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FROM PEOPLE TO POWER

HOW DO POLITICIANS REPRESENT THEIR RECRUITMENT INTO PARLIAMENT?

A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE VISEGRAD COUNTRIES

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ABSTRACT

The literature of transitology has already reviewed the way in which former socialist countries of Central and Eastern Europe succeeded in joining the capitalist world order (Ágh 1993, Bielasiak 1997, 2002; Birch 2003). It has described the political processes and their effects (e.g. the rebirth and transformation of party systems, the development of civil societies and the electoral systems). However, studies published in the past 20 years have not paid sufficient attention to the picture that the parties and their members paint of themselves when it comes to their recruitment into party politics. Following Olson's approach, our study draws attention to parliamentarians as 'the human dimension of legislatures' that are particularly visible in CEE countries (Olson 1994: 13).

In our study, we investigate MPs from the four Visegrad countries: Hungary, Poland, the Czech Republic and the Slovak Republic. Instead of using surveys or questionnaires, we only used publicly available data: the websites of the parliaments and statistic offices, the parties, and the MPs themselves. We were interested in the different representations that MPs construct about their "first contact" with party politics to the voters.

The rich literature of party recruitment and the discipline of elite studies came to the conclusion that the parties of the new democracies of the region are concentrating on the elections and the mobilization of their voters, not on the continuous recruitment of new members. Then, how do the MPs join the political parties, what kind of channels are available to them and how do they represent themselves in their publicly available CVs?

In the first part of our paper, we present the methodology; in the second, our hypotheses; and in the third, the findings of our research. At the end of the paper, we identify the next steps that are necessary to further develop our theories in a future research.

Key words

V4 countries, political recruitment, Members of the Parliament, transparency

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INTRODUCTION

On the basis of geographical proximity and similarities in the social and political frameworks, our research examines the recruitment of national representatives of the so-called Visegrad states: Hungary, Poland, the Czech and the Slovak Republic.

The literature of party recruitment, i.e. the renewal of MPs and party members in comparative perspective, is rich (Cotta & Best, 2000; Best, 2007). Political parties play an especially important role in this process concerning the parliamentary elites in Central and Eastern Europe, since they have established themselves as an important selector for parliamentary and cabinet offices in many CEE countries. Changes in the electoral systems in many of these countries have increased the importance of parties and made it more difficult for independents to run for legislative positions. (Semenova–Edinger–Best 2013: 29).

Since members of parliament are recruited and selected by parties, we seek to identify the sources of parliamentarians' profile in the party context – as Putnam claims, after all, it is recruitment that influences the features of the given elite group the most (Putnam 1976: 47). Most political parties have maintained party youth organizations that act as political training grounds since the time of parties with mass memberships in Western Europe (Stolle–Hooghe 2005). However, political parties do not rely only on their youth organizations for the recruitment of their MPs. We will later show that youth organizations are only one – and not even the most widely spread – channel. Parties maintain connections to civil movements, they employ experts in every policy field, pay attention to minority groups, use the fame of singers and TV personalities, and even look back to before 1989 to utilize the decades of political experience of former communist party members. However, the proportions of the usage of these channels are different in each party and they are especially variable in different countries.

The Visegrad states are similar in various ways. The party development of the region missed 40 years because of the forced socialist system.³ Democracy and parliamentary elections were on hold; society did not have the means to freely form interest or political groups. After 1989, however, the four states have all established parliamentary systems, have not been exposed to substantial ethnic conflict, and have been classified by Freedom House as consolidated democracies for many years. Having the same cultural roots, similar economic backgrounds and more or less the same future plans in 1991, each of the four countries declared their common aims with regional cooperation under the Visegrad Group–V4. Furthermore, these countries are all unitary states and share strong historical ties to Western Europe and became members of the European Union in 2004.

There are also similarities concerning party politics in the region. Since 1989, new parties emerged in the Visegrad countries and old ones were reformed. These new political parties required members to participate in the elections as candidates, to mobilize voters and in the day-to-day activities of the party as well. The party recruitment patterns were initially ad hoc, but soon stabilized in the countries of the region (Ilonszki–Schwarz 2013: 57). Parliamentarians in the Visegrad countries have been the most professionalized: upon their entry into parliament, MPs usually had leadership experience in local offices and within their political parties. Among these parliamentarians, the proportion of MPs recruited from political parties is higher than the CEE average (Semenova–Edinger–Best 2013: 296).

³ Within the People's Republic of Poland, alongside the Polish United Workers' Party, there existed two communist-controlled parties: the Democratic Party and United People's Party. But since there was no democratic competition among these parties, there was no chance for democratic party development.

Based on the abovementioned factors, the four cases are apparently quite similar. Therefore, we can assume that there might be similarities in the career path of an MP.

However, the electoral systems of the Visegrad countries differ: there can be found one mixed-member electoral system (Hungary)⁴ and three proportional systems (Poland,⁵ the Czech and Slovak Republics). Although the latter are all closed-list cases, preference voting is enabled in the Czech and Slovak Republics.⁶ Since the electoral system is one of the most influential factors behind the different career pathways of politicians, this might lead to differences.

MPs elected under SMD (single-member district) majority rules are more district-oriented and candidates have more opportunities to conduct individualized campaigns than those elected in party-list proportional (PR) systems. Concerning mixed electoral systems, Zittel (2008) found that in the case of Germany, the mode of candidacy matters to a surprising extent, because of the contamination effects between the first and the second tiers of the electoral system. Due to these contamination effects recent research on the Hungarian electoral system (Papp 2013) has shown that because of the party-centeredness of the system - not as the consequence of individual decisions, but as the manifestation of party strategies - personal representation appear as part of the overall party strategy. In single-member constituencies a given party might favour candidates that have started their career outside the political party for some reasons (e.g. a well-known local personality might increase the number of the votes). Therefore, we suggest that despite the fact that the recruitment is strongly influenced by Hungarian party control, we will find the greatest number of individual characteristics of self-representation of MPs in the Hungarian case. In PR systems, district magnitude – defined as the number of legislators elected from a district – is a relevant variable that differs in all selected countries. As for the type of lists in *closed lists*, the order of election of candidates from a given party in a multi-seat district is determined by a party-provided rank. When the list is closed, there is no intraparty competition. Following the results of former research (Shugart et al. 2005:439) we expect that these two variables interact to affect the extent to which voters demand information about the personal attributes of legislators and legislative candidates. We assume that parties have strong control over the selection of candidates and career routes of MPs and therefore, most MPs start their political career within political parties. We expect the fewest initiatives for individual career paths outside political parties to be found in Poland. This

⁴The Hungarian electoral system is of a mixed type: it distributes 386 mandates on two principles and into three branches. The considerable role of the single-member districts in the electoral results is a widely noticed feature of the Hungarian voting system. 45.6% of the representatives come from one of the 176 single-member constituencies. In principle, according to the logic of territorial representation, voters vote for people, not parties. Similar to Western-European countries, the Hungarian election campaign is ruled by political parties (Körösényi–Tóth–Török, 2009).

