

BOOK REVIEW

Margit Feischmidt and Balázs Majtényi (eds), *The rise of populist nationalism. Social resentment and the anti-constitutional turn in Hungary* (CEU Press 2019)

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The position of the present reviewer is essentially determined by two circumstances. Firstly, I have devoted a significant part of my research work to empirical socio-legal research: at the turn of the millennium, I was involved in several qualitative micro-sociological studies (participant observation) of the legal situation of the Roma in Hungary. In the last decade, I have been involved in quantitative survey research on the legal consciousness of the Hungarian population. Secondly, as a member of the Hungarian political community, I took up the book as a reader involved in the social and legal changes analysed therein. Moreover, as one who views these changes through the lens of experience with the last two decades of socialism.

It follows that I have followed with some scepticism the academic debate on constitutionalism and the functioning of the Constitutional Court since the regime change. On the other hand, I have sincere respect for Balázs Majtényi as a researcher who has firmly established himself in both fields – normative analysis and empiricism. So much so that some of his analyses of constitutional law have been particularly illuminating for me.¹ But as a sociologist of law, I have always had the suspicion that social practice is more important than written law. It is therefore conceivable that a badly written – or even unwritten – constitution can be juxtaposed with well-functioning democratic institutions and a sound legal order. The converse is much more plausible: a formally flawless constitution may serve as a framework for an authoritarian or totalitarian regime that ignores the law. (As the book's analysis shows, of course, neither of these clichés fits the current situation in Hungary, but we will return to this below). My perspective is therefore closer to the one that is strongly represented by the work of Margit Feischmidt, the other editor of the volume, and which is also suggested by the subtitle of the book: the way to understand legal change is through understanding social discontent, through understanding changes at the ground level of social life, and not vice versa.

Not that I underestimate the impact of politics and law on social life. Well, perhaps the old 'top-down' perspective is more explanatory in our Central European region anyway – as we

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¹See e.g. Majtényi (2011).

know, in Hungary *the fish stinks from the head* – but it was a little disappointing that the volume starts with analyses of constitutional law, followed by sociological studies on the social background of political and legal changes.

Setting aside our reservations for now, let us accept the editors' logic and take a look at the papers in turn.

In any case, in view of the above considerations, the picture drawn by Kriszta Kovács of constitutional developments after the change of regime ("Constitutional Continuity Disrupted", 10–41) seems somewhat misleading. Not because the description and assessment of the current constitutional situation is flawed. As a result of the Basic Law and the successive amendments that followed its adoption, the idea (and practice) of the 'rule of law' has been replaced by the principle (and practice) of 'rule by law', and the separation of powers has been substituted by a concentration of power. The identification of the means of the latter change – the regulation of political demands requiring constant deliberation by two-thirds majority legislation, the stigmatization of political opponents, the changing of electoral rules, the removal of institutional checks on government – seems correct, as does the mention of the strong state influence on the market economy.

What is nevertheless misleading in the description is the theoretical framework, which suggests a break in continuity on the basis of changes in constitutional law, and the antinomy of the pre- and post-2010 periods. This rigid juxtaposition, on the one hand, paradoxically reinforces the rhetoric of the ruling political elite about a 'revolution in the polling booths'. On the other hand, it paints the pre-2010 period in a positive light that obscures the evolution of public thinking and the internal logic that led to the 2010 election results. It is hardly possible to dismiss the right's landslide electoral victory as the result of a combination of domestic political scandals, collapsing budgets and the global economic crisis (26).

The exaggeration of the formal idea of the rule of law, the 'hyper-legalism' which went hand in hand with a real lack of legal certainty, had already eroded the authority of the law, the Constitution and the Constitutional Court in the two decades following the change of regime.² Social psychology research had already predicted a decline in system justification, an increase in the need for paternalism, and a rise in racism and xenophobia. In other words, a change in public thinking and political sentiment, which then found their symbolic expression and new constitutional identity in the Fundamental Law.

Again, this new self-image of the Hungarian political community is aptly characterized by Kovács when he points out its exclusionary character based on historical myths, its non-inclusive religious references, and its anti-equality sentiments (37). To the latter, it is perhaps worth adding that the reference to the value of equality is constantly present in the form of social demagoguery, only that this equality does not extend to the groups that are condemned to exclusion, primarily the Roma.

