

Youth against the Orbán-regime
Young supporters of the Hungarian Two-tailed Dog
Party and Beyond

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Abstract

The Hungarian Two-tailed Dog Party (MKKP) has become an organic part of the Hungarian party system in the last few years. The MKKP is considered a joke and an anti-establishment party. Our survey (N=7537) attempts to answer the question of what the supporters of the MKKP think about their party and other Hungarian parties, and how they describe the attributions of the joke party. The presentation would like to highlight the supporters of the MKKP in generational context and their anti-establishment attitudes. Are they only against the government or the whole political system? Our other aim is to describe the cluster of the younger voters of the MKKP and try to understand their motivation and disappointment and their anti-political attitudes. Hungarian youth are either against politics or they are apolitical, but the MKKP is somehow able to involve these young people into politics, even into the operation of the party. Our perception is that this is because of the MKKP's new party organizing method which they use in the last few years. The differences induced by the generational cleavages are becoming more and more cardinal phenomena in Western societies. Thus, the presentation attempts to identify these characteristics among the advocates of the MKKP through the way they are thinking about the traditional establishment parties. As a result, we can say that the respondents belonging to the younger age group differ in their political values from the older generations in several aspects. Firstly, they are much more active in the party's work and actively participate in its daily activities. Secondly, they are not only dissatisfied with the ruling party but also with other mainstream parties integrated into the system. Thirdly, ideologically, the respondents perceive the party as more centrist, despite their dissatisfaction with the entire party system. Therefore, the MKKP represents a form of centrist radicalism.

Keywords: generations; political parties; anti-establishment parties; hybrid regime

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1. Introduction

The Hungarian Two-tailed Dog Party (Magyar Kétfarkú Kutya Párt – MKKP) has appeared in Hungarian political life with its humorous social and political criticism in the early 2010s. It is mostly called a joke party, as the characteristic of this party family at the level of identity is the mockery of the political elite. Although the MKKP is currently not a parliamentary party, in the past decade it has become an integral part of the Hungarian party system. After the collapse of the union of the left-wing and liberal parties in the 2022 spring elections, the MKKP continues to grow stronger according to public opinion surveys, and in December 2022 it stood at 7% among the discerning voters (Közvéleménykutatók.hu, 2023a) (in the 2022 parliamentary elections it gained 3.27% of the votes [NVI, 2022]). In addition, the organization of the party also reaches wider social groups thus, it has a grassroots organization in most of the big cities.

This study intends to present the results of a questionnaire research carried out by myself, which was aimed at getting to know the supporters, sympathizers, and activists (or passivists, as they call themselves) of the MKKP. This paper is focusing on the party's young followers, since the average age of MKKP voters, which is 36 years, is the lowest among parties above 1% (HVG, 2023a), and MKKP is the second most popular party among those under 40, falling 3 percentage points behind the governing party (HVG, 2023b). Thus, research focusing on young people can provide a lot of relevant information not only about the supporters of the MKKP, but also about the functioning of the party. The main questions of the research, therefore, asked them about their perception of the MKKP itself, and how the MKKP's followers see the party, furthermore, we were interested in their opinion of other parties, mostly from the point of view of rejection. In addition, we were also interested in what role young people assume in the life of the party, how passive or active they are in organization and party work, knowing that only 10.1% of Hungarian youngsters do any kind of formal voluntary work (Eurostat, 2021), and 48% of university and college students do not engage in any political/public activity (Oross, 2016:37).

2. Youngsters

Many people have tried to give different answers to the question of who we consider a youngster. The issue is extremely complex, as drawing boundaries within society (not only on a generational level) is always difficult. On the other hand, in this particular generational issue, not only the social sciences are competent at drawing boundaries. Therefore, we can talk about a biological process and a sociological phenomenon at the same time. Both branches of science consider youth to be the period and process of becoming an adult from a child, however, while natural sciences primarily consider this a shorter period associating it with changes in the human body, sociology considers it a much longer period, based on the role the person plays within the society (Szabó – Oross, 2019). Thus, we can speak of a

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concept created by society, whose extreme axis is, precisely because of this, malleable. In Europe, the interpretation of the young generation is usually put between 15 and 29 years of age, but some perceptions place it between 13 and 30 years, while others are between 18 and 30 years. In the United States, someone is considered young between 15 and 24 (Petkovic et al., 2019). In a sociological sense, youth can be considered the period when we pursue our secondary education, enter the labour market, and start a family, the former being the starting point, while the latter is the end of the definition of youth (Colombo – Rebughini, 2019).