⁵According to the Constitution, the Sejm is composed of 460 Deputies chosen for a four-year term of office and there are 100 Senators. Poland has a multi-party proportional representation system. There are 41 constituencies in Poland, each allotted between 7 and 19 seats. Each constituency provides a candidate list and members of that district vote on the candidates they want to elect. Parties win seats according to the aggregate vote for their candidates in a constituency and then allocate them to those with highest totals.

⁶Although in June 1990, the Czech and Slovak electoral systems were very similar, the Slovak variant was almost identical to the semi-open list PR system, with large district magnitudes and party thresholds. Since 1990, there have been several amendments to this system in both the Czech and the Slovak Republics. In the Czech Republic, the election system to the Chamber of Deputies is characterized today by multi-mandate constituencies; the number of mandates for one constituency is calculated proportionately according to the number of valid votes in the constituency. Voters have the opportunity to vote for competing party lists with the possibility of preference-voting for candidates within the list (Mánsfeldová 2013: 36). In the Slovak Republic, the most notable change was the introduction of a single nationwide constituency replacing four regional districts in 1998. Preference voting is neutralized by the single district, as the application of the existing formula to such a large area made it practically impossible for any but the already most prominent figures to move up the candidate list (Birch et al. 2002: 76). Each voter may, in addition to the party, select one to four candidates from the ordered party list. Candidates who are selected by more than 3% of the party's voters are elected. Each voter can cast four preferential votes for candidates with respect to the same list. Vacancies arising between general elections are filled by substitutes chosen at the same time as titular members.

proportion is expected to be higher in the Slovak and the Czech Republic, where voters can express their preferences for candidates.

The four cases are apparently quite similar, and yet they might demonstrate surprisingly different outcomes in career paths of MPs. The hope is that intensive study of the available recruitment channels might reveal one – or at most several – factors that differ across these cases.

Our research focuses rather on the career paths or self-presentation of MPs than recruitment per se. Our question is: what do MPs emphasize concerning the beginning of their political careers? What is reflected in their curricula vitae that is presumably written for the voters and posted on the webpage of parliaments, or their personal websites, when they are creating a picture of themselves? In these texts, we expect to find their motivation for entering politics and the way in which they became members of their parties. Our paper identifies these ways and compares them in each country, meanwhile showing the differences among the parties as well. At this point, we must emphasize that our research is only focusing on the CVs of MPs; therefore, we expect different results from previous studies. CVs, as with all texts created by politicians, are subject to the goals of politicians: they want to influence or reassure their voters, create credibility in their policies, and paint a trustworthy picture of themselves. The current state of our research on the recruitment channels and self-representation of the members of parliament of the Visegrad countries only allows us a descriptive paper. However, we believe that we have been able to identify the different recruitment channels and shed some light on the topic, which will allow us to investigate it further.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND HYPOTHESES

Our first hypothesis is that despite the similarities of the four Visegrad countries, we will find some differences in the self-presentation of first contact points with politics as indicated in the introduction.

Our second hypothesis relates to the 2008 global economic crisis. We are anticipating a certain kind of depoliticization which is reflected and could be detected in the CVs of the MPs. In times of social, political, and especially economical difficulties, all politicians agree that a solution must be found as quickly as possible, and that this solution has to come from “experts”, not politicians. Most policy questions that are otherwise open for political debate in normal circumstances (e.g. raising taxes, cutting social care), are characterized in the statements of governing and opposing politicians alike as strictly professional questions; however, these issues remain political in nature, and depoliticization could lead to diminishing democratic content (for a review see Flinders–Buller 2006). Drawing on the research of Steven Kettel (2008) we propose testing the extent of depoliticization in the self-representation of MPs in the Visegrad countries before and after the economic crisis. We expect to find different (i.e. depoliticized) first contact points in their publicly available CVs in the elections of 2010 and 2011 and at higher ratios than in earlier times (i.e. before the economic crisis).

In order to test our hypothesis, we have chosen the last three parliamentary elections⁷ within the four countries, and we have only researched the winning parties, since winning parties (i.e. parties in government) necessitate the recruitment of members on a larger scale, making their recruitment channels more visible to the laymen and the researcher alike. Our choice of

⁷ Hungary: 2002, 2006, 2010. Poland: 2005, 2007, 2011. Czech Republic: 2006, 2010, 2013. Slovak Republic: 2006, 2010, 2012.

elections was based on our hypothesis, a kind of depoliticization of parties and different roles of politicians to emerge relating to the economic crisis of 2008–2009. We analyze the cumulative data of all four countries in all three elections. We will present our data proportionally, for the parliaments of each country have a different number of seats; furthermore, we have limited our research to the winning parties only, with a varying number of mandates won in each election.

We will accept our second hypothesis if we find a higher proportion of depoliticized first contact points in the CVs of the MPs in a cumulative data setting in the second group of elections (i.e. 2010 in Hungary, the Czech and Slovak Republics, and 2011 in Poland) compared to the first group of elections (i.e. 2006 in Hungary, the Czech and Slovak Republics, and 2005 and 2007 in Poland).

METHODOLOGY

The data was collected between December 1, 2013 and January 22, 2014. The primary sources of information were parliament websites for the CVs of the elected MPs. This model has functioned well for the Hungarian⁸ and Polish⁹ case, since all the CVs of the MPs are published by the *Országgyűlés* and the *Sejm*. However, these data were not published by the parliaments in the Czech and Slovak Republics; therefore, we used websites of civic organizations¹⁰ with the goal of promoting transparency. They have published the CVs of both Czech and Slovak MPs, however, as additional data source websites of the MPs and their parties were also used if no information was available about the curriculum of a politician.

