



Dual Communication and Absence of Dialogue: Studies on the „Student Network” in Hungary between 2012-2013

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“To be hopeful in bad times is not just foolishly romantic. It is based on the fact that human history is a history not only of cruelty, but also of compassion, sacrifice, courage, kindness. What we chose to emphasize is in this complex history will determine our lives. If we see only the worst, it destroys our capacity to do something. If we remember those time and places- and there are so many- where people have behaved magnificently, this gives us the energy to act, and at least the possibility of sending this spinning top of a world in a different direction. And if we do act, in however small way, we don't have to wait for some grand utopian future. The future is an infinite succession of presents, and to live now as we think human beings should live, in defiance of all that is bad around us, is itself a marvelous victory.”

- Howard Zinn

Abstract

Student Network (Hallgatói Hálózat, abrv. HaHa) is the name of the student movement born around 2011 in Hungary, formed out of the discontent with the government's educational policy. The analysis shows that the Student Network represents the emergence of a new kind of political awareness in Hungary that can be described as a prefigurative political initiative (Yates, 2014).

There are two main parts of the study. In the first part we analyse the involvement and identification with the movement on a personal level, in the second part the representations held by the media are examined.

(1) In the first study we asked HaHa members about their involvement and their evaluation of the events. Results show that these personal experiences can be articulated through two dimensions: the personal involvement focused on a prefigurative political initiative or the more particular educational claims and the evaluation of the movement as a success or a failure. By analysing the published documents of self-proclamation we studied the formal self-definition and message of HaHa. The two dimensions of identity (also stressed in the personal experiences) that can be



categorized as particular educational objectives and the desire of a new and different societal organisation were both expressed.

(2) In the second part we analysed the media representation of HaHa through the content dimensions of the documents of self-proclamation in two newspapers (both left- and right-wing). Some content dimensions were over-represented, whilst other ones were not mentioned. These unmentioned contents were concerned with the prefigurative political dimensions.

The results indicate that the movement as a political minority was unable to change the political discourse to a greater extent, while it had and still has effect on public affairs in Hungary. In conclusion we reflect on the limitations and challenges of prefigurative action in the social-psychological framework of minority influence.

The Student Network (HaHa) and the context of the study

At the beginning of December 2012 the Hungarian government announced a reform with strong austerity measures on the public and higher education sector. The reform concerned drastic budgetary cuts, a withdrawal of 43 billion forints, the reduction of the admission quotas and an obligatory contract for state funded students that bind them to the Hungarian labour market for the double of time that they spend at the universities, opposing to the free labour mobility in Europe. University and high school students together with some of university lecturers answered with protests in Budapest, Pécs, Szeged, Debrecen. On the 17th of December thousands of people protested in Budapest blocking bridges and boulevards. Finally, the government restituted the quota.

The movement rapidly grown, beside demonstrations, flashmobs and protests, students claimed for a comprehensive overall reform of the education sector and organized forums based on direct democracy at the Universities to discuss the actions and proposals. On 11th of February the Movement occupied the ELTE University, faculty of Humanities. As a result the National Union of Hungarian Students were called by the government to participate in the discussion concerning the educational reform, obtaining a partial agreement that even those faculties (e.g.. law, communication and media



studies, economics, sociology) at that moment not supported by the government will receive students financed by the state. As the students' actions did not trigger further effects the occupation ended on 26th of March and the movement slowly dissolved.

The Movement as a social group without clearly defined boundaries (no official membership and leaders) was formed as a reaction to the announced reform. Whilst protesting, the movement had an intense inner life negotiating human and societal values, discussing - through direct participation - education, or what are the boundaries of radical actions, how and with whom to express solidarity. This process generated a constant deconstruction and renewal of cultural and social values and practices, a characteristic trait of modernism and modern society (Heller,1999; Arató, 2014) and – we suggest - prefigurative action.

In the following sections we present our studies and their results in details while attempting to show what the term prefiguration means in this case and how it works in a more and more authoritarian society (Guriev, Treisman, 2015).