One more comment on the new constitutional identity. For me, this 'new' image of the Hungarian political community is very similar to the image of the last decade before the regime change. The only difference is in the aspect of ideology. The authoritarian regime of the 1980s was no longer able to maintain the exclusivity of the Marxist-socialist ideology that had lost its authority, and as a result of this loosening, it was forced to tolerate a certain diversity of

²Sajó (2008), Gajduschek (2008).

worldviews. And today, the growing national ideal is not yet – and hopefully perhaps never will be – in a position to become exclusive and the basis of monolithic ideological domination.

Looking at events in this light, the two decades following the regime change seem to have been merely a detour, a (yet another) failed attempt to catch up with Western European development, after which the Hungarian political community, tired of the burden of free thought and action (responsibility), returned to the old paternalistic, authoritarian system. Maybe that is why the lyrics of the underground bands of the 1980s feel so ‘punchy’ again lately:

*European United Animals,
how I will enjoy my stay with you!
How many, many beautiful foreign languages ...
The previous five-year plan starts all over again.³
(Kontroll Csoport)*

Zsolt Körtvélyesi’s study (“Continuity, Discontinuity and Constitution-making: A Comparative Account”, 43–67) interestingly supports my above-mentioned insight. He reveals that instead of the ‘radical’ change proclaimed by the Fundamental Law – and especially its preamble –, the turning away from the era of socialism and the two decades following the regime change and the promise of a revolutionary new beginning did not amount to a rupture. In fact, even in the field of constitutional law, continuity, or more precisely, legal continuity, is still evident.

The author uses well-chosen examples from the constitutional history of the United States (53–58) and Canada (58–61) to show that while in these cases the continuity of law was used to conceal the fundamental change in the political system, in our case (63–71), it was the other way round. The fact of the continuity of law was concealed by political rhetoric, presenting the Fundamental Law as the result of ‘revolutionary legislation’. To see what the long-term effects of such a deceitful construction of public law can be, it is worth recalling István Bibó’s analysis of the role of the Compromise between the Austrian Empire and Hungary (1867) in the deformation of modern Hungarian political culture.⁴

Nóra Chronowski, in her paper on the problem of social equality and discrimination (“A Nation Torn Apart by its Constitution”, 77–103), also echoes the idea of projecting the discontinuity of constitutional change onto social processes. The author assesses the Fundamental Law’s provisions in the light of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, revealing its internal contradictions and hypocritical falsehood. While on the surface the Fundamental Law recognizes human dignity, equality and solidarity as constitutional values, a deeper analysis reveals an attempt to reduce the political nation to a ‘historical nation’, excluding above all the most populous ethnic minority, the Roma (101). It is indisputable that the Fundamental Law was not conceived with the intention of unifying the political nation and that it cannot fulfil the integrative role otherwise expected of constitutions. But is it really the Fundamental Law that is tearing the Hungarian political nation apart?

As Chronowski herself points out, in the decade following the turn of the millennium, Hungarian society became increasingly introverted, exclusionary and divided. With the rise of political populism, discrimination, hate speech, and xenophobia became part of everyday life (93).

³The quoted lyrics are the author’s translations.

⁴Bibó (2015a).

The Fundamental Law thus in fact merely legalized practices that had already been established and were otherwise questionable or unacceptable from a human rights point of view. The situation is therefore that the Hungarian political community had *de facto* already been torn apart before the Fundamental Law came into force.

Returning now to the reflection on the relationship between the Constitution and democratic practice in the introduction, I would venture the hypothesis that if Hungarian society had stronger respect for human dignity and solidarity, it would be able to integrate minorities now marginalized, despite the Fundamental Law. In fact, even if we were to assume that the previous constitution could be restored tomorrow through some kind of ‘constitutional coup d’état’ – another ‘revolution in the voting booths’ (?) – that alone would not be able to guarantee the unity of the political nation, since it has failed to do this over the previous twenty years. It is at this point that the weakness of the institutional-centricity of the liberal conception of democracy, so aptly formulated by Ernst-Wolfgang Böckenförde (the Böckenförde paradox), comes to light: democracy cannot function without a political elite committed to democratic values.⁵ At the same time, I would like to reiterate that I do not underestimate the destructive effect of a bad constitution. Here again, I would refer to Bibó, who so eloquently illustrated the role of the ‘Jewish laws’ in the moral decay of Hungarian society during the Second World War.⁶ I would merely like to shed light on the fact that the question of the state and future of democracy is somewhat more complicated than what is stated in the passages of the Constitution currently in force.