The interpretation of the concept has naturally changed greatly in modernity and postmodernity. The interpretations of youth differ greatly in time and place; different cultures do not understand the same thing by the term. What is more, definitions also changed within individual cultural circles. The concept of youth in Western culture has changed significantly in the period following the Second World War. The reasons for this are to be found in changes within the social conditions. In the last sixty years, our life strategies have fundamentally changed (cf.: post-material value change [Inglehart, 1977]), as well as our relationship to learning and work. Participation in university education has become much more common, as well as life-long learning, which has pushed back the time of entering the labour market and starting a family. Sociology calls this shift in the time of becoming an adult *postadolescence* (Maguire et al., 2001) or *kidult*, which considers young people as adults in a legal and biological sense, but as children from a sociological point of view (Kočerová, 2018).

3. The political attitudes of Hungarian youngsters

In general, even in regional comparisons, young Hungarians show strong apoliticism and anti-political attitudes (Szabó – Oross, 2021). The main difference between the two concepts is manifested in the quality of the action: while the former is a passive lack of interest, the latter is an active turning away from (party) politics (Szilágyi-Gál, 2020). In recent years, they have been characterized by a kind of radicalization, both in extreme and in centrist positions against the political mainstream elite (Petsinis, 2015). Basically, they are characterized by passivity, but there are active segments that can be divided into several groups. On the one hand, we can consider the urban, more liberal, upper-middle-class young people with a higher level of education as an active group. On the other hand, we can separate the group of more conservative, small-town, middle-class, first-generation graduates; and as a third, those with lower educational qualifications living in rural areas, who are closer to the radical right (Szabó, 2019). The latest international youth researches show a growing interest in politics in the region, although, in the case of Hungary, we can see that half of the respondents are interested in politics at a low level, which was closer to the level of the Baltic states rather than the regional trends, where the proportion of those who are interested in politics at a low level, in the case of Poland is 36%, while in the case of the Czech Republic is 42%. Parents pass on their political attitudes to young people most in the case of Hungary.

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From an ideological point of view, among the V4 countries, Hungarian youngsters are the second most radical right-wingers after the Czech Republic, but a quarter of them were unable to place themselves on the left-right scale. Furthermore, clearly owing to the government's communication, two-thirds of young Hungarians are dismissive of immigrants, which makes them stand out in regional comparisons as well (Harring et al., 2023).

4. The Hungarian Two-tailed Dog Party

The Hungarian Two-tailed Dog Party was founded in 2006, initially as a street art movement. They got involved in political life for the first time in 2010 when they ran in the parliamentary elections in some constituencies (Bucs, 2011). They took part in national elections for the first time in 2018, but they first gained national recognition in 2015, when they were able to present the only political alternative to the government's anti-immigration campaign. In the 2018 parliamentary elections, they achieved 1.72%, while in 2022 3.78%, thus they currently operate as a non-parliamentary party, but in the 2019 local government elections, they won several mandates, thereby becoming an actual political and policy-forming power at the local level. In addition, their national support is constantly increasing, in parallel to which, non-Budapest organizations are also being created.

The MKKP can be classified as a movement party, since its street activism is much more decisive, and in its organization-building strategy it does not use traditional party methods, but rather community-building activities (Szegeci, 2022a). In addition, it is also an anti-establishment (Shedler, Učen, 2007) party, as it formulates a strong criticism of the system and of the elites, not only against the governing parties, but also against other political actors, including the opposition (Oross, et al. 2018). Moreover, MKKP belongs to the family of joke parties, so humour plays a central role not only in their communication but also in the content of the party. Humour is the appearance of a specific form of populism in the case of the MKKP – but also in the case of other joke parties – which can be considered the main ideology of the party, but unlike other populist parties, criticism of the system appears in a funny form (Szegeci, 2022b).