The Student Network was the first attempt since the transition to democratic political system in Hungary to change the social discourse on a mass level from the bottom up, where the youth could express their different worldviews and a desire to be actively involved in social change, stemming from the different political experiences in contrast to that of senior generations with ultimately different set of values.¹

1st STUDY: INVOLVEMENT IN THE MOVEMENT: Analysis of HaHa's members' personal narratives

Results show that historical events occurring between the ages of 12 and 25 have the most significant impact on any individual's identity (Pennebaker, 1997; Erikson, 1950; Rubin & al., 1986; Conway, 1990). This phenomenon is related to the development of

¹ Most of the movement's members are part of the generation born around '88-90, the time of regime change. So they are the first generation who grew up and socialized entirely in a democratic, capitalist, „western” society. In that sense this movement can be interpreted as part of a learning process as described at the end of this paper.



an integrated identity (Erikson, 1950) and the stabilisation of private relationships. If we accept this theoretical hypothesis, the youth for whom this historical event will become relevant will in time inherit experiences from the movement such as coping strategies, scenarios, and emotional attitudes. How will they imagine further possibilities of social activity, social responsibility, and engagement based on these experiences?

"...I think that the organization melded the people who were born at the time of the regime transition into a generation. Even those who did not take part in the protests have some kind of attitude towards them. Talking about this in 10 years' time will still be relevant." (6th interview)

In our study we asked members of HaHa to answer three questions: How did they become involved in the Student Network; how do they reconstruct the history of HaHa; and how do they relate to the previous events. We received 12 reports to our online proposal out of the 112 members approached. There were subjects who responded with distrust toward our survey, and others who did not feel like they processed the events to the point where they could give a sequential narrative of the occurrences and their involvement in them, even less take a stand in what they think actually happened.

"There are people in HaHa with thousands of different political leanings and tempers, there are people from Pest, Pécs, Szeged, and Debrecen, everyone probably saw the events in a different way, what are you trying to conclude here? Even I "relate to the previous events" in two different ways on two different days, how the hell am I supposed to answer a question like this?" (12th interview)

The 12 interviews cannot be looked at as a relevant sample; nevertheless we tried to analyse the content in a bottom up way, identifying the recurrence of thematic issues and dimensions with the aim to construct a typology of these personal experiences. We found two underlying dimensions that have an important role in how their experience is structured: **how the individuals identify themselves in relation to HaHa**, and how they evaluate the movement itself (a success or a failure story).

The identification variable defines the way in which the individuals identified with HaHa. As in, how they textually phrased their commitment to the movement. We identified two tendencies: the so-called **regime critics** and the ones who identified strictly with the **educational policy objectives**. The former define themselves from a broader perspective, they criticize the social structure in a broader context; this is how they get



involved in HaHa, which focuses on educational policy in its objectives, but also embodies one of the comprehensive regime critical movements in Hungary.

“I joined, because I am not content with the current – domestic and foreign – political and financial situation generally, and specifically with the current government, but the selection of opposing forces today is pathetic; I saw potential in the forming HaHa to become the core of a new opposing movement and direct the anti-regime movements of Europe to Hungary.” (1st interview)

The second category includes those individuals who joined HaHa specifically because of its mission, as in they do not agree with the changes occurring in higher- and public education policies.

“I joined the cell in Szeged way back in 2012 formally, because I found the educational policy related news (primarily the student contract), that were also prominent in the media, troublesome, and a friend of mine also joined not long before me.” (5th interview)

Both ways of identification include individuals who experienced and evaluated HaHa as a success and as a failure. Nevertheless the definitions of success and failure change with the perspectives.

Regime critics define what happened as failure for the inner difficulties of HaHa as a movement. The lack of time for reconciling values and interests appears in some accounts. This includes the conflict between the attempts to include masses and the identification with regime critical national values, and how this conflict remains unsolved.

