calling for the country to fit in the global hierarchy, while conservative elites focused on the protection of national interests. This created a new political environment where the global trend of shifting to right-wing governments and often right-wing extremism have appeared in Hungary as well. In 2010, the right-wing coalition of Fidesz and the Christian conservative KDNP won the general elections gaining supermajority which in Hungary means the governing parties can amend and introduce any legislation. Under the leadership of Viktor Orbán, who was prime minister between 1998 and 2002, the Hungary has stepped on the road of what Kim Lane Scheppele called a decline of democracy in Hungary and an introduction of "autocratic legalism" (Scheppele, 2018, p. 547). Hungary has developed into a hard-to-categorize political regime for which many have used the labels of populism, hybrid regime or illiberal democracy. While prime minister Viktor Orbán has been using illiberalism as a positive term describing his governance as the different way that means not bowing to Western democracies (Boda, 2017, p. 86), neither following the European Union's terms. Since 2010, while his critics focused on the loosening rule of law and the erosion of democratic values, the prime minister has been focusing on building those necessary relations with the Hungarian public via soft measures in the form of campaigns, public consultations and careful political narratives. New parties and social movements have emerged on both sides but it was mainly the extreme right-wing party Jobbik that thematized Hungary's position in the global hierarchy with a strong criticism against economic subordination (Gagyi, 2016, p. 360).

In his article, Zsolt Boda argues that the political polarization of elites eventually led to a situation where there is no moral common ground for judging what is happening in the country's political environment which then leads to cynicism on behalf of citizens who see no

legitimacy in a democratic system (Boda, 2017, p. 107). In the search of common moral ground, in the past decade, the only territory where Fidesz's narrative received genuine critique and where the propaganda machine could not form enough of a glue has been the level of local governments where people still might connect to a local, and from time to time different polity than the one created by the governing party. It is exactly at the level of local government's that citizens connect with directly elected leaders and are part of a de-centralized institution of democracy that still exists, in some form, in Hungary. A similar case in point is the analysis of the institution of Russian city managers that is showing us that the municipal level of bigger cities can be still a fertile ground of growing opposition movements and become the ground of opposition politics. Margarita Zavadskaya describes the municipal leaders of Russian cities being in a constant struggle with federal politics and accountability towards local residents, meanwhile running an administration on a constant financial strain (Zavadskaya, 2020).

The Hungarian Two-Tailed Dog Party (Magyar Kétfarkú Kutya Párt)

There is one Hungarian social movement that had always been a party in its name but became a registered political party only in 2014. The "Magyar Kétfarkú Kutya Párt" (abbrev. MKKP), or Hungarian Two-Tailed Dog Party, has focused on the local level in the past decade and gained more and more popularity with a strategy that is correcting the after-transition top-down human rights and development discourse with a humorous bottom-up discourse on infrastructural failures. A study on the history of the Hungarian Two-tailed Dog Party highlighted the way the party builds well on the condition that in East European countries it is hard to find higher level cohesion in society, meanwhile local communities are still strong (Oross et al., 2018, p. 167). From street art to television mockery, in the toolkit of the party many examples exist that show us the way people can be still connected to new polities. The main message for years for MKKP was to mock the public discourse led by politicians taking

themselves too seriously. The tongue in cheek messaging and all the jokes and street art paintings connected the 'masses' that lost connection with national politics.

Dániel Oross, Eszter Farkas and Réka Kinga Papp in their paper on the party's ideology describe the origins of the party as a mainly performance art based initiative between 2003 and 2009 (Oross et al., 2018, p. 171). The then art group, founded by Gergely Kovács and Zsuzsanna Döme, hacked their way into national media in 2006 by pasting up posters of a fictional election candidate in the southeastern city of Szeged where they were based. The posters of the fictional candidate described him as a two-tailed dog. The joke was covered widely in the national media. After that the "party members" continued their work of street art pieces and public art interventions. In 2009, one of the founders moved to the capital Budapest. The MKKP's work in the capital gave the funny street art messaging more visibility, and the party's actions themselves focused strongly on mocking the political atmosphere, for example by organizing a "general demonstration" that around 200 people attended in front of the Hungarian Central Statistical Office arguing that the existence of this office didn't make any sense (Le, 2009). This was a direct mockery of the frequent demonstrations that started in 2006 because of the then prime minister Ferenc Gyurcsány's leaked speech that ruined general trust in politics (BBC, 2006). The MKKP's references to contemporary politics in their public art stayed, and in 2010 three members ran as candidates for the local elections as delegates of a cultural association. Many Hungarians still remember the MKKP from a 2010 television interview where a comedy artist represented the party, and the journalist played along with his jokes (Oross et al., 2018, p. 173). This has become one the signature media appearances of the party.

The party has many stories of political humor or humorous and witty political interventions that were memorable enough that Hungarian voters will later remember the brand and tactics of the Two-Tailed Dogs. One of these big moments was the 2015 fundraising

campaign against the government's anti-migration communication. Hungary's government was running a billboard campaign targeting the European Union's migration quota with messages such as "If you come to Hungary, you have to keep our laws.". The only voice that stood out strongly against it was the MKKP collecting donations (Le, 2015), and later mocking the government's messaging by renting billboards and using a very similar design posting funny (e.g. "Feel free to come to Hungary, we already work in England!"), twisted, sometimes completely meaningless texts on the streets. Hungary ran a referendum on the migration quota in 2016, and Dániel Oross points out that the MKKP was promoting the handing in of invalid votes which resulted in 7% invalid votes, an increase from the usual 2% at elections (Oross, 2019, p. 182).

The 2018 parliamentary elections were the Two-Tailed Dog Party's first elections since they became an official political party – a legal recognition they fought for for years. The party's representative was also interviewed as part of a public service requirement to provide coverage to all running parties. MKKP's Sopron city candidate in 2018 appeared dressed in a chicken costume and a suit. The journalist kept asking serious questions about the candidate's program for the whole 5 minutes of the provided broadcasting time and the interviewee kept responding only using sounds Hungarians use to mimic a chicken (Novak, 2018). The MKKP received 1.7% of votes at the 2018 general elections, and 2.6% at the European Parliamentary Elections in 2019.

These political successes had an effect on the institutionalization of the party as well. The Campaign Finance Act of Hungary (Ligeti et al., 2015, p. 10) provides political parties with a campaign budget based on the number of constituencies in which they have successfully listed candidates. In 2018, the party received cca. 193 million Hungarian forints (cca. EUR560,000). The party utilised the logic of international democracy-building foundations: they re-distributed the campaign funds to people who wanted to do something for their

community. The RÓSÁNÉKATÉKA "squandering fund" is aimed at spending the mock political party's state-sponsored campaign funds on projects that are "usable for as many people as possible, useful, funny, in some cases [the initiative] fills in a gap and/or the neighbourhood will be better, and it makes life good" (Kétfarkú Kutya Párt, 2017b). After the 2019 EP elections, the party members voted to have paid staff members.

What do I know about the Two-Tailed Dog Party?

Originally, I wasn't that keen on only focusing on the MKKP, I wanted to have the time and attention to talk to people from different initiatives about the failure of public infrastructure and the deficiencies of the state. I got to know the party in 2013 a bit better than before, more than noticing witty jokes on stickers and posters in the city, because the non-governmental organization I worked for had an office in the same building with the MKKP, and my boss knew the president, Gergő Kovács well. I can't recall any serious interactions, once I was invited to a brainstorming and ideation meeting because I have been running a website called Jarokelo.hu where people can upload photos of failed infrastructure to notify the local governments about failures in their area. I personally believed that the efforts should be focused on making the local government work by their own tool, challenging them on a legal basis, documenting their failures, and showing them data about how badly they work. Despite my position, at the ideation session I presented a couple of cases that were lost in the labyrinth of bureaucracy and needed the kind of attention the MKKP is famous for, a funny intervention that can grab people's attention. Later, the MKKP also published a website where they collected examples of such failed infrastructure only for the sake of ideations. This has become a part of what they call Rendkívüli Ügyek Minisztériuma or Ministry of Extraordinary Affairs sessions, the sessions where people come up with funny and creative ideas to bring attention to infrastructural failure.

Despite the fact that I have been throughout the years very critical towards the mock position the MKKP took, I have also been a part of that group of people in Hungary who still thought it better to have the MKKP challenging how politics is working in the country than accepting what I really don't like. In 2016, I moved to London but travelled to Budapest in August the same year, and saw the government's hateful billboards everywhere about the European Union forcing Hungary to accept "migrants" according to a quota. The only voice that stood out strongly against that was the MKKP collecting donations (Le, 2015), and later renting billboards and posting funny messages on the streets that delegitimized the discourse of the government by mocking it. In 2018, after almost two years spent in London, I moved home to Budapest a week before the general elections. That was the first election where the MKKP could run as an officially registered party. I still resented the state of politics in Hungary, so I voted for the MKKP. Then when the preliminary election results were published on the night of 11 April 2018, I regretted what I thought was a protest vote. Protesting against this badly working democracy where I have to vote for parties I don't accept as my political options. The results showed the start of another four years of Fidesz, the party I mostly resented being in power since it has been ruining the democracy I knew. I have been part of a generation that grew up and went to school in Hungary after 1989. If I had to be brief, I would just say, those first 10-15 years were probably offering some sort of promise to people about things being better and being democratic, and just politics working for people in general. Due to several conditions local and global, the most critical would say, none of this worked out.

During my research, I recognized myself in the voice of the people I interviewed from the MKKP. I recognized myself in their words that keep saying: no this can't be like that, we need this country to work for us, we need change. However much I resented my, in a way, badly spent vote in 2018, and even if I thought at the start of my fieldwork in August 2019 at the MKKP summer camp that based on what I saw there, somehow the party is channeling away

the energy of creative people who should be fixing Hungarian politics, I still strongly believe that the MKKP should be doing what they are doing. They have to be here. I believe it now more than ever because I saw with my own eyes how much they are working for achieving what they believe in. What started off as an act of mocking, has become a very serious process directed at achieving systemic change.