5. The Orbán-regime

Fidesz, which has been in power since 2010 and won four consecutive parliamentary elections, led by Viktor Orbán, has built a unique political system over the past 13 years. Several attempts have been made to describe and understand the system, but there is no absolute agreement among researchers on the aspect from which Hungary's political system should be examined.

The most commonly used term is hybrid regime (Bozóki – Hegedüs, 2018; Böcskei – Hajdu, 2019; Huber – Pisciotta, 2022), which refers to the formal existence of the democratic institutional system, but at the same time to the informal, authoritarian exercise of power,

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which is neither, in the traditional sense of the word, a dictatorship, nor a Western-style liberal democracy. Furthermore, they exist relatively permanently, primarily because civil society is unable or unwilling to protect democratic institutions from being emptied (Gyulai – Stein-Zalai, 2016). Another approach is illiberal democracy (Pokorny – Sággy, 2021; Schmidt, 2018; Pap, 2017), which emphasizes deviations from traditional Western-style liberal democracies and the impairment of personal freedoms. Both the concept of illiberal democracy and hybrid regime include the regularity of free elections (even if it is impossible to replace the ruling party due to their dominance and because of the electoral system), moreover, the government is one of the main stakeholders in holding elections and referenda, since this is what provides the main legitimacy of its power. In addition, there is a press that is critical of the government, but it is confined to a narrow framework; anti-government demonstrations are also common, but they generally do not have the power to exert pressure on the government. Furthermore, there are opposition political formations, but most of them are either part of the system or marginalized. That is why those countries where the control capacity of the society, the commitment to democratic values, and the weight of the independent media are less, are in greater danger.

In addition, the theory of plebiscitary leader democracy formulated by András Körösenyi and his co-authors (2019) is also worth mentioning, according to which the authoritarian charismatic leader legitimizes his power with referendums, the masses give him his authoritarian power, which he earns with his own charisma. This will give him the right to act, which is a central element of the leader's charisma, the ability and will to act, but in many cases, these go beyond the framework of democracy.

The post-communist mafia state theory of Bálint Magyar (2013) should also be highlighted, which emphasizes the system's functioning and historical formation, i.e. that it can only be established in post-socialist Central Europe, after the political collapse of the state socialist system. Its main purpose is to maintain and stabilize the rule (political and economic) of a certain family and its economic circle.

6. Methodology

The methodology of the research was primarily aimed at assessing the political attitudes and preferences of MKKP's supporters and sympathizers. In this particular study, our main goal was a descriptive statistical analysis to gain a better understanding of supporters of the Hungarian Two-Tailed Dog Party (MKKP). However, in future works, there may be an opportunity for a more in-depth inferential analysis of the topic, as the subject holds many layers of depth. For this purpose, we created an online questionnaire, which we delivered to the supporters of the party through various MKKP Facebook groups, which are the party's main communication platforms. Those who did not identify themselves as MKKP sympathizers when filling out the questionnaire were subsequently removed from the sample.

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Therefore, in the final sample (N=7537) only those remained who are connected to MKKP in some form. The research cannot be considered representative, but due to the high number of cases, it provides useful information about MKKP members and sympathizers. The sampling took place between August and September 2021. For this sub-research, which deals with the party's young supporters, we created a cluster of youngsters by highlighting those aged between 14 and 29 years from the entire sample, who were selected based on the definition of 'youngster' in European and Hungarian youth surveys. Thus, these cluster samples (N=1932) make up 25.63% of the total sample. The research is primarily descriptive, as we conducted research related to the initial knowledge of MKKP. In the general part of the questionnaire, we were interested in the demographic and territorial data of the respondents, as based on our preliminary hypothesis and other research (Oross et al. 2019; Farkas, 2018), we assumed that young, urban, higher educated people would be overrepresented in the research. In the remaining parts of the questionnaire, we asked questions based on three main topics. On the one hand, what is their relationship with the party, and on the other hand, what is their opinion of other Hungarian parties, and what political attitudes do they associate with the MKKP. For these, we used a 5-point and a 7-point Likert scale.

