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Charter–Manifesto Congruence as
Signal for Issue Salience:
Democratic Innovations within
Political Parties in Hungary

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Abstract

The paper scrutinizes whether democratic innovations present in party charters also appear in manifestos of respective parties, analyzing opposition parties in Hungary. It seeks to understand what factors enable congruence between parties' organizational build-up and their policies promoted to voters. We advance the literature by studying what drives (possible) incongruence, via analyzing links between electoral co-operation and organizational learning, as well as intra-party tensions and splits between 2010 and 2018. This longitudinal research design, focusing on democratic innovations in green, liberal, leftist and far-right parties, reveal a recent breakthrough of e-democracy in party manifestos, rather explained by fears of ballot secrecy violations than (slowly) changing internet penetration figures. Findings help us better understand the popularity of institutionalized democratic innovations, exploring distinct arenas where these are embraced by political parties.

Keywords

Democratic innovations, political parties, congruence, policies, voters

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Introduction

Democratic innovations, such as deliberative mini-publics, citizens' forums and referendums, have become institutionalized in a variety of national contexts recently. Political parties endorse democratic innovations for several reasons. They might use deliberation to bring political processes closer to the citizens (Gherghina, Soare & Jacquet, 2020) or utilize to new technologies to create opportunities for online participation.¹ Participatory practices are often promoted with three broad aims in mind: establishing a connection with the people, providing input possibilities for decision-making, as well as functionality reasons (Gherghina & Jacquet, 2022). The involvement of party members could legitimize party procedures and decisions, motivate members to continue their activity and educate them on basic party values (Barberà & Rodríguez-Teruel, 2020; Stoiciu & Gherghina, 2020). Assembly-based intra-party deliberation or plebiscitary-based decision-making contributes to the socialization of party members, closing the gap between citizens and institutions, and has the potential to provide legitimacy to the party in the public sphere, vis-à-vis other political actors (Vodová & Voda, 2020). Parties may also be driven by a desire to increase their visibility, electoral appeal and general perceptions of the electorate (Gherghina, Soare & Jacquet, 2020).

Some parties could even develop issue ownership over some of these innovations, after implementing them while in (national or local) government. For instance, the Workers' Party in Brazil introduced participatory budgeting first in Porto Alegre, following its victory in local elections, and subsequently extended the initiative once the party obtained executive power at the federal level (Melgar, 2014). But how should party promises on adopting democratic innovations be assessed, if they were never given an opportunity to realize them? When should voters believe that institutional changes will be indeed introduced, were these parties get a chance to govern?

For answering this question, we study the extent to which democratic innovations appear in public documents of political parties. For this reason, we find the analysis of party charters and electoral manifestos, probably the two most important public documents of political parties, a suitable approach to scrutinize congruence. We argue that institutionalizing the same democratic innovations at the intra-party level and advocating for their nation-wide adoption suggests signals that a party is more sincere and committed to introduce these policies. This

¹ See the analytical framework of Gherghina & Jacquet (2022) on how and why parties establish deliberative procedures.

entails carrying out a systematic analysis of charters and manifestos, to get a clearer picture which democratic innovations are more likely to be practiced on a day-to-day basis within parties during candidate selection or decision making, and which ones remain sheer campaign promises.

Focusing on democratic innovations within parties, on institutions and processes that deepen rank-and-file party members' influence in decision-making or enhance their ability to deliberate, can be a fruitful avenue of research when it is harder to draw the profiles of parties with other established methodological approaches. In dominant party systems (Arian & Barnes, 1974), as well as in electoral autocracies (Gandhi & Ong, 2019), opposition parties might have only a limited number of MPs, rendering roll call analysis and other forms of studying parliamentary behavior useless. If these parties regularly form electoral alliances, expert surveys such as CHES or MAPOR assign joint scores for them along ideological or issue dimensions, resulting in the analyst's inability to pit these parties against each other.

To show the usefulness of scrutinizing charter-manifesto congruence, we selected opposition parties in Hungary as cases for our analysis. Ideologically fragmented and internally divided, they posed no serious threat to incumbent populist right Fidesz's supermajority since 2010. Only recently opposition parties managed to overcome internal divisions and achieve an electoral breakthrough at the municipal level (Kovarek & Littvay, 2022). Green, social democratic, liberal and far-right parties, they might have very distinct preferences with respect to adopting democratic innovations.