“However the real reason for failure is an inner one. Initially we denied our regime critical approach (well those at least, who had one), partly because of the vain hope that this somehow will legitimize us in the eye of the prevailing elite, partly because of the misconception that education could be observed in itself, independent of the remaining elements of the regime. (1st interview)

Those regime critics who experienced the HaHa movement as a success, although still giving accounts of the problems mentioned above, think further into the future. They evaluated these value conflicts as the necessary steps of the dawn of existence and life in the movement, and for them the success of the story depends on whether these first steps were taken to approach an attitude that is more critical from a societal point of view.



“Although we encounter a lot of obstacles and even now, two years after the launch of HaHa, the movement battles many initial troubles of functionality, I think that what happened in the past two years was useful and important, and I would like to continue developing our thinking, our pursuits, and the discourse we established to talk and debate about these issues.” (4th interview)

Identification along the lines of educational policy objectives is a significantly more specific identification. It is a reaction to the regulation of educational policies. This is an identification of outer localization from a psychological point of view. “I am joining because I do not agree with what is happening.” The content of identification is organized around the dimensions of educational policy. It does not touch upon other social problems and contents.

“Since I study in Hungarian higher education, I felt the problem was one of my own.” (3^d interview)

Those individuals identifying with educational policy objectives who evaluate the movement as a failure, talk about failure against the government. They claim that they actually could not change, or managed to only minimally change the things they stood up against, things they did not agree with. Thus the failure of the educational policy identification is the failure of the efforts to change educational policy. From this perspective the identification of outer localization sheds light on the lack of inner values independent of education, and even if these values appear occasionally, they never become a part of the agenda for discussion (due to time constraints or because of the direct democratic operation of HaHa). There are individuals who do not see, and individuals who do not want any further goals and values in HaHa, other than educational policy objectives.

“It appears to me that since the educational policy items have been taken off the agenda of the government, this movement does not have much to say; specifically we cannot reach a consensus on what it should say that would justify further operations of the movement.” (2nd interview)

The inherent quality of specific identification is that due to codified failure and the long-term “fight” these individuals burn out with time, they feel like their actions and momentum are losing their point.



“If there are no political ambitions behind an organization (as in it does not want to be a part of higher politics), it is only natural that it is going to be governed by entirely human emotions, such as enthusiasm, disenchantment, fatigue, etc.” (3rd interview)

„As an early HaHa member said: it seems like the organization is functional only when it is time for action. It does not stand on its own as a genuine organization.” (6th interview)

In the end, the success story of educational policy objective identification is the experience of communal life, communal thinking, and practicing democracy.

“I am glad and also a little proud to have been able to take part in this organization where young citizens and intellectual can publicly express their views, taking social responsibility independently of party-politics. I feel this is an important development in Hungary” (7th interview)

“It is a very unique community, not without its mistakes. Everyone’s opinions are equal, direct democracy functions in practice, with all of its advantages and disadvantages. [...] To sum it up, I can honestly say it was one of the best choices of my life to join HaHa.” (9th interview)

One of the most important categories that appear in almost every report is the degree of commitment. Those who identified with educational policy objectives, and especially those who evaluated the events as somewhat of a failure, joined HaHa through interpersonal relationships (*friends, colleagues*), often talk about the organization in the past tense and the third person (*they said, they wanted*), and often express the low level of their commitment to taking part in the actual events.

“XY asked me if I wanted to join.” (2nd interview)

“For the longest time I would only observe the operation of HaHa from the side-lines, like an anxious, nagging old lady, who was also strongly critical. But I was also rooting for them. I decided to join the protest organizing evening on the 9th of December.” (5th interview)

On the other hand regime critical identifiers speak about HaHa in the present tense and first person, they give accounts of their extreme commitment and their individual initiatives, painting a picture of themselves as people who joined the movement because of their personal values.

“I do not see the cause as lost.” (1st interview)

“I have memories of disillusionment and subversion from as far back as the 2nd grade.” (4th interview)



„I consider myself a politically active youth. I have been looking for ways to shape public life since 2009. Interestingly enough, as opposed to the majority of HaHa members, initially I tried myself at party politics and only later ended up in the world of civil regime criticism.” (8th interview)

Different interpretations of the movement arise in these accounts of retrospective interpretation (Table 1). The content of identification frames these interpretations.