7. Results of the research

7.1 Demographic data

Regarding the demographic distribution of the youngsters participating in the research, 62.2% were men, 37.4% were women, and 0.5% declared themselves non-binary. 41% of the respondents live in settlements with a population of more than 1 million people, while another 18.2% live in settlements with inhabitants between 100,000 and 1,000,000, thus more than half of the respondents live in metropolitan regions. In terms of education, 46.7% have a university or college degree, and 33.8% have a high school diploma. Due to their age group, a significant part of those filling out the questionnaire are currently pursuing higher education, so their proportion may increase in the near future. This is higher than the national average for the 25-34 age group, which is 32.9% (Zemplényi, 2022), and it is also much higher than the national average for those with higher education degrees, which is 25.4% (Eurostat, 2023). The age distribution of the respondents is relatively proportional in the case of those over 20 years old. The mean value of the ratio of the distribution of the age group of all the respondents of the 'youngsters' cluster is 7.75, and the standard deviation is 3.45; on the other hand, if we look only at the group over 20 years old, we can see that the mean value of the data has increased to 8.3, but the standard deviation decreased to 1.78. Thus, the proportion of people between the ages of 20 and 29 is overrepresented in the cluster, but their distribution is more even per year.

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Table 1: The distribution of the age group

Age	Frequency	Percent	Age	Frequency	Percent
14	2	0,1	22	157	8,1
15	13	0,7	23	174	9
16	17	0,9	24	147	7,6
17	37	1,9	25	186	9,6
18	116	6	26	152	7,9
19	96	5	27	176	9,1
20	137	7,1	28	199	10,3
21	160	8,3	29	162	8,4
			Total	1932	100

Source: the author

7.2 Perception of parties

If we examine the relationship of those who filled in the questionnaire with other parties, we can see that the entire sample shows similar trends, the rejection of almost all other parties is high. The least rejected were the Momentum Movement (generational liberal party) and the LMP (green party) organizations. However, if the entire sample is divided into clusters, we can find interesting differences. On the one hand, the rejection of the governing party itself is almost the same among the respondents of the two clusters; 95.3% of the 14-29 age group are dissatisfied (of which 88.3% are completely dissatisfied) with the governing parties, while 97.6% of the 30-81 age group rejects it (of which 92.4% are completely dissatisfied). In addition, in the case of Our Homeland Movement (Mi Hazánk Mozgalom, extreme right), we can see similar results in the group of ‘youngsters’, with the movement being 2.8 percentage points less rejected than in the 30-81 age group. Furthermore, in relation to Jobbik (the former radical right), we can also see that the difference is minimal, specifically 3.2 percentage points. Thus, in the case of the governing party, the traditional extreme right, and the radical right, youngsters are just as dismissive as older people. The real difference between younger and older people can be seen in their acceptance of traditional left-wing parties. In the case of the Democratic Coalition (the party that has separated from the MSZP, is led by the former prime minister, and is the strongest opposition party [Közvéleménykutatók.hu, 2023b]) the rejection of the party within the 14-29 cluster is 75.4% (of which 54.6% have strong objections against the party), while in the case of the 30-81 cluster it is ‘only’ 63.4% (of which 39.7% are very dissatisfied). In contrast to this, in the case of the MSZP (the successor of the state party of the socialist one-party system), the

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difference is only 3.1 percentage points, which is a similar difference to the government and radical right-wing parties, however, in an inverse way, since here young people are more dismissive.

An interesting result is that the rejection of the Momentum Movement is higher among young people, even though this organization was deliberately organized to represent youngsters, although the difference, in this case, is only a few percentage points.