Nevertheless, voters are left in the dark if they were trying to figure out whether these parties are indeed committed to realizing such innovations. In the words of Wagner (2014, p. 43), "while voters can judge the performance of the governing parties in leading the country for the recent years, they have to rely more heavily on other factors as evaluation criteria for opposition parties". Accordingly, opposition parties are expected to emphasize their position over issues more strongly, which subsequently also shapes voters' calculus to a larger extent (compared to parties in government, the evaluations of which are rather based on past performance). Studying whether such processes or institutions are already in place at the intra-party level could offer a more nuanced picture of how important various innovations are for opposition parties and what potential they have to be realized nationally.

For most parties, their manifestos serve multiple functions at the same time, including shaping the campaign's issue agenda, smoothing over internal differences, and informing other parties – especially those that are potential coalition partners (Harmel, 2018). Party charters, contrarily, are a legal requirement in Hungary: founders of a new party are required to submit it

to the court, alongside a balance sheet (Kovarek & Soós, 2016, p. 186). Generally speaking, party congresses can subsequently amend it, often times only with a supermajority. That is, whoever possesses voting rights at the Congress (delegates elected by local party units, or in few parties, all members) has the potential to shape regulations, including whether democratic innovations are institutionalized.

Typology and operationalization

Following Smith (2009), we use the term democratic innovations for "institutions designed to increase and deepen citizen participation in political decision-making process". As *decision-making* can characterize both intra-party behavior and citizens' involvement in national politics, this definition is well-suited for studying congruence between different political arenas. It is also widely used by other studies on democratic innovations (Bua, 2012; Mattijssen et al., 2015; Trettel, 2015).

There are some more recent definitions of democratic innovations, albeit they tend to be less useful for our purposes. For instance, the one by Elstub & Escobar (2019) includes institutions, but focuses heavily on *governance processes*, which are of limited help when one aims to study intra-party structures. Geissel (2012) conceptualize democratic innovations as "practices", but as analysts of formal party documents, we are constrained by formal institutions, being unable to scrutinize implementation.

For operationalization purposes, we modify Smith (2009)'s definition in one aspect. We restrict our analysis to institutions which have relevance, and the creation of which is empirically possible, at both the national and the intra-party level. It is a necessary restriction allowing us to capture congruence with respect to such innovations.

This inevitably leaves out some of the most popular democratic innovations. Having the party lead by co-chairs or some other sort of collective leadership (Rüdiger & Sajuria, 2020) is a good example: it is hard to envision how such principles could be put in practice on the national level. Similarly, participatory budgeting might serve municipal or federal budgets well (Melgar, 2014), but we are unaware of any empirical example of their implementation at the intra-party level.

Based on the above, we selected three categories, the manifestations of which we will be subsequently recording and analyzing. These are e-democracy or digital participation (Gilman & Peixoto, 2019; Smith, 2009, p. 142–161); deliberative and direct innovations (Elstub & Escobar, 2019); and recall of elected officials (Welp & Whitehead, 2020). Aforementioned innovations,

without exception, can be institutionalized both at the intra-party and the national level. For instance, party congresses might be organized online and closed forums (intranet) can facilitate deliberation for members. At the same time, political parties can fight for the introduction of online voting in parliamentary, local or regional elections. In a similar fashion, ‘party referendums’ are frequently institutionalized, allowing a direct way for rank-and-file members to shape the ideological priorities or alliance politics of their parties; whereas at the national level, it can be a tool constraining the executive or bypassing the legislation.

We note that some of these institutional solutions are tried and tested at least in a few established democracies. However, in Central Eastern Europe (CEE), where citizen participation is generally lower and civil society is typically weaker, introduction (or institutionalization) of aforementioned tools does qualify as innovative initiatives, motivated by parties’ commitment to integrate citizens disengaged from politics.²

Recent literature on the region has studied how direct democracy is used (and managed) by political elites in Hungary, to mobilize their supporters, underscoring the “colonization” of direct democracy by the representative system (Pállinger, 2019). Pállinger demonstrates that genuinely bottom-up initiatives or proposals have a minimal chance of success; consequently, the control function of direct democracy is largely absent. Other country case studies have scrutinized, *inter alia*, the influence of referendum campaigns on decision-making in Bulgaria, Poland and Slovakia (Gherghina & Silagadze, 2019) and the effect of partisan cues on turnout preferences in the context of a citizen-initiated referendum in Slovakia (Nemčok, Spác & Voda, 2019).