		Interpretation of the movement	
		Success story	Failure story
Identification	Regime Critical	A regime critical movement was born in Hungary. Long-term objectives, commitment aligned with certain values, individual efforts realized in communal work.	Commitment aligned with strong emotions and values, experiencing the lack of negotiation of values and norms as an internal obstacle.
	Educational Policy Objectives	Communal life, experiencing direct democracy and communal thinking.	Educational policy objectives failed. Internal tension. Burnout. Low level of commitment and involvement.

Table 1 –Typology of experiencing HaHa

Formal identity of the movement: Analysis of the documents published by HaHa

In the next part we provide a brief overview of the educational policy demands and the politico-philosophical ideals of the students, based on documents produced by the Student Network. We do this in order to create the content categories for the media analysis to see what aspects of the students’ message is represented in the online press. Additional result is that the two ways of identification seen in the personal accounts is reflected in the formal communication as well. There are particular educational policy demands or objectives, while some broader concepts also appear



regarding political ideals, methods of exercising power and social organization. These contents make up mostly the prefigurative notions in the movement's proclamations

Educational policy objectives

We define the educational policy objectives based on the *6 points of demands*² established by Student Network Budapest, and the *13 points* established by Student Network Pécs. The demands can be organized in five basic conceptual junctions.

1. Comprehensive reform

The two documents call for the comprehensive reform of both public and higher education, highlighting the necessity to include the stakeholders (students, educators, parents, maintainers of the institutes) in the process and to take into account the specificities of the 21st century labour market to create a more professional dialogue.

2. Availability

The students had very specific demands about the availability of higher education, such as the re-establishment of acceptance quotas, at least to the level of the year 2011. Furthermore the students criticized the arbitrary, governmental redistribution of scholarship quotas among universities and faculties. Another important point was to protect and increase the possibilities of the underprivileged to get accepted into higher education and to be provided with sufficient conditions to successfully finish that education.

3. Provision of resources

There were clearly outlined demands over the financial support of higher education. These were the immediate cancellation of the fund cuts, compensation for the funds withdrawn in the past, and the guarantee that the government will provide sufficient, consecutive, and transparent funding to maintain higher education. The Student Network was not entirely adverse to tuition fee, but stressed that tuition should only be one source of funding to higher education out of many others. Following in the same

² http://hu.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hallgat%C3%B3i_H%C3%A1llgat%C3%B3zat#A_hallgat.C3.B3k_hat_pontja



vein, they demanded fair wages and sufficient working conditions for the educators to ensure a public and higher education of a higher quality.

4. Contractual relationship

The immediate abolishment of student contracts was demanded. The student contract was harshly criticized, since it entirely opposed the principle of freedom of movement in the European Union. It obliges students to work in Hungary as a „repayment” for their education. It was pointed out that instead of restraining contracts the government should create jobs and opportunities for the youth to stay in the country.

5. Institutional autonomy

The government should not limit the intellectual, economical, and institutional autonomy of universities through financial supervision of „chancellors” appointed by the Ministry of Education.

Politico-philosophical notions

Besides the educational policy objectives, the movement also drew up some political-philosophical notions, which they tried to realize in their actions. We collected these notions from the available self-defining documents (the Charta of the Student Network³, the online „Handbook” published by the movement⁴) and derived it from their public actions, performances.

Autonomous, self-organizing self-advocacy

By the definition of the movement, it is a self-organizing, autonomous, grassroots community, which set the establishment of such communicational frameworks as its goal, which provides the stakeholders with an immediate and personal space for self-advocacy and expression of opinions. In order to move these discussions forward, the network considered all violence-free tools of public resistance utilizable, such as the interactive and placid university occupation.

³ https://docs.google.com/document/d/1gnr5R6g49MeRItiyB4xNIThbEVBmaz_ODANQXUf7n7l/edit

⁴ <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1soXjqdw01zbFrE0VFWLSavl-dJmbsA-WSVDKe-EZ6WM/edit#>



Movement quality (“movementality”)

The movement does not have leaders, only organizers; it is more of an ethical, social, and political *compass*, than professional organization. The Student Network is free of hierarchy and wants to avoid the formation of any hierarchy. The movement is pursuing to cooperate with every citizen of public and higher education, including every advocacy group, students, educators, and other employees of educational institutions.