What can be decisively deduced from the data is that the rejection of the parties is almost the same among the two clusters: while the right-wing parties are rejected by a few percentage points more among the elderly, youngsters are more dissatisfied with the left and liberal parties. DK represents the biggest difference between the young and the elderly. Young people clearly see DK and MSZP as part of the system, which is almost as undesirable as the governing party. Satisfaction with other parties (30-81)

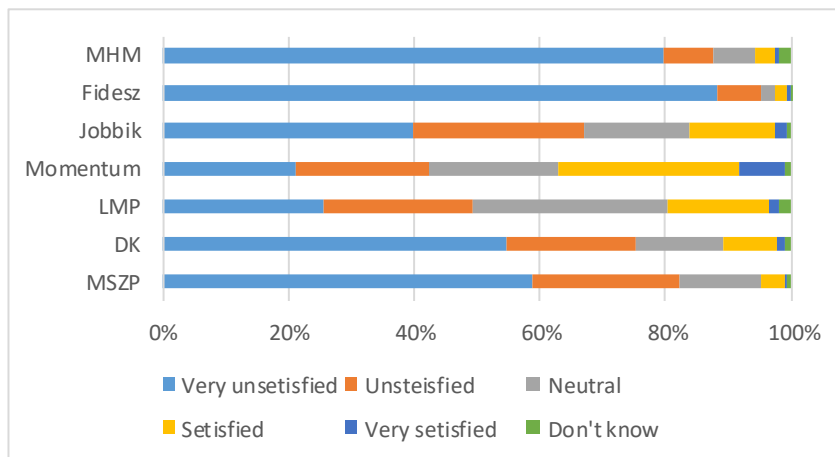


Figure 2: Satisfaction with other parties (14-29)

Source: the author

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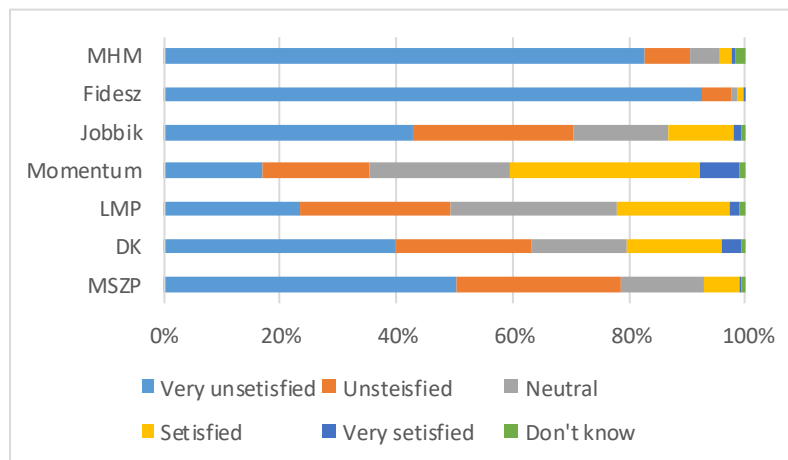


Figure 2: Satisfaction with other parties (30-81)

Source: the author

7.3 Affiliations to the MKKP

If we examine the respondents based on their affiliation to the party, we can see a difference between the two clusters in their support and commitment to the party. In terms of proportions, we get similar results in almost all categories: among young people, 2.8 percentage points more declare themselves to be discerning voters of the party. What makes the real difference is participation in the work of the party. Young people support the party much more actively, while older people support it more financially, however, not regularly, but rather occasionally; meanwhile among young people we find a higher proportion of those who regularly support the party with monetary benefits. Thus the younger age groups do the physical part of the work in the party, which is essential for the functioning of it. This seems relatively obvious, since young people do not necessarily have independent assets, so they can support the organization with their own work. In addition, in the case of the respondents, party members and party functionaries are also among the youngsters. Knowing that progress within the party is based on the actual work provided to the organization (organization, activism, coordination, etc.) (Szegedi, 2022), we can see that a greater proportion of activist work is done by young people, thus they are also overrepresented among party member respondents.