A bevy of scholars extended the empirical scrutiny of democratic innovations to contexts beyond aforementioned countries. Mișcoiu (2019) shows how perceptions on democratic innovations’ ability to aggrandize the executive and to increase the political establishment’s control have potentially contributed to the failure of recall referendums in Moldova. Moreover, case studies also document the limited success of EU-funded e-democracy projects in Serbia (Damnjanovic, 2019); attrition in *neighborhood consultative councils*, a form of mini-publics organized annually for two decades in Timisoara, Romania (Schiffbeck, 2019); as well as a field experiment on participatory budgeting in Ukraine, increasing the level of public trust (Volodin, 2019).

² See Gherghina, Ekman & Podolian (2018) on the state of the art of democratic innovations in CEE.

Without going into too much detail, it is worth underlining that these democratic innovations are not peripheral to the Hungarian political agenda: quite contrarily, some of them tap into vexing questions, dividing voters and politicians alike. Again, this should not be taken against their inclusion: as Åström et al. (2013) refers to democratic innovations, they are "ideas in action", rather justifying our case selection. For instance, (sporadic) discourse on the need of introducing recall for MPs since the early '90s does not mean recall cannot qualify as an innovation. It took Jobbik and LMP a decade to put this "idea in action", i.e. to institutionalize it for their own elected officials. Accordingly, the next section briefly reviews how aforementioned innovations' fit in the broader context of contemporary Hungarian politics.

Democratic innovations: The Hungarian context

Whether *recall* should be implemented in the context of single-member district (SMD) MPs has been a heated debate since the early 1990s. The Independent Smallholders' Party (FKGP) was the first advocate of an electoral reform that would include the possibility of recalling parliamentarians. Later, Jobbik has submitted multiple bills in the Parliament, attempting to create the legal framework of recalling MPs. Such proposals were usually reactions to scandals of government politicians, whose behavior was condemned by their own party, nevertheless they failed to resign and went on becoming independents. Besides parties, other less relevant actors (extra-parliamentary parties, police trade unions, etc.) have also been vocal proponents of a recall clause.

Ever since the regime change, referendums have been understood as a manifestation of checks-and-balances; that is, largely a tool of the opposition to constrain the executive. The very first national referendum in 1989 already exemplifies this, as liberal parties pushed through 4 questions, out of which the only polarizing one concerned the timing of the election of the new President. The campaign for postponing this election after the parliamentary one went against the position of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party. Later, Fidesz used arguably populist referendums to thematize symbolic issues (2004) or to sink the ruling left-liberal coalition's policy agenda (2008); and in the last decade, it has stripped the referendum of its quintessentially opposition and anti-establishment character, initiating referendums on controversial items of its own legislative agenda, such as migration or LGBTQ rights (Pállinger, 2019).

Scrutinizing how Hungarian parties are using digital tools for their internal procedures, Oross & Tap (2021a) found that closed social media groups, newsletters and mailing lists, online

polls, as well as digital platforms are used for the purposes of internal communication. Their analysis highlights that some (but not all) parties also use online tools for deliberation, candidate selection and policy development. Molnár & Urbanovics (2020, p. 550), however, underline the "lack of digital technology use" in LMP and Momentum; according to them, "elements of e-democracy as a tool of direct democracy" are absent in Momentum's electoral manifesto, and nor did LMP "benefit from opportunities and instruments" of e-democracy.

Case selection: Opposition parties in Hungary

We analyze opposition parties in Hungary between 2010–2018, a case selection driven by both theoretical reasons and data availability constraints. Opposition in Hungary is ideologically fragmented, which allows for studying democratic innovations (or lack thereof) in a variety of ideological setting. At the same time, the newly adopted Electoral Law of 2011/CCIII, which strengthened the majoritarian character of the electoral system, incentivized the opposition to gradually co-operate. After a decade of losing all national, municipal and European parliamentary elections, the juxtaposition vis-à-vis the government has become more salient than internal cleavages. This suggests that our longitudinal analysis, focusing on parliamentary elections of 2010, 2014 and 2018, offers ample opportunity not only to trace trends in democratic innovations, but also to scrutinize whether organizational learning (i.e. parties forming electoral alliances, activists campaigning side-by-side) yield empirically observable changes in manifesto and/or charter content. The next general election is scheduled to take place in April 2022; but as these six opposition parties formed a coalition, contesting the upcoming election with a joint list, they drafted a joint manifesto, which we decided not to use. Table 1 presents more information on the political parties discussed.