Active citizenship based on direct democracy

According to the self-defining documents of the student movement a democratic political culture cannot function without the active, reflexive participation of the citizens. In the students' opinion, by being responsible voters, the citizens claim right to the sovereign expressing of opinions in public matters. Thus the movement operates on direct democratic fundamentals, as in every individual can rightfully express opinions about decisions, mould common activities, and decide how they want to participate in common duties. The movement envisions a scale-shifting political culture, thus while it phrases shared values and ideals, it also establishes the principle of *subsidiarity*, such as the importance of localized decision-making or decentralization.

Party independence and neutrality

According to the self-definition of the Student Network, it condemns the cooperation with parties, as organizations, because it defines education as a collective interest rising above party interests. The movement is open to everyone, regardless of their party preference. Thus, they see their organization as independent of parties, which is not looking for representation, but puts its faith into direct action when it comes to reaching its goals.

The university campus as symbolic social space

The fifth conceptual junction is organized around the university as medium and physical space. The student movement considers the medium and space of university as a defining effect on individuals and society lasting for decades, thus it is the movement's first rate goal to qualitatively judge and reform it. At the same time, the *use and*



occupation of space is a central tool among political resources, thus the university campus is not only a providing institution, but an effective, symbolic, social space and the movement asserts its right to its evident use and its physical frames that provide immediate publicity.

To summarize it, according to both the analysis of the student narratives and the conceptual matrix of self-proclamation, the student movement has a twofold identity. Beside it's educational policy demands, it commits itself to the realization of a new kind of regime-critical, socio-political activism or even new kind of social structure, political practices. In the second half of the paper we try to show how these notions appear in the public discourse through the computerized content-analysis of online journals' articles.

2nd STUDY. MEDIA REPRESENTATION OF THE MOVEMENT

The representation of the dual identity of HaHa in the media

The subject and methods of the analysis of media representation

We analysed online articles published by two major newspapers – Népszabadság (left-wing, oppositionist) and Magyar Nemzet (right-wing, loyalist) – between the 1st of December, 2012 and the 1st of March, 2013. We put the key term “HaHa” into the online search engine, being the most specific term related to the topic.⁵ The number of words in the Magyar Nemzet Online corpus (hereinafter MNO): n=25362, number of words on Népszabadság Online (NOL): n=38426. We conducted the analysis with the Atlas.ti computerized content analysing software. The frequency of the previously coded contents was measured in relation to the total word count of the articles. The results are expressed in relative percentage.

To be able to analyse and compare the texts the targeted contents were categorized.

First of all we determined and coded **who** talks or acts **to whom**:

⁵The term “Student Network” would have turned up every instance of the expressions “Student” and “Network.”



- the actors of the represented events were coded: (HaHa and the government); and
- the orientation of agency: to whom the actions and statements are addressed

As for the content of communication, we picked the **educational policy objectives**:

- institutional autonomy,
- security of availability, sorted into two categories:
 - quota of governmentally financed education (quotas and tuition),
 - underprivileged groups' social mobility and access to education;
- contractual relationship;
- Provision of funding.

The other main category concerned the **politico-philosophical ideals** and the forms of political action. Thus we also handled the articles along these categories too:

- active citizenship based on direct democracy,
- autonomy and self-organizing self-advocacy,
- movement-like quality,
- principles of party independence and neutrality
- the university as symbolic space (space occupation)

The analysis of media representation

It is immediately striking that the MNO displays the Student Network more or even vocalizes them more often, than the government party (although this difference is not significant). At the same time, and less surprisingly, the NOL deals more with the Student Network, so it seems there is no quantitative difference between these tendencies. To understand this two pieces of data one has to consider two other factors. On one hand we can see that manifestations *against* the Student Network are more frequent in the MNO (9%) than in the NOL articles where this hostile attitude is not present (0,1). In the MNO most of these opinions originate from other „independent” sources, or authorities related to the students (i.e. university management) not directly from representatives of the government:



“The Dean of the Faculty of Humanities, ELTE has condemned the actions of the Student Network” - MNO, 11. Feb. 2013.