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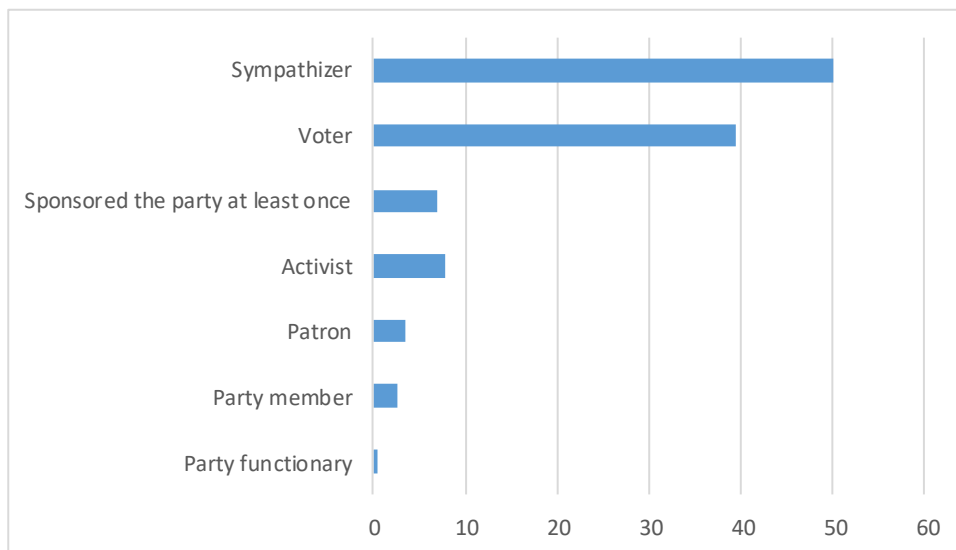


Figure 3: Connection with the party (14-29)

Source: the author

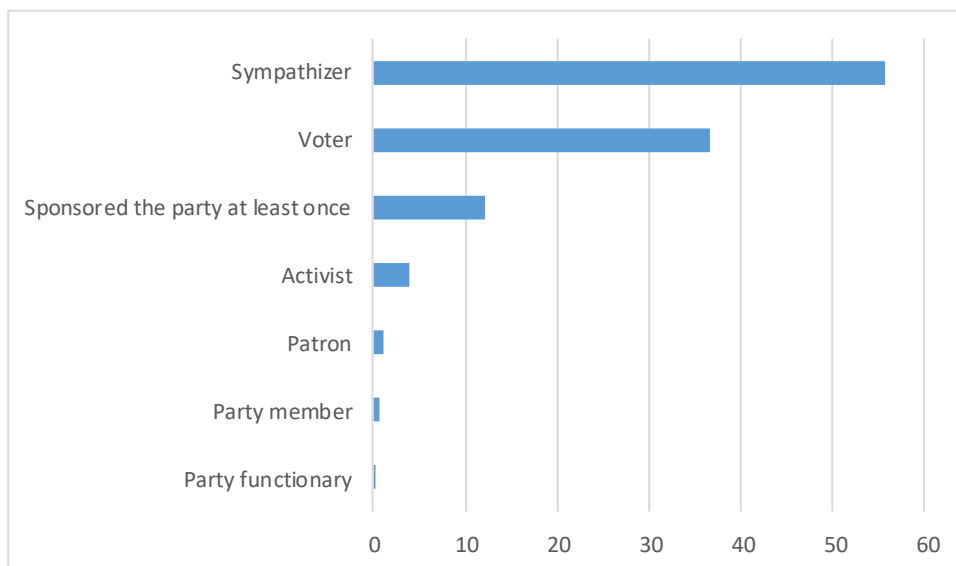


Figure 4: Connection with the party (30-81)

Source: the author

7.4 The ideology of the party

We were interested in the respondents' opinions regarding the ideological categorization of the Two-Tailed Dog Party (MKKP). They had the opportunity to select multiple options, which we later grouped into pairs to include all possible combinations. Thus, we obtained