The principles of case selection mean we omit analyzing two relevant parties: Fidesz and Our Homeland (*Mi Hazánk*). Under the period of study, Fidesz was in government at all time; moreover, uniquely among all Hungarian parties, it refused to produce an electoral manifesto since 2010. This would make it impossible to assess the extent to which charter and manifesto are congruent with respect to democratic innovations. Furthermore, democratic innovations used by Fidesz, such as national consultations, have recently been subject to heightened scholarly attention (Bocskor, 2018; Oross & Tap, 2021b), whereas intra-party structures and campaign promises of the opposition received far less interest.

Scholars of Hungarian politics are divided over whether Our Homeland, a splinter far-right party, founded by former politicians of Jobbik opposed to the party's ideological moderation

strategy (Borbáth & Gessler, 2021), should be classified as a ‘genuine’ or ‘sham’ opposition party (Tóka, 2019). However, our reasons for omitting Our Homeland from the analysis are independent of ambiguities in classification: it was established almost immediately after the 2018 parliamentary elections, hence it produced no manifesto within the time frame of our analysis. Furthermore, as post-2010 Hungary has been described as an electoral autocracy or a diffusely defective democracy (Bogaards, 2018), opposition parties in a strongly polarized party system have few opportunities at hand to empirically prove their commitment to policies.³

Table 1: The Relevant Opposition Parties in Hungary

Abbreviation	Full name	Party chair(s)	Ideology	Membership	Founded
MSZP	Magyar Szocialista Párt (Hungarian Socialist Party)	Bertalan Tóth Ágnes Kunhalmi	social democratic	15,000 (2016)	1989
Jobbik	Jobbik Magyarországért Mozgalom (Movement for a Better Hungary)	Péter Jakab	populist right	13,000 (2019)	2003
LMP	Lehet Más a Politika (Politics Can Be Different)	Máté Kanász-Nagy Erzsébet Schmuck	green	600 (2014)	2009
DK	Demokratikus Koalíció (Democratic Coalition)	Ferenc Gyurcsány	social liberal	10,876 (2016)	2011
Dialogue	Párbeszéd Magyarországért (Dialogue for Hungary)	Gergely Karácsony Tímea Szabó	green/new left	500 (2019)	2013
Momentum (Momentum Movement)	Momentum Mozgalom	András Fekete-Győr	liberal	825 (2019)	2017

³ The "loser is completely denied of any influence on policymaking", as Vegetti (2019, p. 78) aptly put it.

Spending more than a decade in opposition has meant that, with the possible exception of MSZP and DK, whose politicians were on government between 2002 and 2010, there is no benchmark against which the ‘credibility’ or ‘sincerity’ of policy promises could be assessed. If there is no (realistic) chance of shaping the legislative agenda, the intra-party institutions these parties have set up might serve as particularly strong heuristics for the electorate on what to expect from them. Existing literature suggests that ambiguity in party platform – i.e. lack of clarity whether a party supports the introduction of a certain policy, say, a democratic innovation – makes voters to rely more on (evaluations of) party leaders (Wagner, 2014).

Opposition parties in Hungary, however, rarely produce leaders who manage to stay at the helm of their parties for multiple electoral cycles. MSZP often times recruited its Prime Minister candidates from outside in the past, while electing lesser known (and less popular) party leaders (Kovarek & Soós, 2016). Jobbik’s charismatic chairman resigned and quit politics after 2018 (Metz & Oross, 2020). LMP’s co-chairs, after having produced the party’s best-ever electoral result in the same year, were sanctioned and even physically assaulted by other party members, leading to their departure from LMP (Kovarek & Littvay, 2019). Momentum’s founding chairman also had to step aside recently, having lost a vote of no-confidence. All this suggests that charter-manifesto congruency could help aforementioned parties to emphasize democratic innovations, whilst de-emphasizing their weaknesses on leadership.

Data and methods

We analyze manifestos prepared for general elections: whereas parties under scrutiny usually also prepare manifestos before European Parliamentary elections, those tend to focus (almost) exclusively on European affairs, such as questions of sovereignty, common agricultural policy (CAP) or Eurozone membership. It would be unreasonable to expect that democratic innovations would be featured in these manifestos. As some opposition parties were founded earlier than others, we have 6, 5 and 3 manifestos for the parliamentary elections of 2018, 2014 and 2010, respectively. Both authors read and coded all charters and manifestos.