A lot has changed for the party since August 2019 when I started my fieldwork. In September political parties started campaigning for the local elections that happened on 13 October 2019. Not knowing much about participant observation, or really about observation, as I myself am more of a participant-minded person, I jumped head in and helped as a volunteer with some campaign actions. Many of them were the same actions I will later describe as the party's regular mode of working, but this time they were aimed at grabbing the voters' attention. The local elections' result was a massive success for MKKP. The party has several members that are currently working in local governments in Budapest as local representatives, there is even an MKKP-delegated deputy mayor.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In the following, I am proposing to situate the MKKP's activities by looking at three themes of anthropological literature. Firstly, the MKKP started as a performance art group reflecting on social issues, more specifically, political participation in Hungary. Therefore, I propose to look at the party's evolution through the lens of contentious politics of social movements, a term introduced by Charles Tilly and Sidney G. Tarrow. Secondly, the activities of the MKKP are relying heavily on a grounded ideology that starts from an interaction with urban infrastructure. Infrastructure provides the material conditions for the contentious politics of MKKP, that allow the challenging of the status quo, and help them create a new equilibrium. People have ideas about infrastructure that are often expressed in the form of promise, a quality observed more closely by Penny Harvey and Brian Larkin. Thirdly, the MKKP is using a specific toolkit of Do-It-Yourself urbanism when they interact with infrastructure. DIY urbanism includes a range of activities from guerilla gardening to the painting of bike lanes illegally, in order to create more space for interaction for citizens and challenge the expert-amateur dichotomy introduced by the practice of urban planning. This is looked at in detail by Gordon C.C. Douglas who discusses the legitimacy of these interventions.

The contentious politics of social movements

Sidney G. Tarrow summarizes contentious politics as a modus operandi when ordinary people are challenging big politics via small politics (Tarrow, 2011a, p. 6). Contentious politics starts with a recognition of common interests and through the means of collective action resources are mobilized by social movements in order to grab political opportunities or challenge the constraints of political participation. Tarrow highlights that contentious politics is a direct action against elites that disrupts the status quo defined by a long-lasting framing work, ideological packages or mainstream cultural discourses in society. The ways of contesting these structures are highly dependent of the then current situation. Contentious

politics needs a space and time to make them work, a host setting where the direct forms of action such as performances, disruption or even violent behavior deliver their effect. The constant search for the appropriate host setting and the need for often very quick and disruptive delivery require strong commitment on behalf of the members of a social movement (Tarrow, 2011b, p. 104). In order to keep their activities at the same intensity level, social movements have to come up with a strong repertoire of practices that might work at any given moment and contain the same political message. For example, Tarrow observes that demonstrations have become an advantageous practice in many societies given the nature of the intervention allows more control to the state to control and manage the activities of the participants. In "Contentious Politics" Charles Tilly and Sidney Tarrow make a distinction between contained contention and transgressive contention where contained contention would be the example of demonstrations that have their own institutional routines (Tilly & Tarrow, 2015a, p. 62). In the following, looking at transgressive contention will be important because by using transgressive methods social movements aim to cross institutional boundaries, and more specifically aim at adopting new forms of claim making with the help of the introduction of these new forms as new, tolerated routines.

This type of institutionalization results in "goal displacement" where many social movements lose their radical element and become more focused on achieving moderate goals. The institutionalization and professionalization of social movements brings up new challenges in terms of their modes of organizing, legitimacy and openness to innovation.

Tarrow explains Richard Samuels' definition of bricolage as a combination of familiar and new framing, where the familiar pulls in the citizens and then mobilizes them by using a new frame that opens the way to contest (Tarrow, 2011b, p. 146). For social movements, the framing of contention is crucial, and it is largely influenced by the media. Another element is the risk of suppression or repression of the movement. A tactic often used by democratic states

is the repression via channeling. For example, without the use of violent repressive measures, simply to make it more expensive for people to participate in a social movement, additionally, a tool of repression is the state's coercion of contentious mechanisms. In democratic countries, there is a certain space provided for contention, in authoritarian regimes contention is much more limited and regulated by the state. Tilly and Tarrow argue that in the case of China, because organized collective contention is so limited, activists had to come up with innovations such as "disguised collective action" (Tilly & Tarrow, 2015a, p. 63).

MKKP street art depicting pissoirs, a reaction to hidden spots being used as public toilets in Budapest. Photo by Marietta Le, 17 June 2019.

Infrastructure and its social life

Studies on the rapidly changing urban environment and sociality constantly go back to Henri Lefebvre's concept of the "right to the city" in discussions about the contemporary urban space, however, according to Purcell, the emergence of the concept in policy-making demonstrates a significant transformation of Lefebvre's original idea (Purcell, 2014). The discourse on space and time in the city is important in my research because highlights the 'original' questions of my research topic, presented by David Harvey upon discussing the social construction of space and time (D. Harvey, 1994, p. 127): who determines the current understanding of space and time in the city, and what power relations can we read from this understanding about social relations or modes of production? The concept of the right to the city has been around since 1968 but with globalization and the widely spread phenomenon of residents of cities being dispossessed, Harvey argues we need "to adopt the right to the city as both working slogan and political ideal" (D. Harvey, 2018, p. 294). My goal is to bring together this political ideal with a discussion on the failure of infrastructure in Hungary.

Infrastructure is a specific concept and theme in anthropological research that originates from studies on technology and its politics (Larkin, 2013, p. 329). In the article "Do Artifacts Have Politics?", Langdon Winner places "technical things" in the social, and strictly in that, warning us from mystifying the activities and relations of what was eventually created by human beings (Winner, 1980, p. 121). Winner argues that technology is always embedded in a social ecosystem, and we can always investigate if there was a political intention behind the construction of it, and if there was, what kind of social order it was aiming to promote and solidify. Research on infrastructure often focuses on investigating how politics is played out, what drives people's thinking when they imagine infrastructure. Imagining is an important act because it is the source of motivation. People imagine – and are taught to imagine – that the result of constructing (and maintaining) infrastructure brings about (economic) "progress". The

desire for new infrastructure appears in Max Gluckman's "The Bridge" (Gluckman, 1940) as well with a detailed ethnography of the social relations around it. Dimitris Dalakoglou and Penny Harvey connect the imaginations about roads to an understanding of space and time associated with modernity (Dalakoglou & Harvey, 2012, p. 462). In their research about the construction of roads in Peru, Penny Harvey and Hannah Knox apply the concept of "enchantment" (P. Harvey & Knox, 2012, p. 522). They also argue that roads represent three promises in Peruvian society: speed, of political integration and of economic connection. In his article about the installation of public radio loudspeakers in Nigeria, Brian Larkin gives a summary of how research on the "promise of infrastructure" treats infrastructure: taking into consideration political conditions and "the emotional entailments generated by those conditions" together with the fact that they are the representation of state-citizen relations (Larkin, 2018, p. 189). Larkin points out that through affect such as promise, desire or frustration, and through their existence perceived by our senses, infrastructures form people as subjects (Larkin, 2013, p. 333).

Upon studying citizens' relation to public transport in Sarajevo, Stef Jansen describes the concept of "gridding" contrasting it with James C. Scott's description of state-imposed structures on society, Jansen argues that gridding is a bottom-up desire for a working service (Jansen, 2015, p. 71). Francisco Martínez, in his research on holes in Georgia, posits that holes need more investigation because they have a social and subjective quality that shapes and produces social relations. Martínez argues that holes invoke the idea of "existential repair" but there is also an "oscillation between a desire for wholeness and its impossibility, since the results of repair works are fragile" (Martínez, n.d.). Even failure and neglect move along a scale of political reality, in some cases a not-working service represents extremes as it is exemplified in the ethnography of Julie Y. Chu. Her work on forced removals in Fuzhou, China shows that

these measures are enforced through bureaucratic inertia and infrastructural malfunctions caused by intentional neglect (Chu, 2014, p. 353).

An engineer and researcher on road infrastructure in Hungary, András Timár claimed in 1992 that the country transitioned to a new political system with a low quality road network that not only needed upgrades but significant extensions as well (Timár, 1992, p. 290). He also pointed out, or perhaps hoped, that the new expectations brought about with the change of political system will also change the "behavior" of bureaucrats working at roadworks companies (Timár, 1992, p. 293).The perception of failure and the actors reactions to it can vary from despair to gridding for a better service. I situate my research in the literature on the social and political reality of infrastructural failure and how the state is being challenged on its deficiency.

Do-it-yourself Urbanism

Public space in cities have been a constant location of contest. The globalized logic of capitalism, the sometimes arbitrary logic of local land use regulations, urban planning and other attempts at regulating urban spaces have inspired people to invent new ways to contest these efforts. Jeffrey Hou calls the reclaimed and contested sites insurgent public spaces pointing out that because of their mode of production these allow for better participation and spontaneity. Hou emphasizes that these new public spaces are created outside the institutionalized frameworks such as urban planning (Hou, 2010, p. 15). One mode for residents of cities to question these frameworks is to go into illegality, modify or create infrastructure without permission. Adams, Scott and Hardman showed that even if there is some sort of legal way of resolving a request, the perception of planning and the bureaucratic processes of local governments push citizens in the direction of adopting new, often innovative, often illegal solutions to reach their goal (Adams et al., 2013, p. 382). Urban food production and guerrilla

gardening have been specific methods of contest in the urban space. One of the examples Adams et. al bring in, is a community garden in a city in the United Kingdom which was founded by women who wanted to run their community garden based on their own rules, and after a brief inquiry with the local government, they decided they will do better without making it official because of the bureaucratic burden. The inflexibility and impermeability of urban planning regulations for citizens is highlighted by the authors, as well as the need for planning to become more open to innovation. This is actually a process working in practice if we look at the evolution of 'do-it-yourself urbanism' (or tactical urbanism). In his book "The Help-yourself City" Gordon C.C. Douglas categorized unauthorized urban interventions, such as pothole-fixing by locals or home-made traffic signs as 'DIY urbanism' (Douglas, 2018a, p. 12). While he describes the origin of the many interventions to be rooted in local activism, disappointment with local bureaucracy or politics, or sometimes a demand for better aesthetic, we can conclude that the mechanisms of transgression and participation that come with DIY urbanism are rooted in a process of contesting of the limitations of how urban space is being used. Douglas argues that the strength in it at the moment is a strong focus on changing the status subordination embedded in the current, extremely bureaucratic system of local governance where people would be most ready to challenge how things are going, and where they understand the problems with the current politics of redistribution.