It is unfortunate that we were not able to use similar data sources in all Visegrad countries (i.e. the websites of parliaments) and it might raise some questions as to the comparability of the results. However, we were interested in the publicly available CVs; therefore, we chose the data-collection method available to the voters as well. In all four CEE countries, it is mandatory for MPs to submit a curriculum vitae to the archive of parliament when winning a mandate; however, the Czech and the Slovak parliamentary archives did not make these CVs public on their websites. They are, however, available in paper format in the archives themselves, making them available to the public in theory but cumbersome to access. As our hypothesis relates not only to the self-representation of members of parliament but to the picture they paint of themselves for the public, we chose to use the more accessible CVs.

Our database contains the last three parliamentary elections of the Visegrad countries, 23 parties¹¹ and 1,952 MPs.¹² The table below shows the parties analyzed in our research and the election years as well.

⁸ <http://www.parlament.hu>

⁹ <http://sejm.gov.pl>

¹⁰ Czech Republic: <http://www.nasipolitici.cz>, Slovak Republic: <http://www.osobnosti.sk>.

¹¹ Hungary: 4, Poland: 5, Czech Republic: 7, Slovak Republic: 7.

¹² Hungary: 678, Poland: 696, Czech Republic: 331, Slovak Republic: 247.

Table 1. The parties in the database.

Parties Country			1 st time group		2 nd time group			
	2002	2005	2006	2007	2010	2011	2012	2013
Hungary	MSZP, SZDSZ		MSZP, SZDSZ		Fidesz, KDNP			
Poland		SRP, PiS, LPR		PSL, PO		PSL, PO		
Czech Republic	SZ, ODS, KDU-CSL				ODS, TOP09, VV			CSSD, ANO, KDU
Slovak Republic			SMER, ĽS – HZDS, SNS		MOST- HÍD, KDH, SaS, SDKÚ – DS		SMER	

As mentioned before, only the winning parties were selected for our research. The timeframe of our database (2002–2013) necessitated a distinction in the case of the upper houses of the Polish and the Czech parliaments. In the case of Poland and the Czech Republic, we did not include the senators (i.e. the members of the upper houses the *Senat* and the *Senát*).

We have chosen the most recent elections that are comparable in all four Visegrad countries. This means that the economic crisis happened in the middle of mandates of all Visegrad countries; therefore, the same amount of time was available to all politicians to react to the event, and furthermore, all parliaments have fulfilled their mandate with the exception of Poland. The current stage of our research only allows us to compare the CVs of MPs in the two aforementioned elections, thus making our paper rather descriptive. However, we believe that with our innovative approach to the study of representation, we have been able to open a very interesting avenue of research.

Unlike former research into the political elite of the selected countries (Semenova–Edinger–Best 2013) our research did not gather data directly from MPs or from different parliamentary groups, but focused on the public relations of the MPs as individuals, namely on the way how they represent themselves towards the public. Regarding the recruitment of the MPs, we focused on the question of how they formulated their CVs, and what they emphasize when they write about the beginning of their political career. This might cause differences compared to research into the political elite, since CVs are often “edited” by political parties for ideological reasons. Regarding recruitment, one typical issue is that candidates of right-wing parties hide their affiliation to the former state parties (Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party, and Polish United Workers Party). Nevertheless, how these CVs are constructed adds important information about the representation of the political elite of the selected countries.

Since we gathered information about the self-representation of career paths of MPs, we coded what they mentioned as the first step of their political career. We did not formulate our categories beforehand to maximize flexibility. However, shortly after the coding began, the following categories emerged. It has to be noted here, that at this phase of our research, our categories are mutually exclusive (i.e. we coded the CVs of the MPs with only one category).

1. *Founder of the party*: those MPs who emphasized that they have belonged to the given party since its beginning and were active in its formation. We can differentiate two types of politicians who have been coded to this group. The first are seasoned politicians who have been active since the 1990s; the second are the latecomers who have founded new and successful political parties in response to various social, political, and economic challenges.

2. *Party member*: if the MP has emphasized the fact that his or her political career started within the political party (e.g. joined the local division) that nominated him or her as candidate for the elections. The majority of the cases fell into this category, since party loyalty is experienced and enforced on a daily basis in these party systems. A high ratio of party members signifies a kind of loyalty to the political party: in extreme perception, rendering, the past of the MP null and void before joining the party; in a milder wording, making it insignificant.

3. *Youth organization*: we distinguished those party members who mentioned that they started their career within the youth section of the party they represented in the parliaments. We have also coded into this category those who have indicated the start of their political career in any of the communist youth organizations. This could be seen problematic, as membership of communist youth organizations are construed as meaningless, and it was in some cases compulsory; however, we have only coded MPs to this category if they have expressively mentioned their membership to the youth division of communist parties.

4. *Other party members*: we coded into this category those MPs who mentioned that their political career started in another political party, but has left in order to be nominated by their current party. From the party perspective, this could mean a kind of inclusivity and reception toward members of other parties; meanwhile, from the view point of the politician, it could mean a professionalization that makes the candidacy itself more important than party membership (e.g. in the Hungarian case, we find several former FKgP [Independent Smallholders' Party] MPs joining the Christian Democrats or Fidesz).

5. *Local politics*: if the MP started his or her career at the municipal level (e.g. was elected as municipal deputy or became mayor of a settlement) and became member of a political party and national politics later. The literature suggests that that local roots and electoral experience are generally valuable, and it extends these notions by arguing that the value of such attributes varies systematically with the extent to which electoral rules generate a demand by voters for locally committed legislators (Shugart, 1995: 438.). Drawing on the work of Valdini (2005), we argue that voters demand different kinds of information about their potential agents of representation under different electoral rules.