To assess whether innovations promoted to the wide public are congruent with intra-party institutions, we collected the same number of party chapters. As these are frequently modified by party congresses, we decided to use the most recent version still in effect on each Election Day. We then conducted a systematic analysis of these texts. When coding democratic innovations in charters, we only recorded their presence (or lack thereof) in the main text; party charters often-times begin with an ideologically laden ‘preamble’, where commitments to values

and policy priorities are spelled out. This section, however, is rather concerned with the vision the party has for Hungary, not its institutional structure and organization build-up.

Intra-party democratic innovations

Both LMP and Dialogue have intra-party institutions set up for fostering direct democracy, complementing (and sometimes bypassing) the ultimate embodiment of representative democracy – their party congresses, where only delegates of local party units have voting rights. LMP allows that on matters of public policy, *party referendum* can be organized, where each and every party member has voting rights. MSZP party referendums cannot be used to decide over issues of the budget or personal affairs; otherwise, it can be initiated on any issues which would fall under the jurisdiction of the congress. Moreover, a ‘confirmatory party referendum’ can be initiated by the Presidium on matters having previously voted by the congress. Were such referendums fail, the resolutions passed earlier would not come into effect.

Dialogue has the somewhat oddly named *decision making of the entire membership*, a procedural solution which can be initiated by 50% of all members; once convened, it possesses the same rights as the party congress. In spite of common wisdom describing DK as a heavily centralized, personalized party, all party members are allowed to attend *and* vote at DK congresses, and even registered supporters (an alternative form of membership for those preferring less commitments) are welcome at party congresses. Furthermore, ‘partial congresses’ are organized for party members living in the same county or region, extending the experience of direct democracy beyond yearly (national) congresses.

Jobbik is widely regarded as the harbinger of the return of recall to the political agenda, and a wide range of its party officials, such as national and regional board members or local party unit heads, might be recalled accordingly. LMP allows for recalling all of its elected officials, provided 2/3 of the delegating body supports the motion. The same is true for Momentum, where this can be done even without a supermajority – but only through a constructive vote of no-confidence (CVNC).⁴ Party officials of Dialogue or DK cannot be recalled at all, and such regulation is also absent from MSZP.

⁴ The CVNC is a mainstay of contemporary Hungarian politics (Rubabshi-Shitrit & Hasson, 2022): introduced shortly after the regime change, it implemented a constitutional clause mirroring the German chancellor democracy, where stability is guaranteed by the necessity of an alternative majority behind a new candidate before ousting an incumbent Prime Minister. One can safely assume Momentum was driven by similar considerations when adopting the CVNC as a pre-requisite for recall, such as to avoid ousting its chairman without immediately appointing a new one.

As for online tools used for deliberation and decision-making, Momentum expects all of its prospective members to fill out monthly activity reports electronically. Its party charter also allows for a fully virtual (i.e. online) congress. The Ethics and Disciplinary Committee of Dialogue can have its meetings online, and the same holds true for all party units of LMP. (The latter even defines spreading the "use of the electronic tools of democratic structures" as one of its primary objectives). The 'party referendum' of DK, designated to elect its chairman, is the party's single and only online voting procedure. Lasting at least five days, all members are eligible to cast votes, exclusively electronically. Nomination committees in DK are also expected to consult with rank-and-file members in advance electronically, using intranet forums, before suggesting candidates for chairman.

Members of MSZP are encouraged to set up *online communities*. The Presidium and the Board can also initiate an *online dialogue*, the first round of which is always deliberative, followed by a second round where voting takes place. Such online dialogues are not public, organized on the intranet and open for all MSZP members, supporters and volunteers.

Innovations (not) making to manifestos

Manifestos suggest that, with a single exception, parties have no inclination whatsoever for reinstating a recall procedure for elected officials. Only Jobbik declares that voters should be able to recall MPs between general elections. Even LMP, which already had recall procedures in place in 2010, to be used against any elected party official, published an electoral manifesto in the same year that vehemently rejects the introduction of the same democratic innovation against MPs, describing such proposals as "populists drawing a long bow".