Public agencies with clearly diverging priorities from locals might not even register that something happened or would give a tacit approval of the situation because they are so underfunded, their focus is on something completely different. Bureaucratic inertia only adds to this. Planners often bring up the question of legitimacy and accountability, on one occasion an assistant commissioner Douglas interviewed said if people set up do-it-yourself street furniture then the "city is littered with crap nobody is taking care of"(Douglas, 2018b, p. 134). Despite the fact that there is always disapproval on the grounds of professionality or legitimacy,

the author describes a progress which eventually creates progressive urbanism from illegal action. Among the many examples, there is guerrilla gardening becoming a government-approved community garden or reclaiming urban space via temporary actions have been labelled as "pop-up urbanism". The tactic of San Francisco activists who paid for a day's parking and created temporary green space for locals have become a method recommended and promoted by progressive urban planners as creating a "parklet" (Douglas, 2018b, p. 144).

Two important aspects Douglas highlights concerning DIY urbanism are its individualistic quality and the privilege DIY urbanists possess. Firstly, often these interventions are most often done by individuals or small groups who for one reason or the other feel encouraged to enter into transgression, and their acts might not benefit the whole community. Secondly, Douglas' observation is that most DIY urbanists belonged to privileged communities, white and often highly qualified individuals who are planners themselves.

> In short, all this participation is not so empowering. It is fragmented, individualistic, and still frequently elitist, in many ways not equally open to all. This raises the question of whether the more accessible medium of democratic voice and participation in urban placemaking is the opportunity to "do-it-yourself", or the opportunity to be represented, however ploddingly, by a formal process that is at least theoretically concerned with public input and social equity.
>
> (Douglas, 2018b, p. 171)

DIY urbanists are motivated by the desire to improve their environment, but the interventions can bring to surface larger problems such as gentrification. A case in point is an example from Douglas' research, a New York resident who newly moved to an area, and started "seed bombing" which was then criticized by long-term locals. The author refers to Shamus Khan "privilege means being at ease no matter what the context" which has a defining aspect

in terms of whether someone will start contesting the way things are working (Douglas, 2018b, p. 100). Often these DIY interventions perpetuate social privilege by using codes of privilege that exclude certain members of the community. As much as they were radical reclamations in the early days, parklets, bike lanes and community gardens have become codes of privilege that signal the process of gentrification.

METHODOLOGY

In the following, I am going to focus on the contentious politics of the MKKP, specifically focusing on the urban space that they use for performances. I am going to use the three steps recommended by Charles Tilly and Sidney Tarrow: first, the description of the process of contention, second, the decomposing the process into its basic causes, and thirdly, reassembling it into a general account (Tilly & Tarrow, 2015b, p. 28). The MKKP's street interventions provide us with a lively setting where political actors and political identities are clearly recognizable due to the mechanisms of the party's repertoire that use specific sites, conditions and episodes to put a spotlight on a situation and its actors. The repertoire is repeated at the interventions I am looking at making it is easier for the reader to see the basic mechanisms that add to the same process with every episode. My field work allowed me to create a small catalog of contentious episodes that show the interactions among people who build up the contentious mechanism and those who challenge the tension caused by contentious politics. In the case of MKKP, third parties also play a crucial role, starting from the media coverage of their humorous acts to the Constitutional Court publishing a decision on the relationship between free speech and the painting of pavements. These episodes help us understand the process that the MKKP is sustaining with their contentious politics. The members of the party are often very outspoken about this process, and are actively thinking about the mechanisms that help drive it. There are sequences of mechanisms that need to be repeated by delivering a specific set of steps to create interventions with similar results. As in Chapter 4 I will show, the MKKP have become quite professional at creating these sequences of mechanisms, teaching them to people, and that way providing citizens with a toolkit of empowerment.

During my exploratory research, I carried out an ethnographic interview with a road worker Zoltán Kárpáti. I found this method of obtaining information and context about the issue of potholes waiting to be fixed very resourceful in terms of looking at the theories of the state

and gridding, and also giving the research an important aspect of looking at human agency and intentions that can't be demonstrated with the help of analyzing the data or visualizing a network. Upon analyzing the episodes of contention, I would like to identify the main actors and carry out ethnographic interviews with them. As Brian Larkin points out upon discussing research on infrastructure, I expected most of my interviews to be far from roads, and involving a range of actors from staff at the municipal government to engineers, citizens etc. (Larkin, 2013, p. 328) This changed in the first minute I started my fieldwork, and I focused at least as much on the materiality as the sociality of doing contentious politics via infrastructure. The way MKKP works influenced my research, too, because instead of thinking a lot about how things are done, I participated at doing them.

In my fieldwork, I used a mixed methodology of recording interviews and participant observation. I recorded 10 interviews including two 2 follow-ups with people who started working in local politics after the 13 October 2020 local elections. Except for one person, outside the party who is working in a local government office, everyone agreed to have their full name published. Some MKKP members specifically said they are happier to go on the record with their full name. For the time of my research I have become a so-called passivist of MKKP. Passivists are people the party's active followers or members who assist the party at interventions or help with resources. (In Chapter 4, I describe in more detail the role of passivists in the party.) I can't claim I was a very active member, but I did participate at quite some events after in August 2019 I attended the MKKP's 5-day summer camp in Lakitelek, Hungary.

The party's logo spray-painted on a board provided for political parties

to promote themselves during the campaign of the local elections.

Photo by Marietta Le, 11 September 2019.

Since we were approaching the time of the local elections, in September 2019, I volunteered in collecting recommendation signatures for the municipal elections for MKKP candidates in Budapest's District 2 and District 5. I helped with signature collection at Széll Kálmán Square two times at a pop-up stand, and one afternoon in District 15 with door-knocking. As part of the election campaign of a candidate Veronika Juhász, I also helped with

recording and editing a video of pothole-fixing for the municipal election campaign in District 2. In order to help the election campaign of a mayoral candidate Krisztina Baranyi supported by MKKP in District 9, I collected succulents for the top of a bus shelter and helped folding campaign leaflets at the MKKP "party headquarters". As part of the election campaign for Gergely Kovács, the MKPP party president, I participated at one four-color-painting of a pavement in District 12. (Four-color-painting is a specific street intervention I describe more in detail in Chapter 4.) I felt pretty uninspired about how I could best participate in the life of the party, so eventually, I applied to be a part of their election monitoring at the 13 October 2019 municipal elections. I learned about the election regulation and the delegate's tasks from online materials and became an official ballot counting officer delegated by MKKP in District 2. I have to note, I can't really recall any other event or time in my life when I lived and practiced and maintained democratic processes more than that day, working together with a bunch of elderly ladies and a couple of very reserved municipal officials – but that story is for another time. In an attempt at not making my research another example of when the researcher only comes and goes, and mainly just takes away from the group that they observe, I shared my knowledge of DIY urbanism with MKKP members. I gave a talk and held a workshop on Gordon C.C. Douglas' "The Help-Yourself City" book at the MKKP headquarters on 27 November 2019. I read the book, and presented its contents to some 15 participants, and finished off the presentation with two workshop exercises where people worked in teams to come up with DIY urbanist interventions for their neighbourhood. The closing of the most intensive period of my field work was in January 2020 when I saw a theatre play on MKKP. Later, I still kept in touch with my informants and interviewees from the party, for example, in April 2020 I participated at the spray-painting of physical distancing signs on the pavement in Bajnok Street in District 6.

Photo of some relics I took home with me from my fieldwork at the MKKP summer camp.

Starting from top left

1. Money I received for writing my thesis about the MKKP – actually, a fake note the party gives away as a joke of that they are paying people to vote for or work for them. HUF10,000 is the second largest note and it depicts George Soros and among the many hidden jokes on it, it is using the letters "CEU" for the numbering of the note

2. Sticker asking people to vote for the party at the elections in spring, featuring the red eyed, two-tailed dog logo of the party

3. Sticker made of the famous "Basky" street art piece depicting prime minister Viktor Orbán riding a sightseeing train of Felcsút that looks like Thomas the Tank Engine

4. Sticker that reads "100% of our voters vote for us!".

WHAT IS THE MKKP DOING?

The political party for people without a political party

I took the advice of an informant who told me I should go and see an amateur theatre play about the Hungarian Two-Tailed Dog Party in January 2020. The theatre play was delivered by the Felcsúti Anarchista Színház or the Anarchist Theatre of Felcsút (Felcsút is the native town of Hungary's prime minister Viktor Orbán). They are a collective of MKKP who are interested in theatre and are running improvisational theatre workshops and are writing and delivering plays themselves. One of their plays titled "Mesterkurzus" (Master class) is about how to succeed in politics in general, but my informant told me I should watch it with the intent of trying to figure out who is who because the roles are inspired by real people in the party. I had the impression that that was one of the reasons why she didn't want to see the play herself, but she recommended that I go see it.