6. *Communist Party*: we have coded the MPs into this category if they have indicated in their CVs their former membership to the communist parties of the region. We will see significant differences between the Visegrad countries; the reason for this difference might be explained partly by legal obligations. While in the Czech Republic, the Constitutional Court has declared that former membership of the Communist Party has to be indicated by the candidates, there is no such obligation in the other three countries. However, members of the Hungarian party MSZP have been declaring their former state party membership at very high ratios (i.e. in the 2002 data, 50% of their MPs fell into this category); meanwhile, in the case of the Czech Republic, we find no successor party in coalition after the Velvet Revolution.

7. *Civil movement*: those MPs who emphasized that they started their career outside of political parties, however, mentioned their political activity in regard to different political issues. We have also coded into this category those MPs who

started their career in a political movement (e.g. Solidarnosc in Poland), or in a movement that emphasized its distance from established political parties (e.g. ANO 2011 in the Czech Republic) before becoming a party themselves and entering parliament.

8. *Expert*: MPs emphasizing their expertise in a certain field fell into this category (i.e. economists, medical doctors, university and academic researchers). These professionals are working with political parties in think tanks or other institutions, and for their continuous support they might receive parliamentary seats.

9. *Minority*: certain MPs concentrate on representing a minority group and usually they belong to them as well. In their CVs, they indicate that they represent especially the interests of these minority groups, and did so before joining a political party and becoming MPs. We did not code into this category the MPs of explicit minority parties automatically (e.g. MOST-HÍD of the Slovak Republic) because we were researching the different recruitment channels as represented in the CVs, not the characteristics of the parties themselves.

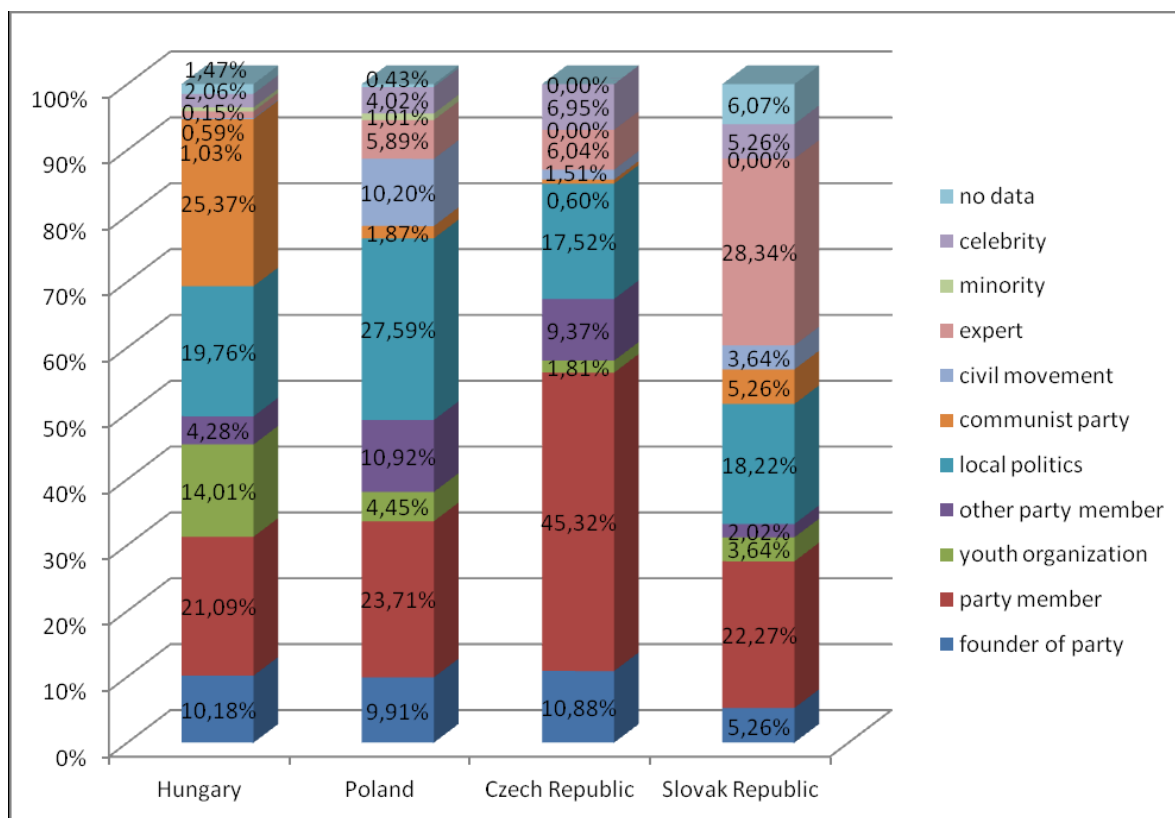
10. *Celebrity*: we differentiated party politicians who became MPs because they were celebrities (e.g. actors, singers, writers, sportsmen); their CV focused on emphasizing these features.

11. *No data available*: in some cases, we were unable to find sufficient data on the MPs about their curriculum, and how they came to be MPs. These few cases are very interesting, since we are talking about public figures at the highest level of politics. Further research is proposed on these MPs and their parties, related to transparency.

RESULTS

First, we tested trends among the Visegrad states as to the way their politicians represent the process of how they became part of the political elite (i.e. members of parliament). Do the parliamentary elites of Hungary, Poland, the Czech and the Slovak Republics mirror the same proportion of recruitment channels or not? Firstly, we present the cumulative data for each country.

Figure 1. Cumulative data of the Visegrad countries. N=1952.



Source: own calculation

FIRST CONTACT WITH PARTY POLITICS

As for the availability of data on the CVs of MPs, information on every politician was accessible in Poland and Czech Republic. In Hungary, no reliable information was provided by 2% of the sample, while the most difficult task was to find data on Slovak politicians, and 6% of the sample could not be tested.

The highest proportion of MPs reporting on the beginning of their political career within political parties can be found in Hungary, while our results indicate the lowest results in the Slovak case.

Affiliation to the Communist Party of the former regime is most reflected in Hungarian politicians (25%) since the MPs of the successor party of the socialist state party (MSZP) indicate their affiliation and the party had great share in the parliamentary seats in 2002 and 2006. The proportion is much lower in Slovakia (5%) and in Poland (2%) and almost zero in the Czech Republic.

Starting a political career within the same party that nominated a given MP is often mentioned by MPs of the Visegrad countries, justifying the claim that party context is the recruitment method that influences the features of the given elite group the most. Almost half (45%) of the Czech political elite comes from the party context, while in the other three countries, this proportion is significantly lower (21–24%).