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[table 5 and 6] indicating in which constellations the respondents could best interpret the ideological positioning of the MKKP. Then, we separated the data by age groups. When asked how they would classify the MKKP ideologically, the two clusters took a similar position in many respects. Both camps consider the MKKP to be primarily a liberal party, to which the majority of people from both clusters indicated green ideology as a secondary ideology. The difference is that the older age group marked the anarchist the second most often, while young people marked the green, but in both cases, after the liberal, they marked the green next to the anarchist, and next to the green, the anarchist as a secondary ideology. Thus, according to the respondents, the main image of MKKP is liberal, which is complemented by anarchist and green ideologies. As a result, the party is simultaneously thought of as a kind of centrist bourgeois party, while at the same time as a critic of the regime (Capoccia, 2002) and a representative of post-material values (Inglehart, 1977; 1990). The better appearance of green values in the cluster of young people can be explained by Ronald Inglehart's (2005) theory that the post-material change of values affected Hungarian youngsters more, albeit with a decade's delay (Ságvári, 2012). Based on Inglehart, we consider those values as post-material that go beyond the values related to wealth, such as environmental protection, protection of minorities, sexual freedom, etc., Inglehart linked this to the generation growing up in the period after the Second World War, who no longer live in deprivation, but they were socialized in welfare democracies. In Central and Eastern Europe, due to the lack of a welfare state and the development of deficit economies, society remained materialistic, which remained decisive even after the regime changes. Hungarian society is still fundamentally more materialistic, in 2020 it was 57% of the entire population (Szabó, et al., 2020:25). The appearance of anarchism is more about the criticism of the regime, with which the MKKP can be identified. Complementing this with liberal ideology, we can talk about centrist-anti-establishment parties, which are anti-establishment parties because they attack the political elite primarily from the point of view of corruption, but centrists also, because they do not represent a radical or extremist left-right position, they accept Western-style liberal democracy, and they are not characterized by *'illiberalism, ethnocentrism and social conservatism [...] or anti-capitalism'* (Engler, 2020:308). Precisely for this reason, due to their non-radical, anti-elite nature, they become ideologically complex and difficult to define (as can be seen with the respondents). Therefore, since ideology does not play a decisive role, dissatisfaction is the most decisive factor in addressing voters. Thus, the camp of these parties primarily consists of protest voters who are dissatisfied with the mainstream parties (Engler, 2020). As a result, in the case of the MKKP, we can see that the centrist-anti-establishment mentality – anti-elite politics, and support for liberal democracy – is complemented by post-material, primarily green values. However, in the case of the members of the MKKP, the political elite includes not only the governing parties, but also parties co-opted by the system. Sympathizers and supporters of the MKKP are strongly critical of the system, but they also treat the opposition parties as part of the Orbán regime. In addition, among the younger age group, there is a significantly higher proportion of respondents choosing the *sui generis*

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category, indicating that a portion of the younger respondents did not attempt to describe the MKKP with traditional ideologies. This suggests that some of the young respondents do not think in terms of 20th-century ideologies when it comes to certain political actors.

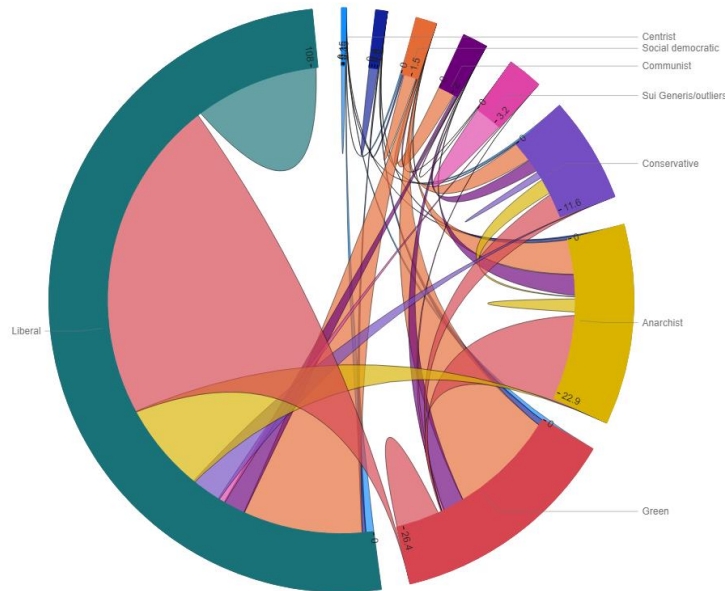


Figure 5: Ideological affiliation (14-29)