One more comment on Chronowski’s writing. The author discusses the case of the Greek-Catholic school in Nyíregyháza as an example of educational segregation of the Roma. I do not dispute the author’s assessment of this particular case, especially as I have no first-hand knowledge of the circumstances of the case, but especially of the disadvantages suffered by the Roma in the Hungarian education system in general. Nevertheless, I would like to draw attention to the problem of the tendency of education policy-makers to oversimplify the relationship between segregation and prejudice. In general, so-called ‘mixed’ or ‘integrated’ education – where students from the majority community are placed with those from the minority – is seen as the only salutary way to reduce prejudice, forgetting the recent social psychological research which has revealed that in an integrated education system, this positive effect is only achieved if there is ‘equality’ or similarity between pupils in all aspects other than ethnic diversity – wealth, socio-cultural background, consumer culture, etc. Otherwise, on the contrary, such a ‘mixed’ system will reinforce, rather than reduce, mutual prejudice among young people.⁷

The series of normative analyses concludes with an interesting study by Chris Moreh (“Towards an Illiberal Extraterritorial Political Community”, 105–141), which examines one of the main pillars of the ‘nation-building’ policy of the ruling elite since 2010 – the efforts to integrate Hungarians living abroad into the political nation. At one level, the analysis traces the development of simplified naturalization and the regulation of voting rights for Hungarians outside the state, highlighting the contradictions that arise from the fact that the citizens thus

⁵Böckenförde (1982).

⁶Bibó (2015b).

⁷H. Szilágyi (2001).

incorporated into the political community have only rights and no obligations: On the one hand, it identifies the ethno-cultural character of the legislation, which becomes apparent when its internal exclusionary nature is taken into account. On the other hand, also that the latter undermines the political position of cross-border minorities in the long run (122). Thirdly, the failure of the legislation to reflect the democratic will of the citizens of the country as a whole, and not just that of the dominant ethnic group, as the Venice Commission put it (125). This leads to the question of the political nature of a community, part of which lives outside the territory of the state (130).

This problem links what has been said so far to another, more abstract level of analysis. Moreh here, on the one hand, draws on Seyla Benhabib's analysis (108–109) to describe a complex process analogous to the process of 'de-ethnicization' in Northern and Western European countries. In the south-east of Europe, similar political battles and the search for national identity have resulted in the 're-ethnicization' of political communities. On the other hand, drawing partly on Rainer Bauböck's line of thought (134–135), he takes account of the processes that have now undermined the cultural and identity-building function of territorial citizenship and the scenarios that are based on the further strengthening of non-territorial political entities (135–136).

Two aspects of Moreh's analysis – one explicit and one implicit – caught my attention. One is that the author points out that, as a result of the new nation-building policy, more than 200,000 Hungarians had already left the country by 2016 (130). The impact of this 'exit' on Hungary's political, demographic and economic conditions is difficult to estimate in all respects today, but will certainly be significant in the short and even more so in the medium term. The other idea that although left unexplained can be inferred from the discussion is the insight that in the ethical vision behind the 'nation-building policy', the model citizen will be a member of the Hungarian minority living outside the borders. The specificity of their situation is that they only have to choose the party that best represents them. This would also be the model for the people living inside the border in terms of their attitude to politics, according to this ethical vision. 'All you have to do is vote for us (*Vote for me!* [URH]) and the rest (the conduct of public affairs, i.e. politics in the classical sense) is our business' (*You will be my people and I will be your folk musician!* [URH]). In this way, citizens can (seemingly) be freed from the burden of political deliberation and the responsibility of political action.