Unfortunately, due to the coronavirus pandemic, I only had one chance to see the play, the second occasion I wanted to attend was cancelled. Still, I found the play very funny and very memorable in terms of thinking about MKKP and its activities. It was very easy to tell that Mesterkurzus is about the evolution of this movement to a real political party, the way the members have been trying to recruit new members, how they have been trying to formulate their messaging, and also about the two party founders and leaders Gergő Kovács and Suzi Dada who have been on and off throughout the years.

A core element of the play was a play on the qualities of the characters of the founders and core members, and a slogan of the party's interventions: szép (pretty), hasznos (useful) and vicces (funny). I went to the play with one of my interviewees, and he explained me after the play that to him the three qualities were describing the party's activities: beautification of cities, reaction to contemporary politics, and active citizens who draw attention to problems that need to be fixed. In an interview, another MKKP passivist said the aim of the party is that you should

either fix the broken thing you find, if you can, or if you cannot then you should draw attention to it to make people think:

> I am not doing these things [the actions I organize] because I want them to have some concrete effect, and there hasn't been any until now so I can't even tell you about how you should do it to reach an effect. It would be great if it would have one, but really, I am doing it to get some thinking started, I don't have any higher goal than that.
> (Péter Babinszki, personal communication, 8 September 2019)

Some other interviewees have been even more articulate about the "theory of change" of the party. Clearly, MKKP passivists are spending a lot of time thinking about how to change Hungarian society. For example, changing the ways of thinking of people is of prime interest of MKKP members. They explained me that the actions or interventions they deliver, with their specific toolkit that includes humor, are aimed at catching people's attention, asking people to participate, and empowering people in thinking they can do something for themselves. This theory of change is important because of the imagined political community the MKKP passivists describe: Hungarian citizens have been robbed of a real change promised with the transition to democracy in 1989; people have been and have become even more disappointed with politics and participating in public life therefore they rarely initiate change themselves; so they need to be waken up, and be reminded of the fact that they have a say.

"We often say that our aim is not to replace politicians, but to replace the voters" – one interviewee said. It is hard to describe in writing the dedication which comes through the words of the MKKP passivists I interviewed. As though a religion, they were describing a movement with actions and activities that create change. Something that works and will fix democracy in Hungary, and even if no one else in the country believes in democracy anymore, these people will have proof that somewhere somehow democracy exists. In addition to that, they firmly

believe that there are ways to explain and convince people of how democracy works and works well, even to those who feel they have been "left behind" by political elites and global trends.

According to one interviewees account, the early years of MKKP were much less political. The messaging was humorous and artistic but around 2008 only a smaller portion of interventions were directly about politics. This is also described by Oross and his colleagues who did a research on the party arguing it has no program (Oross et al., 2018, p. 167). They eventually published a political program titled "Everything should be better!" listing several topics, among them transport and economic policies, as well as "weather policy" and "promises made to Hungarians working in England" (Kétfarkú Kutya Párt, 2017a).

A common motif in the accounts is that the MKKP is representing 'people without a party'. The MKKP represents the critique of the actual mockery that democratic elections and democracy has become for many in Hungary. One of my inteviewees, Péter Babinszki is a man in his thirties who at the time of the first interview worked as an event organizer and communication person at a Hungarian bank. He recalled that he was drawn to the party after seeing a television interview with one of the founders, Gergő Kovács. Kovács said that those who have been drawing a penis, as part of a nation-wide protest vote movement titled "Vote with a dick in spring" (Tavasszal Szavazz Fasszal, n.d.), on their ballot paper, would have had a party to vote for, had had the party been officially registered.

During the interviews passivists implied the democratic transition in 1989 failed people, but it was a natural need to be represented by a political party, therefore the only answer was a party that in itself is a criticism of politics and democracy in general: the MKKP.

Obviously, my opinion is the same as the Kutyapárt's opinion. First of all, at the moment, about the system and the change of regime, and the road leading to that, the inner world war, the world war inside each and every person that's what they are helping to win, for as many people as possible.

(Márton Szokor, personal communication, 27 September 2019)

Phone booth changed over to look like a teleportation system from the film The Matrix. Photo by Csaba Bardócz, 8 April 2019.

Who is a "passivist"?

"The person who wants to have money but doesn't want to work for it."

(Veronika Juhász, personal communication, 29 May 2020)

The word passivist is yet another MKKP joke. Passivist is in fact some sort of a synonym for activist or member or follower on Two-tailed dog terms, but the use of the word activist is forbidden. People who do it are being scolded for doing so because of a certain critique of activism in general, and the preference of using the MKKP jargon. Broadly speaking, everyone is a passivist who somehow interacts with the party when there is an intervention, or somehow supports the party e.g. lending something useful that the party needs for an intervention. Based on the accounts of people I talked to, and what I myself observed, there are three levels of being in contact with the party. There are people who observe the party's workings from far, they like or share posts on Facebook, they sympathize with the mocking and perhaps even vote for the party. There are people who, from time to time, show up at party events, they join actions or evening ideation sessions but are only loosely connected to the party. Those people can already be called passivists. There are people who regularly show up at the evening meetings, who can be relied on when MKKP needs a hand in organizing an action. The more you can be relied on, and you jump in to organize actions yourself in an area, you are definitely a passivist. The passivists in the last group are often invited to become party members, meaning they have more responsibilities in terms of discussing and helping to find the direction the party should be going. Since the research Oross et al. published in 2018, that still stressed that the party has no paid staff, there has been a change after the general elections of 2018, and the party started issuing payments to four members. Gergely Kovács shared with me that they made this decision because he and Zsuzsanna Döme (Suzi Dada) had been working on running MKKP on a daily basis for a year before the 2018 elections, they had to leave their day-jobs to dedicate enough time to it. In 2019, the number of people who receive a wage from the party has been extended. One person is hired to do the RÓSÁNÉKATÉKA squandering fund's administrative tasks, one person is doing graphic design, and also the people who are essentially working for MKKP in

local governments, as elected members of assemblies or on other positions, receive some money to adjust their income to a wage enough to cover their living costs.

The Campaign Finance Act of Hungary (Ligeti et al., 2015, p. 10) provides political parties with a campaign budget based on the number of constituencies in which they have successfully listed candidates. Perhaps not with the intentional purpose of copying it, but the party utilised the logic of international democracy-building foundations: they re-distributed 150 million Hungarian Forints (cca. EUR436,000), out of the 193 million Hungarian Forints (cca. EUR560,000) they received from the state as a campaign budget, to people who wanted to do something for their community. The RÓSÁNÉKATÉKA "squandering fund" is aimed at spending the mock political party's state-sponsored campaign funds on projects that are "usable for as many people as possible, useful, funny, in some cases [the initiative] fills in a gap and/or the neighbourhood will be better, and it makes life good" (Kétfarkú Kutya Párt, 2017b). According to Gergely Kovács, in 2019, the MKKP had about HUF80-90 million income from the state funds (HUF66 million) and some income from their online store.

In addition to the general understanding of passivist being a synonym for activist at MKKP, there is also a broader, cultural understanding of what it is referring to. One interviewee explained me this understanding based on the findings from an article by György Csepeli and Gergely Prazsák. The authors looked at the European Social Survey's results to find out the historical effects of feudalism and capitalism on the value system of societies in Europe (Csepeli & Prazsák, 2011). The authors show that the ratio of "active doers" is much smaller in Hungary than it is in most other countries in Europe. Active doers are defined as people who initiate change and believe that they can actively do something for themselves. The article makes a distinction between active doers and "rebels" who believe in nothing and question all values. The rest are people who do nothing for change, and only suffer consequences. My interviewee explained that people who complain when the MKKP passivists are painting a

pavement or are installing a bus shelter, are people who prefer passively suffering. While he himself would rather install a bus stop shelter even if that is not going to be the perfect bus shelter, but something that works fine. He won't wait for change to just happen. Thus, works the joke that the MKKP passivists are actually people who are active doers.

In 2017, the Hugarian Two-Tailed Dog Party published a document listing their principles of working (Kétfarkú Kutya Párt, 2017a). The four main goals being

- strengthening of an active citizenship instead of complaining

- working towards a real political discourse instead of taking part in denigrating others

- if necessary, do what the local governments should do in a way that makes them work more efficiently

- working according to a view that promotes working on issues rather than reacting to what other parties are saying

The principles document clearly states that the party will try to resolve everything they can, will plant flowers if they are missing, will build a bus shelter if there is none, will paint the bench if it looks awful. It also states that there are issues that the party cannot resolve, and in that case the party will draw attention to that issue utilizing humor.

A ventilation shaft made to look like heads of Lego brick figurines.

Photo by Marietta Le, 11 September 2019.

We are not a mock party, we are a funny party

The description of the way the party works and how they apply some of the well-refined

mechanisms they are known for, shows us that an important element in their operation is the

use of humor. In an NPR article about the party's 2018 campaign, Gergely Kovács, a man in

his late thirties, the president of the party was quoted saying satirical activists The Yes Men and

the German satirical party Die Partei have been an inspiration for MKKP (Nelson, 2018). Some

Die Partei members even participated at the 2018 summer camp of MKKP. Despite the

references, neither in the interviews, or during my fieldwork have I seen clear connection with the two groups. My understanding is more that the MKKP members know about these references and are often being compared to international examples of mock political parties and political satire because humor and satire are in the toolkit of MKKP, too. Similar to The Yes Men whom Ian Reilly describes utilizing satire as a critique and a form of politicization and mobilization with a special focus on creating a spectacle that amplifies the meaning (Reilly, 2013, p. 1244). MKKP exists in the context of political jokes and mock parties becoming increasingly popular. Dominic Boyer argues that the election of a mock political party, the Best Party's candidate to mayor in Iceland in 2014 showed that these parties represent hope and play, and at the same time, the possibility of radical transformation (Boyer, 2013, p. 284). At the time of their emergence, many of these mock parties, including the Best Party or Die Partei in Germany have been written off by the media as insignificant in terms of the political environment of the country. Since humor has been a good tool to challenge a certain political context, for example, the Serbian social movement Otpor that was active between 1998 and 2004 protested the governance of Slobodan Milošević used humorous protests and small acts of resistance in their toolkit (Sombatpoonsiri, 2015, p. 62). Otpor eventually ran at the 2003 elections as a political party. Similarly, MKKP also went the way of becoming an official political party. In 2013, the Budapest-Capital Regional Court rejected the request of the MKKP to be registered as an official political party on the basis of a misleading party name and the party's humorous acts (Budapest-Capital Regional Court, 2013). After the MKKP appealed the decision at the Constitutional Court, the highest judicial authority, the Curia revised the decision, and the party was eventually registered (Kúria, 2014). That was still unfortunate for the party, the original decision was reversed the day before the deadline of the local elections' candidate registration in 2014, which meant the party couldn't participate at the elections.