Conversely, not counting Momentum, all parties have pledged to foster direct democracy and strengthen participatory politics in one way or another.⁵ MSZP would hold referendums over contentious issues (e.g. the expansion of the Paks Nuclear Plant), and it would give the decision over Corporation Tax Allowance (i.e. to what purposes it should be allocated) to company employees. Jobbik would introduce 'e-consultations', which would mimic the National

⁵ Some could interpret two recurring proposals of manifestos as initiatives promoting direct democracy: the direct election of the President and the confirmation of a new constitution by a referendum. In reality, they have more to do with the contemporaneous Hungarian political context. The opposition has been hoping that a directly elected president could unite voters of the fragmented opposition and constrain the chief executive. Similarly, arguing that Fidesz is anti-democratic rests (partly) on the proposition that it adopted a single-party constitution (Bogaards, 2018), without meaningful consultation with opposition parties. Consequently, even if parties have a strong desire to revamp the constitution, they cannot promise to do so without popular legitimacy, otherwise they would appear as hypocrites.

Consultations of Fidesz, just "without propaganda", would lower validity thresholds of referendums and expand the scope of questions suitable for referendums. The latter two pledges appear in manifestos of DK and LMP in an almost identical form, but LMP would also like to see local governments to "adopt direct democracy elements", as well as an easier procedure for submitting referendum proposals. Finally, Dialogue would bring back non-binding referendums and popular initiatives,⁶ both of which were previously abolished by Fidesz, and would introduce a mandatory round of citizens' review before bills are passed in the National Assembly or in city councils. The reluctance of Momentum to follow suit is likely explained by its founders' political socialization: as Angyal et al. (2017) has pointed out, Momentum leaders have sympathized with the student protests of 2012/13, but they clearly rejected their organizational structure, "condemning" direct democracy.

Most parties would introduce (some sort of) e-democracy at the national level. Jobbik, DK, Dialogue and Momentum would all create a framework where online voting is feasible at general elections; some of them would implement the same procedure for European Parliamentary and local (municipal) elections, as well as for referendums. Furthermore, Momentum is also committed to "online debate of bills", "electronic bill proposals" and to conduct student union elections in universities entirely online.

Discussion

Parties were rather consistent in endorsing practices of direct democracy at the last general election, with the single exception of Jobbik, which promotes direct democracy to the wide public, but not for its own members. The three 'youngest' (i.e. most recently founded) parties delimit the scope where we find congruence with respect to e-democracy: Momentum, Dialogue and DK have a variety of online tools promoted both within and outside their parties. LMP and MSZP have seemingly felt such tools, which they rely on heavily for intra-party deliberation and decision-making, are premature for replacing more traditional methods at a national scale.

⁶ The popular initiative was a petition-like institution, which mandated the Parliament to discuss any topic supported by 50,000 signatures; it was abolished in 2012 by the new constitution.

Table 2: Democratic innovations and opposition parties in 2010

Democratic innovations	Political parties		
	MSZP	Jobbik	LMP
Recall			
Direct democracy			
Lower voting age			
Quotas			
Online democracy			

Notes: ■ both in charter and manifesto; ■ only in charter; ■ only in manifesto; □ neither in charter, nor in manifesto.

Despite all the scholarly attention devoted to Jobbik's social media presence and the role of the internet in its early rise (e.g. Borbáth & Gessler, 2021), the party's organizational structure lacks any e-democracy elements – which does not stop Jobbik from promoting them for its voters. Oross & Tap (2021a) also corroborate this finding on the absence of e-democracy, emphasizing that the role of Jobbik's digital platform is restricted to storing party members' phone numbers and e-mail addresses.

There are very few examples of parties *abandoning* democratic innovations once they embraced them. In other words, no matter whether experimentation with innovations started within parties or in manifestos, the conclusion was almost never that the particular innovation failed and should be retracted. This could be a welcome news for those committed to "reimagine and deepen the role of citizens" (Elstub & Escobar, 2019, p. 11) in democratic processes: our Hungarian case study suggests that institutionalized innovations, the very tools designed to achieve this goal, do not end up being failed experiments. The only two exceptions concern LMP: intra-party direct democracy institutions were absent in 2014, whereas e-democracy did not make into LMP's 2018 manifesto.