The introductory paper in the series of empirical studies is the work of Balázs Majtényi and György Majtényi ("Shift in the Hungarian Roma Policy", 146–177), which partly draws on the authors' earlier work reviewing the Roma policy of the period 1945–2010⁸ and partly complements it by surveying developments after 2010. The virtue of the analysis is that it highlights historical continuity by making clear that both socialism and the official policies of the two decades following regime change which were aimed at Roma integration (in fact, forced assimilation), have failed. And in the post-2010 period, the political elite, learning from the mistakes of their predecessors, has simply abandoned this goal, more or less openly embracing a policy of exclusion. More towards the domestic sphere and in practice, less towards the foreign sphere and at the level of principles, but even at the level of constitutional law, as the previous analyses in this volume have already shown.

⁸Majtényi and Majtényi (2016).

The authors also present two theoretical frameworks for interpreting the events they describe: one in which the majority society defines itself as a social class. In this context, the Roma are placed in an underclass situation, or forced into it by the majority society (146–155); the other version relates the situation to the post-colonial condition. In my opinion, both theories are lopsided. The theory of the ‘nation as class’ runs counter to ethnically based national ideology – analysed and criticized in earlier studies in the book – which, by the way, tries to disguise the fact of growing social differences by appealing to the idea of a comprehensive national cohesion that ignores class differences. I fully agree with the authors, however, that the Roma have been forced into deep poverty by Hungarian society, and that the condition of deep poverty has been ethnicized, i.e. successfully confused with the image of the Roma. On the other hand, the evocation of the colonial or post-colonial situation as a parallel is again vague. In the socialist era, the whole of Hungarian society – including the Roma – was in a colonial situation, and it is difficult to understand how the majority society changed from colonized to colonial after the regime change. The authors seem to forget that the distinction between ‘us’ and ‘them’ and the attempt to exclude (even destroy) ‘them’ is another recurrent situation in Central Europe, that of totalitarian and authoritarian regimes. Perhaps following this thread would help to increase understanding of the dynamics of how the majority society is becoming increasingly vociferous in its demands for Roma assimilation, while at the same time increasingly ruthless in its obstruction of it. Of course, we could also ask whether assimilation is really the only way for Roma in Hungary to integrate into society.

Despite all these difficulties, the study is significant in that it provides a focus for subsequent papers presenting empirical research. Indeed, there can be little doubt that today, the growing hatred of Roma is the most striking symptom of the increasingly confused and hysterical state of mind of the majority society.

The internal social logic of this is revealed in Margit Feischmidt’s excellent study (“New Forms of Nationalism and the Discursive Construction of the Gypsy Other”, 179–208), which examines the three counties with the largest Roma populations in the country – Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén, Somogy, and Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg – based on material collected through field research and focus group interviews. The theoretical background of the research is contemporary social anthropology (179–183).

In Feischmidt’s analysis, the discourse on the relationship between rural agricultural⁹ and industrial workers and the Roma living there is clearly organized around two symmetrical counter-concepts: on the one hand, the unemphasized and unmarked ‘Hungarian’, and on the other, the explicitly marked – culturally, morally, but most often racially – ‘Gypsy’ (205–206). The lack of emphasis on ‘Hungarianness’ in everyday speech – with the exception of a few interviewees who had migrated from Transylvania (188–189) – stems from the naturalness of belonging to the majority in the absence of local civil organizations and effective state institutions that shape national identity in both real and symbolic terms. This ‘naturalness’, however, does not stem from the habitualness of belonging to a political community, but from the ‘Hungarian–Gypsy’ opposition that permeates and redefines all social and political issues. Since the notion of ‘Gypsy’ – the ‘subordinate they’ – is coupled in this discourse with ethnic

⁹The author uses the term ‘peasants’ in the English text. The fact is that the Roma still refer to the ‘peasants’ as a reference group, but instead of this folk concept, I think the sociological description of the term ‘agricultural worker’ is appropriate, and in the post-regime change period, in some cases, the term ‘farmer’.

determination, the whole structure of the discourse is consequently determined by the racist logic of subordination (206). As a consequence of this hierarchical structure, not only does the 'subordinated otherness' but also the unemphasized 'Hungarianness' become ethnically determined.

On the other hand, however, the double identity of the Roma also becomes contradictory: the conflict between their own (autonomous) self-image and the negative image of the Roma of the majority society gives rise either to a feeling of constant remorse or to a sense of revolt against the majority society (204).