Being a party founder is indicated by 10% of MPs in Poland, Hungary and in the Czech Republic, while it is less frequent in Slovakia (5%).

The highest proportion of young politicians getting a head start in politics via youth organizations was detected among Hungarian MPs (14%). These organizations have significantly less importance in the other countries of the region (2–4%).

Although the party system underwent significant changes in all countries, the CVs of MPs reflect little on the fact that their political career started in another political party in Slovakia (2%) and in Hungary (4%). It is reflected more in the Czech Republic (9%) and 11% of Polish MPs mention it.

Our results confirm the importance of political parties to MPs with regard to political recruitment in the region. Only a small minority of MPs start their careers outside political parties. The highest proportion can be found in Slovakia and Poland.

As for political careers outside political parties, local politics serves as a key channel for the selection of MPs within the region. The proportion is the highest in Poland (28%), while in the other three countries, approximately one fifth of MPs mention this form as their first politics-related role (18–20%).

Emphasizing their expertise in working with political parties or in think tanks or other support institutions of political parties before entering parliament is the most reflected form in Slovakia (29%). The proportion of experts is 6 percent in Poland and in the Czech Republic, while it is not a significant feature of Hungarian politicians (1%) at all.

The role of political movements is reflected by high number of MPs in Poland (10%), most of them referring to their role within the Solidarnosc movement. Czech and Slovak politicians refer to such origins at a much lower proportion (2–4%), while according to their CVs, movements seem to have had little influence on the careers of Hungarian politicians.

Famous personalities can help to increase public support to political parties and make them more attractive for voters. The share of those famous personalities who get seats as MPs is highest in the Czech Republic (7%), around 5% in Poland and Slovakia, while their number is not significant in Hungary (2%).

The proportion of politicians mentioning activity in issues for ethnic minorities as their recruitment channel is almost zero among Czech and Slovakian politicians, and it is not significantly higher in Hungary or Poland¹³ either (1%).

Although we have expected that, given the mixed electoral system, Hungarian parties might favour candidates that started their career outside the political party, Hungarian party control proved to be stronger than expected, and we have found fewer individual characteristics of self-representation of MPs in the Hungarian case: more than 90% of MPs reported having

¹³ However, in Poland, the data reflect the importance of the Kashubian minority movement, since almost all politicians who mentioned minority issues indicated their engagement to the Kashubian language in their CVs, while no similar trend could be detected in any other case.

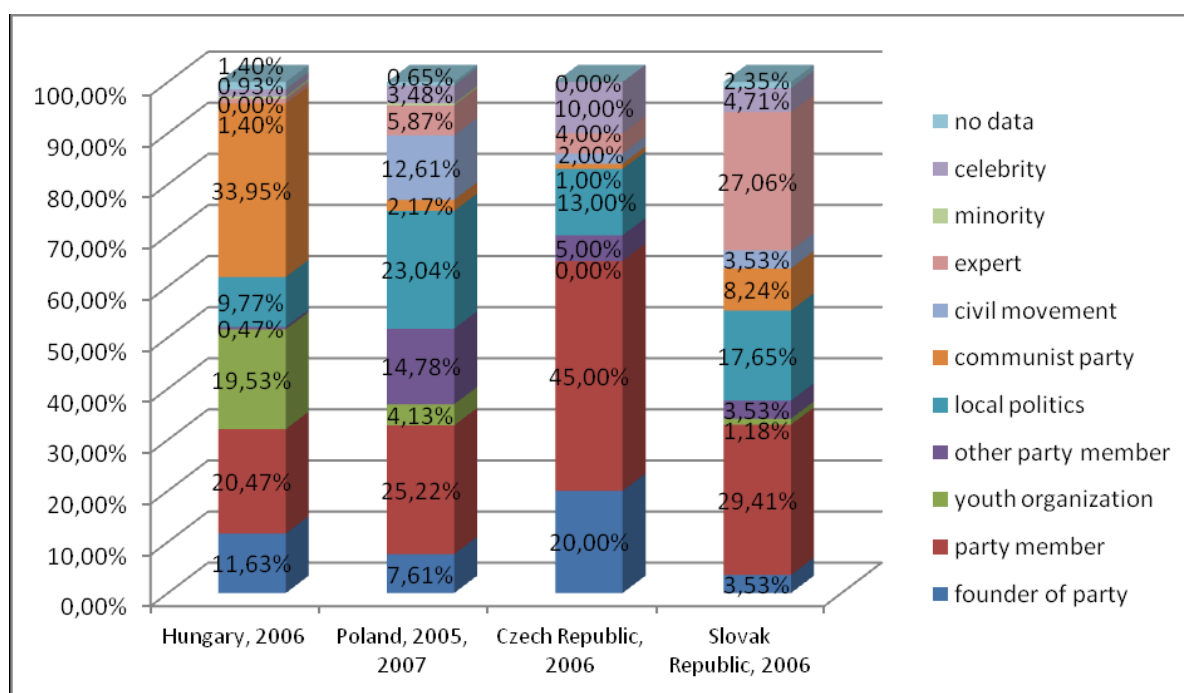
started their political career in political parties. Our results indicate that the most initiatives for individual career paths outside political parties are to be found in the Slovak Republic, and that this could be the result of voters being able to express their preferences for candidates.

FIRST TIME GROUP

After reviewing all four countries from a cumulative perspective, we continue to test our second hypothesis (i.e. the differences and similarities of the CVs of the MPs related to the date of elections). In this part of our paper, we will first show our results in two groups: firstly, the elections of 2005 (Poland), 2006 (Hungary, Czech Republic, Slovak Republic), and 2007 (Poland); secondly, the elections of 2010 (Hungary, Czech Republic, Slovak Republic) and 2011 (Poland). We have weighted the cases of Poland in the first time group, as they contained two elections instead of one.

The following figure shows the results from a national perspective, making the characteristics of each country visible.

Figure 2. Data for elections in 2005, 2006, 2007.
N=860 (Hungary: 215, Poland: 460, Czech Republic: 100, Slovak Republic: 85)



Source: own calculation.