What is MKKP's humor like? One interviewee said that before he joined, he was able to recognize their street interventions because of the distinct tone and making fun of structural problems. An example he recalled was a street sign that was made to resemble the street sign under the "no entry" traffic signs that usually say something like "except for BKV [public transport] vehicles", but this time the sign said "except for evil rich people with big black cars". Another interviewee explained that to her humor meant a way to release tension, she said "these are flashes that live on" in the results of elections. Her example was when MKKP planted trees on a street illegally, and they planted small signs next to the trees that said "lottery tree" or "money tree" with the aim of making people laugh so that they remember better to water the trees.

> The interesting thing is that we are not mentioning Orbán, we don't pique on politicians and promote them by way of trashing them or mentioning them. Still, that is also telling that when we published the graffiti picture of the prime minister riding the train, and we replicated that, then those things were the ones that people liked because obviously you can let the tension go through that, now, you can laugh at this domineering somebody who makes people's lives miserable. And these are flashes of moments that live on, for example, I think, in election results, and our small actions are similar in that regard. (Veronika Juhász, personal communication, 25 October 2019)

Compared to descriptions of less focused actions and media stunts by MKKP before 2010, since the 2010 elections the party has become more and more focused on achieving goals such as growing its reach, recruiting followers and new members, and refining its intervention strategy. In an interview with Oross et al. in 2018, Gergő Kovács, the president of the party said he only slowly started to understand and accept the reasons why people keep asking him about

the party's program, because their ideology is based on actions, not on following a program (Oross et al., 2018, p. 178). In a way, "Without a program, following instincts", the title of Oross et al.'s study has become the grounded ideology of the party. Based on the interviews with core members and passivists from the party, it seems clear that there is a common understanding among people that the party is doing political labour in Hungary by engaging citizens to fix and beautify their own city, as well as make jokes about the malfunctioning democracy they live in. This political labour aims at activating citizens and empowering them by showing them they can make a difference in their own environment. This is explained more in detail by the following quote from Veronika Juhász, a woman in her thirties, a former opera singer, who is now the party's Budapest District 2 councillor.

> The system gives up, and people feel they won a battle against the system, or they have absorbed a part of the system, or this is how I like to see it, rather than with a metaphor of fight, because we are the weaker ones in that. So, we shouldn't fight back with the same methods, and we are not trying to fight back with those, and I think that is good. If we tried with arms, for sure we would lose, but with a bus shelter we might win. The people absorbed a part of the system by teaching it to work differently, they forced it to work differently to make it serve them, and not to let it oppress them or give them orders. (Veronika Juhász, personal communication, 25 October 2019)

"The system doesn't know how to deal with humor, even if the system itself is doing humorous acts," another interviewee said. To MKKP's followers, humor means courage, and a creative way of criticism. It is a distinct criticism of elites, and that fits well the description of mock political parties Oross et al. noted in their study about the party's ideology and role in Hungarian politics (Oross et al., 2018, p. 167). However important is the use of humor in the party's actions and communication, there has been a shift from being a "mock political party"

to a "funny party". This shows a clear distinction from doing funny things just for mocking and doing funny things for mocking and fixing democratic processes. This is even spelt out in their public self-description playing on a pun of the Hungarian language that is using the word "vicc" for both mock and funny/joking: viccpárt – vicces párt.

> I think we stepped out of strictly joking, we resent the use of the mock political party label. We are not a mock party; we are a funny party.
>
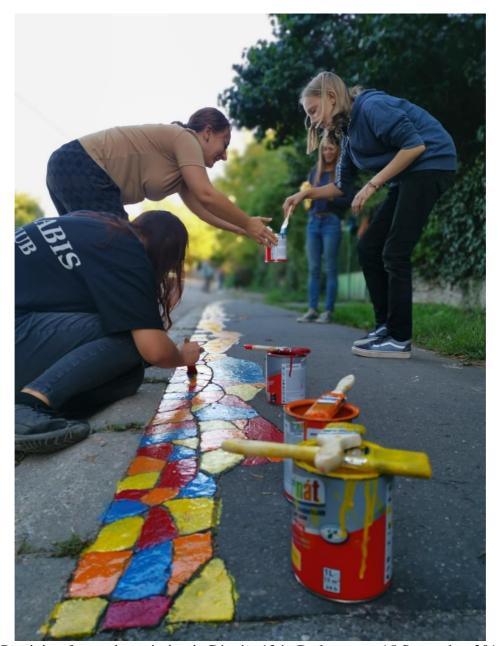> (Suzi Dada (Oross et al., 2018, p. 181))

Humor helps citizens to process their concerns with the legitimacy of the state. Martha Lampland and Maya Nadkarni argue that shared complaints create a political intimacy between the state and citizens and creates a common ground for citizens to joke about social relations. They point out that after Hungary's transition to democracy in 1989, political jokes have become rare, and they seem to have emerged again around 2014 showing a political polarization that has taken place in the country. The authors cite the example of MKKP's political jokes in 2014 (Lampland & Nadkarni, 2016, p. 459). The MKKP's members describe the party's actions as activities that draw attention to a problem in a creative way, mainly with the help of humor, such as their action of smuggling soap bars and toilet paper to Hungarian hospitals that are famously lacking toilet paper and soap in their patient area toilets (Vaskor, 2018). The party members have ideation meetings where they come up with creative ways of positioning and delivering an action. One passivist described positioning as finding the best context for an action where it can deliver its message correctly and can be associated with the correct meaning and societal problem. Humor is important because it helps the party's message to travel further than a regular statement or proposal. Humor becomes a vehicle of a serious message and acts in an inclusive way, it doesn't distance away a lot of people, and often has a long afterlife.

People remember the funny messaging, as well as the party that delivered the intervention. Another important quality of the party's most popular actions is that they are intended to be easily replicable that work everywhere – travelling models that can easily be inserted into a context, and don't have a harmful effect because they mainly keep their original meaning.

Four-color theorem in the wild

In addition to the criticism of elites, the party's actions are also challenging legitimacy of the state by challenging it on the grounds of infrastructural provision. MKKP's street interventions are combining street art pieces and the delivery of do-it-yourself urbanism. There are specific meetings where passivists meet and ideate around public space issues, problems, or discuss how they can make dull pieces of infrastructure colorful and cheerful instead. These sessions are called "Rendkívüli Ügyek Minisztériuma" or "The Ministry of Extraordinary Affairs", and famously result in street infrastructure such as cabinets and ventilation shafts becoming SpongeBob SquarePants or mushrooms or pieces of smiling Lego bricks. Often when the party passivists deliver an intervention, people from the area come and ask them about permissions and in a threatening tone talk about punishment, but even more often, nowadays, people greet them kindly, and use a threatening tone when they talk about a public servant possibly having an illegal bus shelter or a guerrilla planted flower removed. Previously, in a response to frequent questioning about a permission, the party often issued a "general permission" to its passivists which looks like an official letter with an official-looking stamp and is signed by Gergő Kovács as the president of the party. Gergely Kovács finds it worse having to remove an installation, or not being able to finish it as an outcome, despite the fact that that would usually mean good media coverage for MKKP. He says, originally, that was the reason why passivists put on yellow vests at delivering actions, such as roadworks, to keep people from asking questions.

MKKP's most popular DIY urbanism examples include setting up bus shelters illegally or running a Four-color-painting action. This very specific model of intervention that the party has been using is called "Négyszínfestés" in Hungarian. It is a type of urban intervention that aims at pointing out the neglect of public spaces on behalf of local governments, and as well as the negclect of citizens in holding local governments accountable for spending public budgets wisely. The four-color-painting is based on a mathematical theorem called the "Four color theorem" which states that any plane divided up by any number of regions into a map can be colored with no more than four colors, in a way that no two adjacent regions will have the same color ("Four Color Theorem," 2020). The four-color-painting is the painting of cracked pavements utilizing the theorem, painting the regions between the cracks using only four colors. That way creating a cheerful, lively section of the pavement that is nice to look at but at the same time, drawing attention to the fact that the pavement is in bad condition, and needs tending to. Pavements where four-color actions have been delivered but the paint has worn off are still reminding people of the original intention, and the deficiency of the state. Several passivists called the Four-color-painting intervention a great idea because people from all walks of life are enjoying it, it is easy to deliver, easy to replicate, it doesn't take long to do an action and it doesn't need any specific training. A good first step towards activating someone, many people start by joining, even by accidentally bumping into and joining a group of four-color painters on the street. It is a popular activity among newly joining members.