In case of NOL, in a whole different context, this code appears as an active rejection by the government party:

“It became clear, that the government won’t give way to the protestors.” / “this way the Student Networks who organized the demonstrations was intendedly left out of the negotiations” – NOL, 12. Dec. 2012.

On the other hand, the Student Network’s explicit anti-government attitude is represented in a higher proportion in the MNO articles (16% vs. 5%). This oddity can be understood by the fact that these notions always correlated with the Student Network as an actor. In other words, the MNO depicted a threatening, anti-government mass.

“Following the announcement of the quota in higher education, there were multiple protests nation-wide against the notions of the government.” – MNO, 18. Dec. 2012.

While the protesters are depicted as aggressive and threatening, the government’s attitude is calm, solution seeking and positive towards the Student Network and the students in general, as manifested in higher proportions of government gestures (10% vs. 3%). This dual communication is illustrated in the quotation below:

“ Prime minister Viktor Orbán wrote a letter to David Nagy, the head of the National Student Council in which he calls for negotiation with the students” – MNO, 18. Dec. 2012.

As for the students’ demands, the problem of the *quota and the tuition-fee* appeared most prominently. These are the topics where the government seemed to be more permissive. In addition to this, the question of *financing* became emphasized in this category, showing that independently from party politics, education has been reduced to



a mere economic problem. The cases of *institutional autonomy* or the *student contracts* appeared briefly and only in relation to economic issues. The access of the underprivileged to higher-education as a pledge of social mobility is hardly represented in the media (0,2% MNO, 4% NOL).

The *new means of political action*, propagated by the movement and what they also tried to implement was even less dominantly represented in the press. Notions promoting active citizenship, or the methods and instruments of direct civil influence on decision-making appeared in greater proportion on the NOL site (7%).

Furthermore, *self-organization*, the *movement form* and *party-neutrality* were not represented in either media product. This can be an indicator that these medias are representatives of consolidated political structures and ideologies and try to anchor the movement’s novelty to settled political concepts and relations. It is also possible that neither political „side” has an interest in promoting radically new approaches of political philosophy.

Agency and orientation in text	MNO	NOL
HaHa as agent	30,7%	26,8 %
Government as agent	27 %	20%
Actions against HaHa	9%	0,1 %
Actions against the government	16%	5%
Representation of educational policy demands	MNO	NOL
Financing of higher education	9%	10%
Student contracts	5,5%	7%
Accessibility (tuition fees, seats)	20%	19%
Availability for disadvantaged	0,2 %	4%
Representation of politico-philosophical	MNO	NOL



ideas		
Autonomy	5%	6%
Active citizenship	0,2 %	7%
Party neutrality	0,2 %	0,2 %
Occupation and reinventing public spaces	7%	3%
Self-organization	6%	6%
Movement-like quality (“Movementality”)	6 %	7%
Discrediting	17%	5%

3. table. The relative amount of coded contents appearing in the two journals

Discrediting the movement in the press

Discrediting strategies are a characteristic feature of political rhetoric acting against minority influence. This method was found to be most conspicuous in the articles of MNO (15% vs. 5%). It is possible, that the oppositionary, critical attitude of Népszabadság (NOL) was fitter for propagating direct anti-government agenda, although it did not represent the movement’s broader critique of the political system either. As a result they rather exerted open but friendly disagreement and used discrediting less. There were four different strategies of discrediting identified. Either a systematic error is attributed to minority arguments or the minority is naturalized, namely they are coded along contents that limit and discredit them ontologically. Naturalization can happen in three ways: biological, psychological or social reduction (Deschamps & Doise, 1978). Most prominently MNO often linked the Student Network to the official opposition, discrediting them as mere „puppets” of political conspiracy (social reduction). This kind of social reduction as discrediting is effective strategy against a minority group because as Moscovici (1979) claims one of the fundamental factors required to effectively influence the majority is that the minority is appearing as independent and unbiased.