From a more theoretical perspective, our analysis suggests links between electoral co-operation and organizational learning. Some of the opposition parties studied here were archenemies of each other: Jobbik and LMP have originally established itself against the ruling MSZP, whereas DK, a splinter party project of former MSZP Prime Minister and party chairman Ferenc Gyurcsány is viewed by many as "cannibalizing" the Socialists' voter base, having sworn revenge on his former intra-party opponents. Jobbik-allied far-right websites, such as kuruc.info, issued calls to

deface billboard ads of MSZP candidates, resulting in anti-Semitic words and drawings painted on a large number of posters, while mocking LMP supporters in a weekly recurring column. Nonetheless, as Fidesz gradually dismantled checks and balances (Bogaards, 2018), party elites and supporters alike have become more open for co-ordination, eventually fielding joint candidates in 2019 for the municipal elections, achieving an electoral breakthrough (Kovarek & Littvay, 2022).

Table 3: Democratic innovations and opposition parties in 2014

Democratic innovations	Political parties				
	MSZP	Jobbik	Dialogue	LMP	DK
Recall					
Direct democracy					
Online democracy					

Notes: ■ both in charter and manifesto; ■ only in charter; ■ only in manifesto; □ neither in charter, nor in manifesto.

The analysis above demonstrates how this *détente* was accompanied by a convergence of party structures and manifesto content. This suggests organizational learning: as activists worked together and party elites started talks with each other, particular forms of democratic innovations have emerged as ‘best practices’, whereas others remained isolated examples organizational specificities on the fringes. For instance, back in 2014, only Dialogue had a clear position on direct democracy, as no other party was characterized by manifesto-charter congruence. Four years later, direct democracy was endorsed both internally and in manifestos by DK, MSZP and LMP, too.⁷

Tools of online democracy, however, hint at a different pattern: whereas in 2010, it was entirely absent from opposition parties’ charters and manifestos, one can see a sudden change in 2018, commitment to e-democracy having become ubiquitous in charters, manifestos or both. Two explanations lend themselves. The first would, rather trivially, posit that Hungary was simply

⁷ Further examples of organizational learning are abound with respect to IPD elements not discussed here: for instance, MSZP introduced male and female co-chairs in 2020 after contesting elections and caucusing in the Parliament together with Dialogue for years.

not ready for wide-scale introduction such tools earlier – nor for their implementation in the intra-party context. This, however, seems unfounded, given data on internet penetration rate and digital literacy in Hungary (NRC, 2020). Even LMP claimed in its 2014 manifesto that the "technology necessary for e-voting is already available".

Alternatively, one could conjecture that the upsurge of electoral clientelism and coercion after 2010 (Mares & Young, 2018) incentivized opposition actors to think about electronic alternatives for elections. If a growing share of voters feel that ballot secrecy is violated or turnout buying is widespread, opposition party leaders, as well as rank-and-file members, could perceive e-voting as a remedy for illicit behavior. That is, demand for democratic innovations of this type might be driven by fears of voter frauds; killing two birds with one stone, online democracy could strengthen programmatic linkages, while potentially also diminishing the chances of Fidesz-allied brokers boosting ruling parties' vote share.⁸

Table 4: Democratic innovations and opposition parties in 2018

Democratic innovations	Political parties					
	MSZP	Jobbik	Momentum	Dialogue	LMP	DK
Recall						
Direct democracy						
Online democracy						

Notes: ■ both in charter and manifesto; ■ only in charter; ■ only in manifesto; □ neither in charter, nor in manifesto.

Analyzing LMP's charter over time also reveals an interesting, albeit well-established pattern: as parties grow in size (i.e. membership), direct participation often-times gives its way to institutions of representative democracy (Poguntke, 2017). In 2010, we coded the presence of direct democracy based the regulation that allowed all members of LMP to attend *and* vote at its congress. However, the charter included a clause that once party membership reaches 500, voting rights should be reserved to delegates of local party units. The irony of this passage is that *after* OMOV was deleted from the charter, LMP membership figures have once again sunk below

⁸ We are unaware of studies systematically comparing the extent to which Fidesz and opposition parties engage in electoral clientelism, but the election-time threats described by Mares & Young (2018) presuppose the political control of rural municipalities. The opposition never possessed this resource.

500 – not independently of (sometimes violent) infightings (Kovarek & Littvay, 2019) and a self-defense clause of the charter against usurpation, which places a cap on the number of applicants local party units are allowed to admit as members (Kovarek, 2020, p. 41).