Passivists four-color painting in District 12 in Budapest on 15 September 2019,

Photo by Marietta Le

A 2017 four-color-painting ended with a report of offence by the local authorities who didn't appreciate the action of the local passivists in the city of Szombathely. Later, the local court decided that an offence was committed but this was appealed by MKKP, and it has become one of the party's most frequently cited legal decision (highlighted in the quotation

below). The Constitutional Court found that painting the pavement was an exercise of the right to speech and therefore did not constitute an offence:

> In the present case, the cracked and painted section of the pavement itself directly conveyed the opinion: the petitioners painted the defective parts of the pavement as a form of demonstration against the neglected state of it, and they intended to raise attention about the need of repairing the relevant section. Thus, the particular act was, according to objective assessment, a communication interpretable by the public. It is also worth noting in this context, that **colouring a cracked section of the pavement would rather raise a laugh in the passers-by, therefore, a sober sense of humour is also needed on behalf of the proceeding authorities** in the course of assessing the conduct. It should also be underlined that the painting of the relevant pavement section has not caused any permanent damage to the condition of the affected surface and it was objectively appropriate for conveying the message.
>
> (Constitutional Court, 2019, p. 10)

One can buy a "national four-color package" in the MKKP online store for HUF9,900 (cca. EUR28.65) which contains paint, brushes, gloves, tissue and a "general permit". The description of the product states that it helps release "happiness hormones", and creates a happy and spectacular visual effect that causes those whose job it is to fix the cracks to fix them faster (Kétfarkú Kutya Párt, n.d.-b).

What has the Two-tailed Dog Party done better in terms of engaging local polities via pavement painting than anyone else? In her article titled 'Rethinking recognition', Nancy Fraser criticized the politics of recognition for displacing the politics of redistribution with a conversation about reified identities that eventually may promote economic inequality. The problem with looking at DIY urbanism from the perspective of legitimacy or the workings of

bureaucracy is that it is reproducing the same status subordination DIY urbanism is aiming to fight on its own terms. Whenever the MKKP invited residents to take part in their interventions or replicate them in their own street, they didn't focus on the interaction of the citizen and the local government, they never asked for approval and never suggested asking for it. They focused on the 'parity of participation' (Fraser, 2000, p. 115). At a workshop I held at the MKKP headquarters in November 2019, we discussed the examples of "The Help-yourself City", one of the participants asked what happened if a road sign posted up by an American activist signmaker on his own fell off and killed someone. I said I thought we need to understand why we were coming up with these questions of legitimacy all the time when we know well from the story of that sign that it was posted up by a professional, and we know from other stories, at least in Hungary, that legitimate signs might loosen, too. Later in a conversation with one of my professors I brought up this story, and again, I was told that the big difference is accountability. My thinking, and I think the key to the MKKP's success is exactly the fact that these questions are never asked from this perspective. Focusing on legitimacy and accountability puts DIY urbanists in a position of illegality and creates a disparity of power.

MKKP passivists building a street art installation from trash collected along the Danube riverbank. The writing reads "Alaptörvény asztala" or the Table of the Fundamental Law, referring to the tables installed at local governments and some state institutions for citizens to observe the new constitution after its introduction in 2011. The tables were maintained in these institutions for about a year. Photo by Marietta Le, 30 May 2020.

The one, but not the only "Mészáros"

In April 2018 the mayor of the prime minister's native town Felcsút, a man named Lőrinc Mészáros resigned, and asked residents to support a person called László Mészáros with their vote at the mayoral elections. Lőrinc Mészáros, a former gas-fitter, is well-known in Hungary for being prime minister Viktor Orbán's close friend, and also being very successful at public procurement tenders. In 2019, Bloomberg Billionaires valued Mészáros's wealth, including assets owned by his wife, at USD1.5 billion (Eder et al., 2019). As you can see from the example above, Mészáros is a quite common family name in Hungary. Coincidentally, the

MKKP has a core member who goes by the same first name and last name as the candidate supported by the former mayor. MKKP's László Mészáros also goes by the nickname Mészi. He is a now out-of-job software developer in his forties who lives with his three children and wife in a small town near the capital. He told me the story of his mayoral campaign of 2018 with all seriousness in his voice despite the fact that this time the party has pulled off one of the best structural political jokes. Mészi received a phone call from the president of the Hungarian Two-Tailed Dog party, Gergő Kovács, who said something along the lines of 'Did you hear that Lőrinc Mészáros asked people in Felcsút that they should vote for László Mészáros?' Mészi says his heart skipped a beat and thought that that could only be him. So, he announced at his workplace that he was running for mayor in Felcsút, which didn't go well with his bosses, and they asked him not to declare where he worked, but otherwise the campaign was on.

Mészi remembers that it was hard to collect the required number of signatures so he could be registered as a candidate, because people were afraid to be seen talking to a different candidate than the one the former mayor recommended. People who were open to sign the recommendation sheet asked Mészi to rush into the house and talk inside. MKKP collected 65 signatures which was above the required 48, so Mészi's name could appear on the ballot paper. He says those people are the brave people in Felcsút because their names were on the official recommendation sheet that he handed in at the local government. Staff who work there could see those names, and Mészi adds they are Lőrinc Mészáros' people.

In his campaign, Mészi and the MKKP passivists ran with their regular public space interventions, they fixed potholes and built a bus shelter. In the case of pothole-fixing, police showed up, Mészi remembers at least 20 police officers who also started filming him and the other passivists, so they in turn pulled out their phones and started filming them. He said they jumped up and down to be able to show on camera the number of police officers present. In an interview with MKKP's pothole person "Kátyú Zoli", Zoli told me that they specifically looked

for potholes to fix in Felcsút, but they found only two potholes on the road next to the cemetery. He mentioned that usually he fixes potholes based on people's requests but in Felcsút it was a planned political action. Eventually, the only consequence of the pothole-fixing was an official letter from an administrative staff member at the local government that asked the MKKP to reinstate the original state of the pothole. MKKP obviously published the letter to create ridicule around the case.

> They [the police] checked our identity, and concluded that we didn't commit a crime, and then left. That was it. Then we received a decision from the notary that the pothole we filled illegally should be reinstated. [Actually,] it wasn't from the notary because he quickly took a day off, and a member of the administrative staff who is not eligible for signing [official documents] sent us the letter, so it wasn't a letter officially, that asked us to reinstate the original state of the pothole we filled. And then we wrote a response that we are not going to reinstate it, and we gave them a technical description of the technology we used for fixing. […] But the letter in which the administrator requests the reinstating of the pothole was published all over the Hungarian media. That, for the system was very…the system made a joke of itself.
>
> (László Mészáros, personal communication, 25 October 2019)

The other campaign intervention was a pop-up bus shelter, that has been referred to as the 'Mészáros type bus shelter' among passivists. In a location where previously a street art piece mocking Lőrinc Mészáros was put up by some passivists, Mészi and the others noticed that people needed a shelter from rain, so he came up with an idea that was later refined so well that the pop-up bus shelters of MKKP have been requested around the country, almost as much as Four-color-paintings. Obviously, not even the setting up of a bus shelter could go without a

police identification. Mészi says they told the police that they were setting up a stand for campaign posters, and for good measure they quickly pasted two posters on the new shelter. Later, upon the request from the public company that maintains the road, the shelter had to be removed but it was re-installed by the party in the city of Hódmezővásárhely based on an online vote.

Mészi says he received about 11% of the votes amounting to 60 or 70 votes. His understanding is that those people didn't want to vote for him, they just wanted to vote for someone other than the prime minister's person.

A man named "Pothole"

I interviewed Zoltán Kárpáti, a passivist of the Hungarian mock political party the "Two-Tailed Dog Party". Zoltán, who is called Kátyú Zoli by party members, describes himself as a 40-year-old road worker whose hobby is fixing potholes, and who has been nicknamed "Kátyú" or "Pothole" since high school where he studied about construction and roadworks. According to Kátyú Zoli's loose definition, a pothole is a damage in the road that is the result of frost and doesn't cover a large area. Road surface with a larger damage or with damaged edges doesn't fall under the category of a pothole.

Kátyú Zoli won with a pothole-fixing proposal at the "RÓSÁNÉKATÉKA" call for proposals in 2018, to spend the mock political party's state-sponsored campaign funds on projects that are "usable for as many people as possible, useful, funny, in some cases fill in a gap and/or the neighbourhood will be better, and make life good" (Kétfarkú Kutya Párt, 2017b). The Campaign Finance Act of Hungary (Ligeti et al., 2015, p. 10) provides political parties with a campaign budget based on the number of constituencies in which they have successfully listed candidates. The 2018 parliamentary elections were the Two-Tailed Dog Party's first elections since they became an official political party. Kátyú Zoli's plans were financed by the

party for purchasing machines and materials to start an initiative that fixes potholes based on people's reports on a website called "katyu.hu". He told me that the domain was previously owned by the current governing party Fidesz which in 2004 ran, at the time an opposition, campaign against the capital's political leadership headed by a mayor from the Alliance of Liberal Democrats (SZDSZ). The campaign was focusing on the issue of potholes on the roads of Budapest. Kátyú Zoli recalled this during the interview, and said he waited until eventually Fidesz gave up the ownership over the domain, and he purchased it, and put it to use when he started the pothole-fixing initiative.