The proportion of MPs who emphasized that they are founders of party was the highest in the case of the Czech Republic, with 20%. This is much higher than in the other Visegrad countries; in second place is Hungary with the proportion of 11.6%, followed by Poland (7.6%) and the Slovak Republic (3.53%).

The Czech MPs mentioned their party memberships in the highest proportions as well, with 45% of the cases. We find party membership less emphatic in the case of the Slovak Republic (29.4%), Poland (25.2%) and Hungary (20.4%). As mentioned before, political parties hold key positions when entering politics in the region, therefore, it is not surprising that this category contained the highest ratios of MPs, except for Hungary, where it was preceded by former Communist Party membership.

As we mentioned before in the introduction of our paper, it is evident from our database that political youth organizations are not the most widely emphasized first contact points with national politics. This category has the highest ratio in Hungary (19.5%), but this can be explained by the bigger coalition party, the successor of the Hungarian Worker's Party, MSZP. The MPs of this party had a standardized CV template in 2006 and 2010, and all of the MPs old enough have mentioned their relation to either socialist youth organizations or the socialist Worker's Party. Hungary is followed by Poland, with a considerably smaller proportion (4.1%) and the Slovak Republic (1.1%), while no MPs mentioned relations with any youth organization in the Czech Republic.

Membership of other parties was most emphasized by MPs from Poland (14.7%), a three times higher ratio than the Czech (5%), Slovak (3.5%) and Hungarian MPs.

Having come from local politics was most emphatic in the case of Polish MPs, as well (23%), followed by the Slovak (17.6%), the Czech (13%) and finally the Hungarian (9.7%) cases.

As mentioned before, Communist Party membership was very well articulated in the CVs of Hungarian MPs: a third of them mentioned a former commitment (33.9%), while this first contact point was emphasized significantly less by the other three Visegrad countries (i.e. 8.2% of the Slovak, 2.1% of the Polish and only 1% of the Czech cases).

Proportions of involvement in various civil movements was the highest in the case of Poland yet again (12.6%) followed by 3.5% in the Slovak Republic, and 2% in the Czech Republic. In the case of Hungary, we only found MPs who mentioned various activities in civil movements or charitable foundations after joining their political parties.

The ratio of experts is very high in the Slovak Republic compared to the other three CEE countries (i.e. 27%), while in Poland it is 5.8%, in the Czech Republic 4% and in Hungary only 0.9%.

Emphasizing minority groups and also belonging to them is rather under-articulated in the Visegrad countries: only three MPs (two Polish and one Hungarian) mentioned minority advocacy groups as their first step towards party politics, making this category the least represented in our database.

It seems that being a famous person or a celebrity is a more emphasized gateway to politics, especially in the case of the Czech Republic where 10% of the MPs mentioned this in their CVs. This proportion is followed by the Slovak Republic (4.7%), Poland (3.4%), and finally, Hungary (1.4%).

We found no difference on missing data in the four Visegrad countries. In the Czech case, there were no missing CVs; meanwhile this ratio was the highest in the Slovak Republic. However, in only 23% of the cases was no data available.

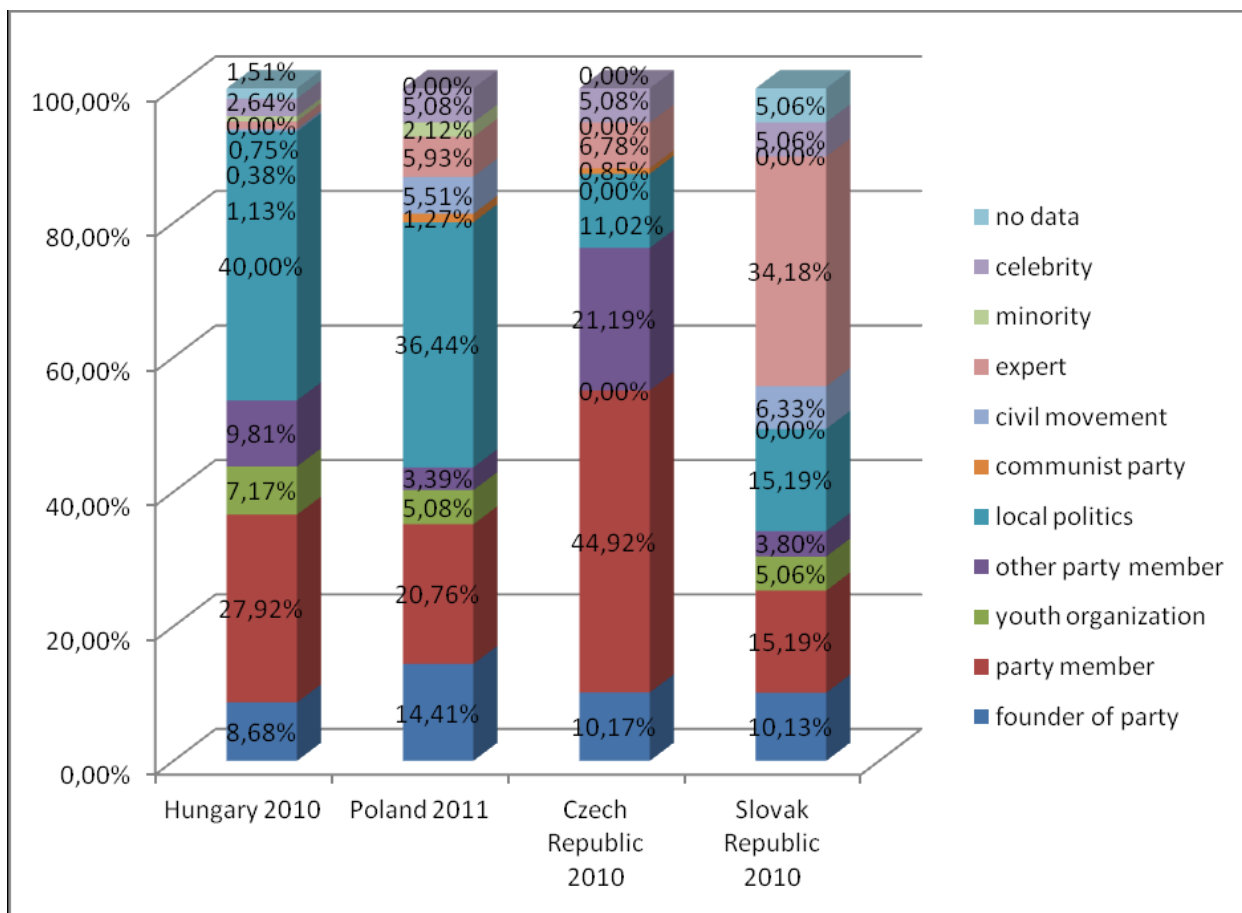
After the first descriptive part of our results, we will continue with our second time group: the Polish elections of 2010 and 2011.