Conclusion

This paper has addressed the relationship between institutionalizing democratic innovations at the intra-party level and endorsing them publicly, via their inclusion in electoral manifestos. We argued that congruence is a sign of a party emphasizing a democratic innovation more, signaling sincere commitment about their introduction to voters. Examining six opposition parties in Hungary, findings suggest that attitudes on direct democracy is the most congruent dimension; i.e. political actors promoting it in their electoral manifesto, with the single exception of Jobbik, also implemented some form of it at the intra-party level. Contrarily, all sorts of patterns have emerged with respect to e-democracy elements and tools for online deliberation, hinting less genuine commitment of Hungarian parties over respective democratic innovations. Recalling elected officials was, by and large, not followed by endorsing the same measures at the national level, in the electoral arena.

These results hold some interesting lessons for future research. As intra-party politics and organizational structures are obscure topics for most voters, it is somewhat unclear to what extent aforementioned inconsistencies undermine parties' credibility. Contrary to campaign promises and pledges, it is rather rare for intra-party regulations to make it to the headlines; and even if they do so, it usually relates to personal conflicts and rival factions.⁹ Further research should evaluate the degree to which political sophistication affect any 'electoral penalty' associated with incongruence. In other words, it would be interesting to see whether those who are better informed and consume more political news indeed perceive manifesto pledges more genuine, were parties to implement some versions of them internally beforehand.

To move beyond simply confirming the occurrence of charter-manifesto congruence, and to rather explain factors driving (in)congruence, we focused on organizational learning. Party activists and elites, who were once arch-enemies of each other, were gradually forced to co-operate by Duverger's Law and growing public discontent; this inevitably influenced how

⁹ For instance, the party statute of Jobbik gave broad powers to the chairman, who can veto the appointment of any Vice Chairman, even if duly elected by the congress. Whilst unique among Hungarian parties, this particular clause has only received media attention when Gábor Vona (Metz & Oross, 2020) used the veto, blocking infamous far-right politicians to take their seat, eventually leading to the departure of Jobbik's extremist flank.

particular democratic innovations are perceived by voters and members of *other* opposition parties. Research on *inter-organizational* learning in the context of political parties (Jakopovich, 2009) is scarce, and further studies can look into the question whether forming alliances, particularly electoral cooperation, make such learning more likely than merely being contemporaries of each other.

There are a handful of potential factors, which might explain why certain innovations are featured prominently in manifestos, but not in party charters (or *vice versa*). Studying whether disparities in parties' opinion structures (May, 1973), i.e. different strategic considerations of central party and rank-and-file members, determine the arenas where democratic innovations are endorsed, could be a fruitful avenue of future research; but unlike the research design employed here, it would require conducting surveys with party activists, members and elites.

The analysis has made further progress in charting the prevalence of institutionalized democratic innovations. Nevertheless, the extent to which these are supported by the electorate, and whether public sentiment affects parties' willingness to openly endorse innovations remains unclear. After all, manifesto contents are frequently the function of the preferences of rank-and-file members and activists, "leading political parties to adopt some policies which may be unpopular with their target voters" (Basu, 2020, p. 444).

Scholars have argued earlier (e.g. Böcskei & Molnár, 2019) that despite the *cordon sanitaire* between mainstream parties and Jobbik during its far-right period, as well as the party's inability to be in government, Jobbik nevertheless heavily influenced the government's legislative agenda. Fidesz rather implemented some of Jobbik's fairly popular initiatives, in order to keep the party's support at bay. However, Jobbik apparently struggled to convince other parties about the need for recalling elected officials. Even Momentum, which at least institutionalized it at the intra-party level adopted it from the party charter of extra-parliamentary, liberal EGYÜTT (Kovarek, 2020, p. 51). Future research could investigate what explains Jobbik's striking inability to influence adoption of democratic innovations, despite the Hungarian public's longlasting support for recall. Ideological distance and polarization between the Left and the Right (Vegetti, 2019) is certainly one, albeit definitely not the only possibility.

We focused on opposition parties, as in their context, charter-manifesto congruence might be understood as a proxy of selective issue emphasis. Nevertheless, we were also constrained by data availability, as Fidesz refused to publish electoral manifestos in the past. Future research could select other cases to study whether patterns similar to our findings are empirically observable in parties currently on government. Analyses like that would also allow

for scrutinizing the relationship between ideology and presence of democratic innovations (or lack thereof).

At the normative level, the analysis furthermore suggests that some forms of institutional solutions are better suited for intra-party organizations and more easily adopted by parties than national institutions. These implications might be relevant for those committed to promote gender equality, participation of youth in politics or deliberative democracy.

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