Briefly, what Kátyú Zoli does is with a small team of volunteers he visits villages and small towns where potholes have been reported on his website. He has a strong dedication to fixing potholes that are in villages and small towns rather than big cities because he works with the assumption that big cities would be able to allocate money from their budget to roadworks while the others might not even be able to properly sponsor teachers or doctors working locally. Kátyú Zoli says he inquired with authorities what would happen if he was found to be illegally fixing a pothole, and no one told him about any serious risk. He is up for taking responsibility for what he is doing, but he has never had any problems about fixing potholes with his team. The only time when police showed up was the mock party's campaign event which was a pothole-fixing in the prime minister's native town Felcsút. He emphasises that he is using a very efficient and cheap technology that, if adopted, could save a lot of money to big, state-owned companies. He notes that this is not the aim of most construction companies, and the governing party's influence is very much observable in roadworks, because the Hungarian prime minister's proxy has taken over the biggest construction company. This company was previously owned by Lajos Simicska, an oligarch who used to be friendly with Viktor Orbán, and served as a proxy until he publicly broke ties with the prime minister in 2015 (Than & Dunai, 2015). Kátyú Zoli thinks that he does not have an impact on the work of bigger

companies as his capacity is very low, and he does road-fixing as a spare time activity. While in many cases his work is welcome without any comments, on some occasions the local government reacted to the news of his plans on fixing some potholes that they fixed them themselves before Kátyú Zoli arrived, all this despite the fact that some of the sites have been abandoned for years. In one case a member of the local government referred Kátyú Zoli's request for permission to the local government that led to the fixing of potholes, in another case a passivist in Szentendre started leafletting in a neighbourhood to campaign for the fixing of a local road with the help of Kátyú Zoli, that also led to the local government readily jumping on the issue.

> And the local government says, and that's how it is in many places, that it's only a matter of time that it will be replaced then why should I spend money on it. Because it's one thing that in some places they have the money and they are loading money into road constructions. There are many roadworks going on in the country now which is very good but there's always a place where the local government doesn't have the money, for instance in smaller villages where there is a state road network and a local government road network. Say you are going on a perfect road to a village, upon crossing the boundary into the village you are going on a road fallen apart, and when you get out of the village, you are on a good road again.
> (Zoltán Kárpáti, personal communication, November 11, 2018)

The pothole-fixing aspect of the party's work has become so popular that in 2019 it was used for political campaigning. In an interview I recorded over the phone with Zoltán Kárpáti in 2018, he told me he was up for taking responsibility for what he is doing as he does it illegally, but he has never had any problems about fixing potholes with his team. The only time when

police showed up was the mock party's 2018 campaign event which was a pothole-fixing in the prime minister's native town Felcsút. A year later, in 2019, the party heavily utilized this activity, with Zoltán Kárpáti fixing potholes in Budapest districts where MKKP candidates were running for local election. At one of these events, as part of my thesis research, I helped the party activists (passivists in their lingo) to create a campaign video of the pothole-fixing. I was there filming them during the several hours activity not far from a main road on a sunny Sunday in Budapest's District 2. No authority ever checked if the people working on the road had a permit or why they were doing it on a Sunday. Passers-by who asked what was happening and locals who understood what was going on thanked the passivists. A local couple mentioned that they hadn't seen a politician down their road for years.

We can see that in Kátyú Zoli's case the event of fixing a pothole creates a dynamic where certain actors who have been in an equilibrium are pushed to break the equilibrium, they are made to act. There is a power in such an intervention, it highlights the boundaries and the relationships and shows us not only the ways citizens express their desire for ordinary gridding but also the imaginaries of the state and its structures. A case in point is the fixing of a Budapest pothole by Fidesz party local government members in 2004 ("Fideszes útjavítás," 2004). During the fixing event, documented by media, the two members recorded the shape of the pothole in plaster which was to be sent to the mayor of Budapest, and they also 'adopted' the pothole and fixed it. This fixing event is very similar to what Kátyú Zoli is doing, and clearly, its goal is to enforce an imaginary of the state and also to enact political relations (P. Harvey & Knox, 2012, p. 524). An interesting aspect of this event is that the same political party that used the fixing of a pothole as a tactical measure to get the state do its job and to play on the political dynamics in 2004 in Budapest, is also the one which starts policing on the Two-Tailed Dog Party doing the same in Felcsút. Kátyú Zoli also mentions that he did his own research to find out and mitigate the risks of being punished for fixing a pothole.

There are many roadworks going on in the country now which is very good but there's always a place where the local government doesn't have the money, for instance in smaller villages where there is a state road network and a local government road network. Say you are going on a perfect road to a village, upon crossing the boundary into the village you are going on a road fallen apart, and when you get out of the village, you are on a good road again.

(Zoltán Kárpáti, personal communication, November 11, 2018)

Kátyú Zoli's description that the two-tiered governance of the state and local governments in Hungary has a key role in producing a fragmented view of 'the state'. This also demonstrated in the research of Schwarcz and Szőke on social service provisioning which shows how decentralisation is creating different practices at the state and the local level (Schwarcz & Szőke, 2014, p. 3). This can be understood as one reason why state actors don't find Kátyú Zoli's work challenging the status quo meanwhile local (government) actors are either silently acknowledging the help to a budget running low or are ready to protect their reputation by demonstrating their monopoly over legitimacy. At the higher level, state still stays unchallenged by tactical measures. At the hyperlocal level, it is certain that Kátyú Zoli's interventions are making a huge impact because some potholes are finally fixed.

The pothole-fixing passivists of District 2, myself in grey sweater in the top right corner. The asphalt is freshly set in front of our street with a red MKKP logo on it.

Photo taken by Zoltán Kárpáti (Kátyú Zoli), 1 October 2019.

The MKKP arranged a pothole-fixing campaign action for several of its Budapest District 2 candidates. Kátyú Zoli, who was a candidate in another Budapest district, brought his machines with a flatbed transporter. It was 1 October, 2019, the weather was warm, yellow leaves on the street. I travelled from Pest to Buda to the location a bit hesitant and doubtful how I would be of help to the team, although the fixing was open to people who wanted to volunteer, it had an event published on Facebook. The work has already started by the time I got there, but not long before, because I got there just in time to be asked if I can handle a semi-professional handycam and could help with documenting the whole event. Thankfully I could, and this was the best way for me to participate. I helped with interviewing the candidates, one

of them sang a song about potholes, and I documented the team fixing potholes in two locations in District 2. I was pretty stressed about making a funny video for the party, as I am not that well-versed in MKKP humor. I received instructions about which part of the recording I should definitely use, and some ideas for visual jokes such as editing a scene to suggest that controlling a strongly vibrating roadworks machine is similar to the act of using a sex toy on the street. I edited the video, and about two days' time it was uploaded to MKKP's Facebook page where it received over 30,000 views[1].

The view from the local government administration

I interviewed a head of department and a senior staff member in two Budapest district local government administrations. Both work on "parks and recreation" issues. My aim was to find out their perception of DIY urbanism and the MKKP's actions. The senior staff member in a district on the Buda side of the city mentioned their frequent powerlessness in terms of serving citizens who contact them regarding an infrastructure failure. He mentioned issue of communication not only of their own initiatives but also the fact that the two-tiered governance of the capital namely that districts have their own administration but there is also a main Municipality of Budapest with a certain set of infrastructure e.g. main roads and public transport they maintain. In Europe, for example, London has a similar local governance system. He complained that they have a hard time obtaining information quickly, so citizens think they are not capable of doing their job, meanwhile sometimes they are just as clueless as citizens. Or when it comes to creating a new zebra crossing the number of needed permits is so high, and it is so complicated to obtain them from several authorities that they are also waiting months for approvals to arrive. At the same time, two-way communication with citizens can be a burden,

[1] Link to the video on Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=2435541946731680
and on YouTube: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FkaMk0fpudA

as well as the strict spending regulations that makes the municipality looks less agile, but it can give better long-term answers to problems. In his district one problem caused by DIY urbanism was residents painting over the road surface to gain more parking lots for themselves.

In the Pest side district, the head of department mentioned the issue of working with contractors that slows down the process of dealing with residents' complaints. When asked about issues a local government cannot resolve, he argued that there no unsolvable issue, but issues where the time needed is different where the resolution needs longer time. The removal of illegal waste dumps or the management of hazardous situations can happen quickly. In that district, there was an MKKP action in 2019 targeting a metal playground slide. MKKP passivists created a video showing they can fry an egg on the slide on a hot, sunny day. Commenting on that instance, the head of department said they didn't know about the concerns of people about the metal slide heating up, so they were surprised when they learnt about the issue. He also emphasized that as a department, they planned to renovate the playground for some time before, but only received political and financial support from the leadership after the MKKP's action. "Our job is only delivering so we can't put pressure on them [the leadership]," says the interviewee, who points out that tenders for infrastructure repairs usually take longer than three months, confirming the conclusions of literature on the promise and failure of infrastructure that bureaucracy and the slowness of local administrations creates a fertile ground for citizens to take their own initiative. "If people saw their problem resolved within a reasonable timeframe, they wouldn't start their private actions," the Buda side districts employee says.

THE SABBATH WAS MADE FOR MAN

Péter Babinszki started working in the District 9 local government administration in Fall 2019 as the associate of Zsuzsanna Döme, the deputy mayor for cultural affairs who was delegated by the MKKP. The district's new independent mayor invited the party to delegate a deputy mayor simply because they have been helping out during the campaign. For example, they built a bus shelter near the local government's offices. Péter says they have been doing similar activities to what they would do as a party outside the local government but with support from "inside", as well as utilizing their MKKP tactics. He mentions some cases when the two-tiered governance blocked or slowed them from having some infrastructure repair arranged quickly, during the negotiations he mentioned that they would do a creative action, and that usually changed the dynamics of the situation. He says it was the natural next step for the party to do some things legally, and for instance, the illegal bus shelter they built during the campaign was "legalized" by him (Kétfarkú Kutya Párt, 2020). Now, with the MKKP in the local government, all authorities easily accepted the documentation he submitted, and the bus shelter is now completely legal, it won't be removed. In addition to a whole politics of legitimacy to uncover when it comes to infrastructure intervention, this brings up the question of how contentious politics also can be institutionalized, and the institutionalization process the party members themselves recognize.