DISCUSSION

According to our results it is argued that the Student Network (SN) represents a new form of political consciousness in Hungary that can be defined as prefigurative political movement. By definition (Boggs, 1977; Yates, 2014) prefigurative politics is a form of direct action where socio-political goals are expressed through the means of the action as well as the structure and function of the movement itself. In this paper it is shown that the content of the SN's message and form in which it is delivered are intertwined. It is also presented that the movement possesses a kind of dualistic nature through the two-fold identification of the members. While on one hand it is a protest movement against certain educational reforms it is also an attempt at deconstructing (Arató, 2014) or re-establishing social relations and the political system in general.

In the second half of the study the representation of the movement in the public discourse is examined. It is shown that the broader political context, the prefigurative motives of the movement are not presented in the media, either due to conflicting political interest or simply due to novelty of the phenomena which makes it difficult to put it in context and anchoring it to familiar concepts.

Prefigurative politics can only be successful if it is capable of impregnating the existing, „figurative” order. In this study it is shown that this „figurative order”, the majority discourse as expressed by political power (both by the government and the opposition through their more or less independent channels of communication) define and restrict the ways of interaction. It is defined by the more powerful party what are the terms of negotiation or what is negotiable while other issues are muted, discredited. Through this process of confrontation the dialectic contrasts dissolve, the new culture disintegrates. The available grade of cultural change is a function of the adjusted means and claims of the prefigurative culture and the openness to change of the figurative, dominant one.

Interpreting the events in a minority influence framework (Moscovici, 1979) can be also revealing. How does a minority group influence a majority effectively? Moscovici stated that consistency – both diachronic and synchronic – is the most important element of



successful minority influence. Others (Nemeth, 1986) suggested that rigid consistency without compromise or flexibility can be seen as extremism or radicalism that can obstruct the influence process. However, in Nemeth's experiment the majority and minority were in the same status during the debate (members of a jury) while in real-life societal context there are usually asymmetric power relations, hierarchies involved. In this case, there is the government of a state with major influence over the media and a group of spontaneously organizing students with radically new concepts and instruments of protest in an increasingly authoritarian political environment.⁶ In these cases, we suggest, compromise and flexibility can lead to the distortion of the original goals and values of the protestors as they become subordinated or reframed in the dialogue with the powerful who are capable of shaping and restraining the public discourse. Genuine dialogue and negotiation can only come about between equal parties who acknowledge and respect each other.

The results also support that if a minority group tries to influence public opinion it needs to be consistent and this is what the students lacked. Consistency is required through time (diachronically) and among members, different parts of the group as well (synchronously). We saw that there was no agreement within members regarding the purpose of the movement. That divergence originated in the different motivational and identificational backgrounds of members. Furthermore, even the „official“ sets of goals were unclear and two-fold, reflecting the unnegotiated values and purposes of the movement. These circumstances resulted in the movement seen as incoherent, having low entitativity, that is less convincing and appealing. This is also a reason which made it possible for the government to lead and shape the discourse and this asymmetrical relation prevented the development of real dialogue.

As to our view the prefigurateness of a society is embodied in the ways the members of the society relate to the questions of exercising political power. Moreover, this is a social learning process where people as a group learn how to articulate their common opinion as one (political) entity. According to Hirsch (1990) there are four major aspects a society has to learn in order to be more successful in the communication with the

⁶ On the political situation in Hungary see Guriev and Treisman's (2015) paper on New Authoritarianism.



beholder of the political power: consciousness-raising; collective empowerment; polarization and collective decision-making. We see the events that took place at the end of 2012 as the Hungarian society's first step to develop a more conscious, reflexive political culture.

While the movement is seemingly dormant, since then voicing disagreement or even major protests against unpopular government measures (taxation of internet use, building of a new nuclear plant and nuclear waste storage) have become frequent. According to personal accounts and experiences of the authors, many of the movement's members continue to work in NGO's related to human right activism and education, social care or started political carriers, while critical and active attitudes towards public affairs are becoming more widespread among the generally indifferent youth.



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