Among the factors behind the lack of 'Hungarianness', the author also highlights the efforts on the part of the majority society to restore the previously customary, historically traditional social hierarchy, in which the Roma have always been at the bottom (187–193). This also highlights the motive that the majority society is able, through this discourse, to vent its frustration arising from all existential insecurity: to blame the Roma for all difficulties and negative changes. This, in turn, allows not only the exclusion of Roma from social benefits (welfare chauvinism) but also the stigmatization and exclusion of 'successful Roma'. The consequence for the Roma is that they lose the hope, based on the promise of the liberal nationalism of the previous era, of being integrated into majority society as a result of upward social mobility (207).

Feischmidt's study is certainly the strongest chapter in the volume, and could be a starting point for further research and debate. At the same time, it demonstrates the potential of qualitative methods, which have only recently gained ground in Hungarian sociology, and provides an in-depth analysis of an important aspect of the distortion of Hungarian political culture (*Vote for me! Disgust and terror take me ...* [URH]).

Virág Molnár's paper ("Civil Society and the Right-wing Radicalization of the Public Sphere in Hungary", 209–245) clarifies and complements Feischmidt's study in a certain sense. As we have seen, Feischmidt sees the lack of local civic organizations and the weakness of state and local government bodies as an important factor in the discursive creation of the image of the 'Hungarian' as 'non-emphasized'. Molnár's analysis is related to this point, pointing out that, contrary to the liberal doctrine, which sees all forms of civil initiatives as a platform for consolidating democratic values, in the Hungarian situation, a significant part of the civil sphere has become a densifying fabric of populist nationalism instead of liberal and democratic values.

The theoretical background for this line of thought is provided by the political science writings of John A. Hall, Peter Heller and Ariel Armony on the relationship between the civil sphere and democracy (211–215), and the empirical basis by research on the public sphere on the internet and content analysis of primary and secondary documents on selected organizations (225). In the latter context, the author provides an interesting structural overview of nationalist organizations in the economic, political, social and cultural spheres (221), complemented by three case studies focusing on the Goy Riders (226–227), the Hungarian Guard (228–233) and the foreign currency creditors' organizations (233–236). This organizational snapshot is rounded off by an appendix table of radical nationalist NGOs (237–241) and framed by an insightful historical analysis (228–233).

The author highlights two turning points in the history of contemporary nationalist civic organizing: the elections of 2002 and 2006. The first relates to the time of the search for new forms of political mobilization, a new strategy following the electoral failure of the then recently

turned conservative ‘young democrats’. This is the beginning of the attempt to penetrate the civil sphere politically, with the emergence of ‘spontaneous organizations’ convened from above in the form of the Citizens’ Circles. The decisive turning point, however, was undoubtedly the period of political struggles around the 2006 elections, which, with its remake of the 1956 revolution (*1950, 1960, it is 1956 ...* [URH]), both sent the corrupt and anachronistic left-wing political elite into the historical abyss and brought to light the diversity and political potential of truly spontaneously organized right-wing nationalist organizations. The author is also right to point out that 2006 marked the beginning of the current downward spiral in the quality of political communication, which has led to the extreme degradation and degeneration of political language (220), opening the space for the proliferation of cognitively difficult, objective and visual, symbolic meta-communication.

On the one hand, the author’s analysis once again underlines the gradual and processual nature of the social changes that led to the 2010 turnaround. On the other hand, it draws attention to areas that have been largely ignored in political analysis: the interaction between the civil and political spheres, and between populist politics and mediatized political culture.

There are two critical comments to be made regarding Molnár’s paper: one concerning a not very significant factual error, the other a methodological problem. The author refers to the notion of ‘Roma crime’ as something invented by the radical right-wing media (227), whereas – and one might say, on the contrary – it was introduced by communist propaganda in the early 1980s in order to divert attention from the deepening crisis of the Kádár regime and to make the Roma the scapegoat.