SECOND TIME GROUP

The next figure shows the characteristics of each country, making the differences visible at the national level.

Figure 3. Data from elections: 2010 and 2011.

N=698 (Hungary: 265, Poland: 236, Czech Republic: 118, Slovak Republic: 79).



Source: own calculation.

The proportion of MPs who emphasize being founders of parties as their first contact point with politics has decreased in all Visegrad countries with the exception of the Slovak Republic, where we detected an almost 7% increase (from 3.5% to 10.1%). Overall, this coincides with our expectations.

In accordance with our second hypothesis, the ratio of MPs in the category of party members decreased in Poland (from 25.2% to 20.7%) and the Slovak Republic (from 29.4% to 15.1%). However, they increased in Hungary (from 20.4% to 27.9%), and stayed almost the same in the Czech Republic (45% compared to 44.9%).

Our results are also mixed in the case of the ratios of the group of political youth organizations. The proportions decreased in Hungary (a significant change from 19.5% to 7.1%), stayed virtually zero in the Czech Republic, meanwhile increased in Poland (from 4.1% to 5%) and the Slovak Republic (from 1.1% to 5%).

The ratio of other party members decreased in Poland (from 14.7% to 3.3%), stayed the same in the case of the Slovak MPs and increased in Hungary (from 0.4% to 9.8%) and the Czech Republic (from 5% to 21.1% – a robust change).

We have found the most significant change to be in the category of local politics. In Hungary, their proportion increased from 9.7% to 40%, in Poland from 23% to 36.4%; meanwhile, we detected a 2% decrease in the case of the Czech and Slovak Republics.

Former Communist Party membership as a first contact point with politics has virtually vanished from our second time group, which coincides with our second hypothesis: we found four MPs (one in the Czech Republic and three in Poland) from a total of 698 that emphasized this in their CVs.

We found no changes in the category of civil movements in Hungary and the Czech Republic, as they mentioned only in a few cases; meanwhile the ratio of this group increased in Poland (from 5.5% to 12.6%) and in the Slovak Republic (from 3.5% to 6.3%), coinciding with our hypothesis as well.

Verifying our hypothesis, we detected an increase in the ratio of MPs with the first contact point to politics as experts in Hungary (non-significantly from 0,9% to 1,1%), the Czech Republic (from 4% to 5,9%) and a further increase in the already high proportions in the Slovak Republic from 27% to 34.1%, while there are virtually no changes in Poland (5.8% to 5.9%).

In the category of minorities, we notice no definite trends: a slight increase in Hungary, a non-significant decrease in Poland, and no changes in the CVs of the MPs of the Czech and the Slovak Republic.

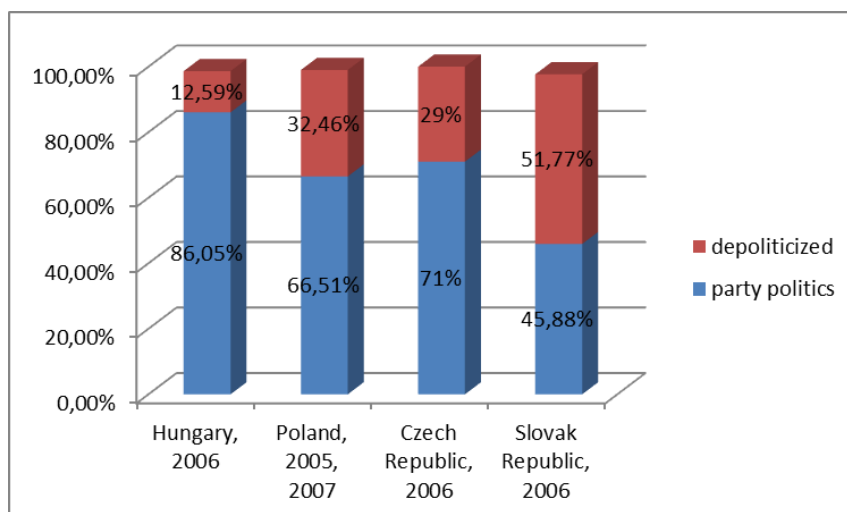
We have mostly verified our second hypothesis with the increase of proportions in the case of celebrities in Hungary (1.4% to 2.6%), the Slovak Republic (4.7% to 5%), and Poland (3.4% to 5%); however, we found a decrease in the Czech Republic (10% to 5%).

There are no significant changes in data availability of the Visegrad countries after the elections of 2010 and 2011, although in the case of the Slovak Republic the proportion of missing data is relatively high: 5%.

DEPOLITICIZED VS. PARTY POLITICS

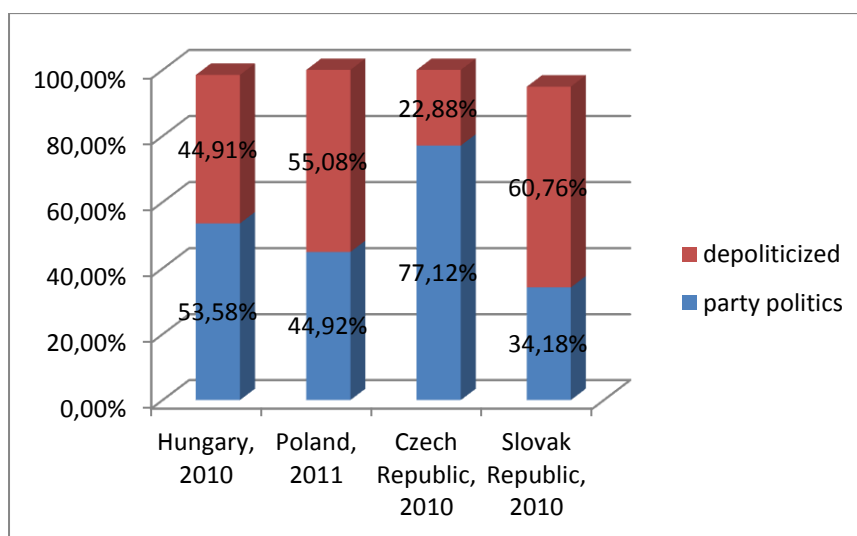
After these mixed results, we will show our results in the figures below cumulatively by our two main groups (i.e. depoliticized and party politics first contact points). In the party politics group, we have included the following categories: 1) founder of party; 2) party member; 3) youth organization; 4) other party member; and 5) Communist Party. In the depoliticized group, we have included the following categories: 1) local politics; 2) civil movement; 3) expert; 4) minority; and 5) celebrity.