Source: the author

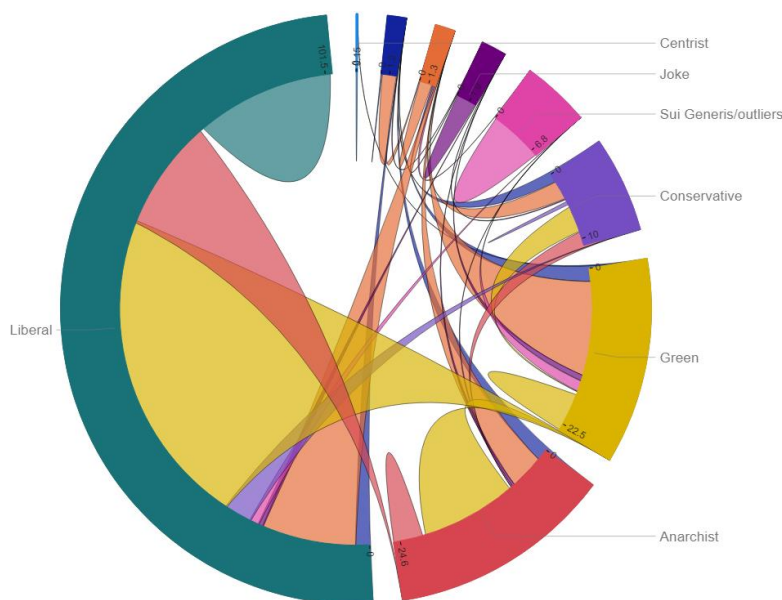


Figure 6: Ideological affiliation (30-81)

Source: the author

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8. Conclusion

In conclusion, we can say that the MKKP is relatively popular among young people (14-29), who are particularly dissatisfied with the existing political system. However, it is clear from the data that for them the system is not only associated with the governing party, but that the mainstream opposition parties are also considered part of it, towards which a large proportion of them are also disapproving. From a demographic point of view, the respondents mainly come from urban intellectual circles, which may be due to the characteristics of the questionnaire, although other researchers have also given similar results. We have seen that Hungarian youngsters are quite passive in terms of political participation, however, in the case of the MKKP, we can see the manifestations of traditional forms of political participation in that young people actively participate in the work of the party. In addition, the participants in the research marked the party's worldview as liberal, which is considered a traditional center ideology, and post-material green, as well as radical anarchist. The MKKP can therefore be classified as one of the centrist anti-establishment parties, which are anti-elite but not radical in terms of democracy and capitalism. In this way, it is a particular actor of the Hungarian party system, since it is almost the only political organization that is not a party with a traditional ideology or one that is critical of the system and its members in the form of extreme radicalism. MKKP can predictably play an increasingly cardinal role in Hungarian politics that will mostly depend on how well it is able to present the image of a real alternative to other parties. In the short term, it may be able to appeal primarily to voters disillusioned with the opposition, therefore its main opponent in the municipal and European Parliamentary elections to be held in the spring of 2024, will not be the governing party, but other, non-extreme right-wing opposition parties, with whom it will have to compete for extremely heterogeneous and atomized anti-Orbán regime voters. In this, it can have an advantage over some opposition parties, which can be considered as a co-opted part of the system, because its identity is quite distinct and clearly distinguishable from them, and as a result, voters can see it as a real alternative. Which Bálint Magyar and Bálint Madlovics (2020) domesticated, or based on the international literature, we can call them satellite parties (Sartori, 1976; Blondel, 1968).

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