In a 2013 episode of the dystopian science fiction TV show *Black Mirror* titled "The Waldo Moment," the lead character is a blue CGI bear called Waldo who becomes the popular political satire of an evening show, and who later runs as a candidate at the parliamentary elections. In the episode, Waldo evolves from a brutally honest critique of politics to a character consumed up by political games and tactics, he starts playing according to the rules of the political scene he criticized before. At our first interview, before the 2019 municipal elections,

Péter Babinszki mentioned this episode as an inspiration for him to volunteer for MKKP more actively, to keep the party away from the threats of institutionalization.

> "Something comes in that brutally reacts to injustices of the system, and in the beginning of the episode you think it is a very progressive thing, something that moved me much more than anything before. Obviously, Black Mirror is about showing the dark future, so in the second part of the episode it is in the system already, and that was the point when I felt that I should try to do something, so it doesn't happen. So, yes I associated that with the MKKP."
>
> (Péter Babinszki, personal communication, 22 May 2020)

I asked him to reflect on that now that he is living the future of the party where they are essentially part of the system the same way as Waldo. He laughed, and said he thought about this, as well, and thought it was a big question for him where the party gets from here.

During the local elections campaign, in several media appearances Gergely Kovács complained that opposition parties have been accusing them of hindering their tactical voting efforts by not cooperating with them, but MKKP has been consistent on these terms, and this was documented in Oross et. al's research in 2018 as well where Zsuzsanna Döme (Suzi Dada) was quoted reminding people that if one doesn't want certain parties to exist then they shouldn't run together with them (Oross et al., 2018, p. 181). Still, the party's position has changed with the results of the local elections. Gergely Kovács says the party gained several positions in local government, and each delegate has a unique context they work in. In District 12, the long incumbent governing party mayor stayed so Kovács is working as a sort of watchdog councillor in opposition, focusing on uncovering corruption issues in the local government, and helping local residents, as well as delivering street interventions locally. The MKKP's District 2

councillor Veronika Juhász is more cooperative with the winning, formerly opposition, parties, however, she faced tensions when she published a video about a missing zebra crossing. Local politicians perceived it as an attack, but they eventually accepted that her aim was to give the case more publicity and support. In District 9, the deputy mayor for cultural affairs Zsuzsanna Döme (Suzi Dada) has a more powerful political position in the local government. The party has two more councillors in District 14 and 15, a senior advisor in the city of Szombathely, and a mayor in a village of 1,500 residents. Kovács says that although the election success gave them the possibility to work more focused on an area, both he and Suzi Dada have been unable to visit cities outside Budapest to recruit more passivists and help with community-organizing. Before, they visited cities outside Budapest twice a week on average. They are aiming to shift the focus back in the near future.

Street art piece inspired by popular 1980's arcade game Super Mario, freshly installed at Blaha Lujza Square in Budapest. Police and a staff member of the public transport company are talking to the president of the party about the intervention, while the other founder Zsuzsanna Döme is taking a photo of the installation. Together with some passivists, they

painted the shaft green but the flower later had to be removed. Gergely Kovács says this case appeared in the media because the public transport agency's employee started talking about a damage caused, while police were permissive and didn't want to create an issue from the case. About a week later the agency removed the green paint. Photo posted on 1 June 2020 by the MKKP District 12 Facebook page.

Gergely Kovács highlights that the biggest difference in terms of the evolution of the party and its relationship with authorities is most visible in the capital. He recalls that in 2011, he was painting on Szeged city trash cans. The police stopped him, and one of the officers said either they would take him to the police station for questioning, or they would spray his own paint on his body. Then Kovács said, go ahead paint on me, and that was how the situation was resolved. Police still checks the identity of passivists delivering actions but there is no harassment or prosecution at all. "When the Constitutional Court basically allowed us to do four-color painting about 1.5 year ago, a lot of things changed, because now I can show anyone the decision, that this is allowed," Kovács says. Another aspect that's important for authorities now is that the party is a registered as an official political party. Kovács says that when police check their identity, they do everything cautiously according to the law, and for example, share their police identification numbers with them proactively. The situation in the countryside, however, is still completely different, jokingly exaggerating to describe the situation, he says: if there's a paintbrush in your hand, the police will show up. A four-color-painting action during the 2018 election campaign for instance in the city of Békéscsaba stopped because the police threatened passivists with taking them to the police station. In Budapest, police do appear at interventions, but they are very permissive of the MKKP's activities.

A ventilation shaft painted to resemble liver pate tin cans stacked on each other was repainted to a dull green by the service provider agency. Photo posted on MKKP Budapest Facebook page on 3 June 2020.

Veronika Juhász is hopeful in terms of what the MKKP can achieve in local government. She says other political parties make compromises for popularity, but this party doesn't want power, it wants the local government to work for people, an aspect often forgotten in the world of laws and bureaucracy:

What you can see in this is the long-term goal to turn this relation around, that the rule is there to protect you and give you privileges, to make it better for you, and it's not you being there to serve the rule you were by chance born in. So, we need to turn this relation around, and I always point out, despite the fact that I am not a baptized Christian or anything, that in the Bible Jesus had a brilliant sentence or saying, that Shabbath was made for man. This Jesus must had been a very witty chap or fantasy or metaphor,

because this sentence is valid even today. You can use or apply it to many things. Now, it specifically means that the laws should serve you, not the other way around.

(Veronika Juhász, personal communication, 25 October 2019)

What is going to happen with MKKP while working to achieve these goals? "We never planned ahead, I guess that's visible," Kovács says about how he imagines the future of the party. He adds, perhaps two years from now they would be able to tell how well they performed in the local governments, although for most passivists who deliver street actions, it shouldn't mean a big change. Meanwhile, finding the moral common ground for the party members is something other interviewees mentioned, together with the question if the party can better stay true to its goals outside or inside the local government.

Finally, there is another symbolic difference since the Fall of 2019, that Gergely Kovács highlights: nowadays one can find serious posts on the MKKP Facebook pages. Some of their new posts describe local corruption cases in a serious tone. There is no joking at all.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The ever-polarized political environment in Hungary after 1989 created cynicism among citizens and gave way to a populist government that is controlling everything in the country. The MKKP is a mock political party that started off as a social movement. Specific in challenging the current status quo by focusing on hyperlocal issues and using a specific toolkit that includes humor and do-it-yourself urbanism. My interest lay in MKKP because as many young Hungarians, I noticed I have no options on the political spectrum. I approached the topic critically, because I shared the doubts of many outsiders seeing the party as a not serious thing that is nor constructive for democratic processes. However, my ethnography showed it is exactly its special toolkit that can be described very well by using the analytic methods proposed by Tilly and Tarrow who argue that contentious politics have their specific timing, context, actors and more importantly, mechanisms that create a process of transformation. Based on their framework of analysis, MKKP is using transgressions to produce new situations people are drawn to and then they are basically taught to make claims in this new environment, that is also producing new practices and understandings of the situation. More specifically, MKKP is using the failures of the maintenance of infrastructure. Infrastructure and its sociality are important because there are several meanings and imaginations that are attached to it. Harvey and Larkin call it the promise of infrastructure that includes imaginations of economic progress and development. Citizen's imaginaries about infrastructures often come with a desire for the state running a service properly: the failure of infrastructure undermines the legitimacy of the state that fails at provisioning. Other failures noticed by citizens include the lack of openness to accommodate people's needs not only in terms of maintenance but also the expansion of infrastructure. Therefore, in certain cases I identify as do-it-yourself urbanism based on the research by Gordon C.C. Douglas, examples including guerrilla gardening, self-

made bike lanes, or traffic signs are ways for citizens to challenge a status of subordination where they are alienated from the state by way of bureaucracy and regulation. I used a mixed methodology of participant observation and ethnographic interviews to follow how the MKKP is delivering these small-scale interventions and what are the practices that eventually become mechanisms of driving change and creating a process of democracy-building. I experienced these workings by participating at events and organizing a discussion on do-it-yourself urbanism myself at the party's office. This helped me understand that MKKP and especially their grounded ideology based on hands-on interventions draws lot of people to it because there are, just as myself, many people in Hungary who are interested in public affairs but are disappointed with the political environment. MKKP has been a social movement for a long time but has become the party for people without a party after 2014 when they were registered as a political party. They could next run at the 2018 elections and achieved a significant number of votes that demonstrated the party has been on the rise gaining more visibility and followers among people who found their tactics sympathetic. Although neither the general elections in 2018, nor the 2019 European Parliamentary elections brought success in terms of gaining seats, they were signs of the success that followed at the local elections in Fall 2019. 2019 brought successes in general for Hungary's opposition parties but I argue that MKKP was specifically destined to become more popular at a local government scale because of their focus is on local issues that are closer to people. This includes drawing attention to cracked pavements that need maintenance by painting them with vivid colors or fixing potholes with equipment bought from state-fund issued to campaigning political parties. Last but not least, it also includes running at local elections with candidates that are mocking but at the same time talk about serious issues. In this process of bringing together tools of mobilization and politization of the seemingly apolitical, the MKKP has admittedly evolved from a mock party to a party that is using humor as its tool to do politics. I have looked at several examples such as the pothole-fixing for the

local election campaign. In the last chapter, I am drafting up questions for future research about the party's institutionalization, and its coping mechanism in staying authentic to its goals and methods and working in a very, formally and informally, regulated environment of politics. In this research, I focused on the mechanisms of using infrastructure and do-it-yourself urbanism in contentious politics, but further research could focus on the legal mechanisms that MKKP is using to fight back when they are prosecuted for an intervention, or when they are policed when delivering interventions that are in a gray area in terms of legality. MKKP has proven to be resourceful in fighting back with the help of lawyers who make the laws work for the party. In addition to that, a further research is needed to understand the context MKKP works in in the countryside, as the head of the party mentioned things work very differently in the capital. In addition to that, the relationship of MKKP with other parties in Hungary needs more investigation, and last but not least, the future the party is also a question for further research: how is the MKKP going to evolve after reaching such degree of institutionalization and becoming a part of the political system they have been challenging from the outside?

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