Figure 4. Proportions of depoliticized and party politics, 2005, 2006, 2007.



In the election years of 2005, 2006, and 2007, we found that the highest ratio of party politics was in Hungary, followed by the Czech Republic, Poland, and the Slovak Republic respectively. Our second hypothesis suggests that these results would have changed significantly after the global economic crisis. The next figure shows our results for these elections.

Figure 5. Proportions of depoliticized and party politics, 2010, 2011.



Our hypothesis proved to be correct in three Visegrad countries out of four. The ratio of depoliticized first contact points with politics increased significantly in all countries, with the exception of the Czech Republic, where we detected a slight increase in party politics.

Figure 6. Cumulative proportions of depoliticized and party politics, 2005, 2006, 2007 compared to 2010, 2011.

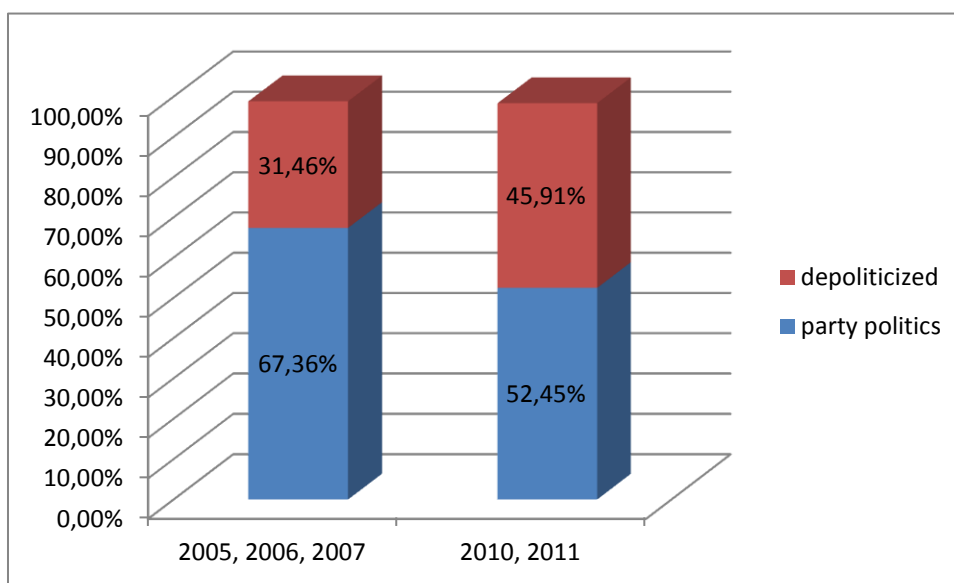


Figure 6 shows that when our findings are presented in all four countries, the group of depoliticized first contacts with politics did indeed decrease, verifying our second hypothesis for the region.

CONCLUSION

The way in which politicians grant access to their CVs publicly differs in the four Visegrad countries. However, our research was able to gather information on almost every politician in our sample.

Our results confirm the importance of political parties to MPs' political recruitment in the region. The highest proportion of MPs reporting on the beginning of their political career within political parties can be found in Hungary. We have found that there are similar trends among different recruitment channels of the four CEE countries: party founders have a similar share of the seats (5–10%). Many MPs attach importance to party membership in all the selected countries, but this has very high importance in the Czech case (45%). Hungarian MPs indicated their connection to the Communist Party with a very high proportion (25%), while it was almost insignificant in the other three countries. A relatively high proportion of young politicians start their careers in youth organizations in Hungary (14%), while these organizations have significantly less importance in the other countries of the region (2–4%). The CVs of MPs reflect little on the fact that their political career started in another political party in Slovakia and in Hungary (2–4%), while Czech and Polish MPs mention it more often (9–11%). Only a small minority of MPs start their careers outside political parties. The highest proportion can be found in Slovakia and Poland. Winning parties necessitate the recruitment of members from local politics at almost the same scale (20–28%); few famous personalities get seats as MPs in all countries (2–7%), and mentioning any activity regarding issues for ethnic minorities proved to be very low. Being an expert affiliated to a political party is an especially preferred option of Slovak politicians (28%), while it has much less importance in the other cases. The role of political movements is reflected by a relatively high proportion of MPs in Poland (10%), while other politicians from the region refer to it at a much lower proportion (1–4%).

We developed two time groups in order to investigate if we find any differences between the self-representation of the MPs in their CVs in connection with the global economic crisis. We have verified our hypothesis that the self-representation of the MPs in their CVs has changed significantly. We found that they increasingly emphasize first contact points with politics that are closer to society and farther from the sphere of politics. We have termed these first contact points *depoliticized* because they do not represent party politics. However, as discussed above, the recruitment channels are dominantly controlled by political parties; therefore, our results do not mean the actual depoliticization of the MPs of the region, only a change in the self-representation of members of parliament.

Our aim was to contribute to an already existing scientific debate from another aspect. Since these abovementioned trends stem from publicly available data and texts subject to the goals of politicians, future research can answer the question of whether the self-representation of MPs differ from other available data. The comparison of our results with data gathered directly from MPs or from different parliamentary groups can add important implications about the transparency of the political elite of the Visegrad countries: it is highly conceivable that there is an ideological difference among parties of the region regarding the roles of their members in the communist parties of the past. Future research may help us to see the matter more clearly, and therefore, this is highly recommended.

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