As for the methodology, I think it would have been worthwhile to complement the internet search and document analysis with participant observation in the case studies. I suppose that this might have given us more insight into the alchemy of the mythical national idea behind the non-emphasized ‘Hungarianness’. Namely, how the sense of being duped and a ‘loser’ – most obvious in the case of the foreign currency borrowers, least obvious in the case of the Goy Riders – is transformed by mystical doctrines into the omniscient, winking, intimate confidence of the initiates. Because the initiates know that it is not the thought that counts, but the feeling. It does not matter if ideas – about the prehistory of the Hungarians, their ancient religion, their historical mission, the sacred crown, the Jewish conspiracy that moved the world, and a host of other essential topos – contradict the official position of science, historical facts, or even common sense – or perhaps the more they contradict them, the better? Of course, this is all just a figment of this author’s sociological imagination, but perhaps the ‘rub is buried somewhere’ – the key to unlocking the paradox of how it is that a representative poll in 2010 showed that Jobbik voters considered themselves the most open-minded.¹⁰ In any case, it is worth considering the way in which the self-image of the unaccented ‘Hungarianness’ reflects the hegemony of a former alternative counterculture.

Eszter Bartha and András Tóth tackle a similar interesting problem in their study (“What Lies Beneath the Appeal of the Radical Right to Elite Skilled Workers? The Impact of Deeply Ingrained Nationalism and Perceptions of Multiple Exploitations”, 247–268), in which they ask why the elite layer of Hungarian skilled workers is attracted to the political tendencies of the extreme right.

¹⁰Lönnquist et al. (2019).

The response was based on seventeen life histories and two focus group interviews conducted in 2015 with a sample of skilled workers from a multinational company based in Transdanubia, known for its corporate social responsibility in line with Western European standards. Its theoretical horizon is marked by contemporary political sociology on the post-communist orientation of workers in Central Europe – research by David Ost, Dan Calb and Gábor Halmai (247–252) – and especially by those perspectives outlined in an earlier study by Feischmidt. The latter argues that neo-nationalism provided a new language and cultural codes for the working class to express their discontent.

The authors were therefore primarily interested in the cultural and social factors behind the sympathy for the extreme right of the workers who were interviewed. Two characteristic influences were identified from the analysis of the interviews: one is the psychological attitudes organized around the family traumas suffered under communist oppression (the Rákosi era) and the tradition of confrontation with the limits of socialism (the Kádár era) (256–259). The other is the antipathy arising from the sense of multiple exploitation, which manifests itself in several aspects. On the one hand, there is the antipathy towards the heirs of the old ‘communists’ who ‘sold’ the country to the ‘West’ after the regime change: On the one hand, the workers and engineers (technocrats), and on the other, the ‘West–East’ relationship (259–260).

Why the discontent from the latter two sources – the disproportionately high wages of technocrats, in the workers’ opinions, and the disproportionately low wages of ‘Eastern’ workers compared to ‘Western’ ones – could not be exploited by the left-wing political elite to retain its voter base among the highly educated working class, the authors explain in a brief historical overview (260–262). In this, they list the political, tactical and organizational failures that led to the electoral debacle of 2010.

To all this, the authors add the effect of the organic combination of neo-nationalism and hatred of the Roma, which also pushes the working class, traditionally seen as a pillar of social democracy, towards the extreme right.

In the final chapter of the book, Dániel Oross, Dániel Róna, and Andrea Szabó look to the future. Not, of course, in the sense of speculating on plausible scenarios for the coming socio-political changes, but rather in the sense of trying to map the political views of young people who are the bearers of the potential for change and their attitude to politics in general (“Who Brings the Political Change? Divergent Understandings of Politics among Politically Active Students”, 269–298). Specifically, they focus on politically active college and university students as groups of young people who have the potential to both influence the broader youth population and become a major political factor in the future.

Unlike previous studies based on empirical research, the authors based their research on quantitative survey data. In 2013 and 2015, a representative database ($N = 3,040$) of the entire student population by gender, education level and faculty affiliation was created in two waves, partly online and partly face-to-face, among university and college students. On the other hand, two samples ($N = 2,400$) representative of the Hungarian population as a whole (278–279), recorded by Medián in October and December 2018 with the help of interviewers, were also included in the analysis (278–279).

In examining the political activism of young people, the authors have sought to go beyond the traditional approach of focusing on institutional participation by developing a theoretical concept of the ‘rational rebel’. Three connotations have been incorporated into this concept (276–279): The first is a political-economic meaning, following Antony Downs, which

emphasizes the pursuit of individual interests with minimal investment of energy. The second is a concept of ‘post-modern rebellion’ borrowed from Máté Szabó, emphasizing the integrative role of sporadic actions and demands loosely linked to the immediate goal. The third is a conceptual element; the authors underline that this particular form of activity is specific to contemporary Hungarian youth, who have inherited a pattern of turning away from politics and passivity from their parents, who were raised under socialism.¹¹ Relying on the notion of the ‘rational rebel’, the researchers have thus attempted to map the attitudes and political identity formulas behind unconventional manifestations of political activity.

As a first step, the political attitudes of 18–29-year-olds compared to older generations were examined using data from 2018 (278–282). In addition to the usual left-right and liberal-conservative scales, party preferences were also examined. Some differences in all three aspects were striking. Thus, it was striking that among young people, far fewer identified themselves as left-wing, and more identified themselves as being in the middle. Additionally, fewer young people considered themselves conservative, but rather more identified themselves as being in the middle of the liberal-conservative scale, compared to older people. In terms of party preferences, the first striking finding was that there were twice as many young people who could not identify with any party as those aged 30 and over. The left-wing party alliance had a fraction of the popularity among older people, while more than three times as many young people would have voted for Momentum. It is also noteworthy that Jobbik was somewhat more popular among them.

As a second step in the analysis, a cluster analysis of data collected from undergraduate and graduate students in 2013 and 2015 was conducted, focusing on students’ political attitudes and ideological orientation. As a result, the researchers were able to distinguish six groups (282–286). The largest proportion of students (38%) fell into the ‘Apolitical, passive’ group. In addition, two other relatively small (2–3%) politically passive clusters were identified: the ‘Anti-democrats’ – who would most like a dictatorship – and the ‘Social-democrats’. Among the active groups, the most populous, comprising about a quarter of students, are the ‘Western-oriented democrats’. This is followed by the ‘Radical Nationalists’, who account for a fifth of students. Finally, the smallest group (12%) is the ‘Conservative, Christian Democrats’, who are part of the safe constituency of the parties currently in government.

In the next part of the study, the authors attempted to characterize in more detail the political community based on the latter three clusters among Hungarian youth (286–291). They focused their attention primarily on the two ‘rebel’ communities – the ‘Radical Rebels’ and the ‘Green-Left Rebels’ influenced by the ‘Western-oriented Democrats’ – arguing that the ‘Conservative, Christian Democrats’, who are conforming to traditional forms of political participation, can be expected to do nothing but support the regime in power.

In the last part of the chapter, the authors identify the group of ‘Western-oriented young people’ as the depository of future political changes, presenting the example of Momentum as a

¹¹ As far as the socialist era is concerned, I think it makes the picture of political participation more complex. Because, on the one hand, it is true that the party elite kept the mass of citizens away from the possibility of real decisions. On the other hand, however, the communist tradition of mobilizing for empty political rituals without stakes – state ceremonies, rallies – remained alive until the fall of the regime. This kind of ritualized participation still has a strong appeal among the generation socialized during this period, for example, in relation to sympathy demonstrations and ‘peace marches’.

success story, which is now the third declared generational party in the history of contemporary Hungarian politics, following Fidesz (1988–1993) and Jobbik (1999–2006).

For my part, I do not share the authors' optimism on the latter point. Somehow, I do not trust the young, Western-oriented liberal rebels emerging from cyberspace. Rather, I see the possibility of restoring the content of Hungarian democracy in the group of conservative, Christian-democratic young people who have been socialized in line with the institutions of traditional political participation. It is possible that today they still have an excessive respect for the authority of the former young democrats turned sages of the country, but this may change in time. And since, as the authors note, they are more confident than other students about their professional future and career prospects (286), they are unlikely to disappear into cyberspace if their political calculations turn out to be wrong. However, given that this is the smallest group of politically active students, I do not have high expectations.

Most of the studies included in this volume, or earlier versions of them, have already been published in Hungarian. However, by their very arrangement – and this is obviously to the credit of the editors – they form a comprehensive and authentic picture of the socio-legal changes that followed the regime change, which it is important to confront the Hungarian readership with – although I think that the people who would most need to read this book – politicians and would-be politicians – have either already left the Gutenberg Galaxy behind them, or have never been there.

How did I myself – as a concerned citizen – feel when I looked in the mirror of this work? This would be hard to express in the joyful lightness of folk songs. Rather, in the URH's alarm siren sound:

*Take me away, take me away!
Take me away, take me away!
I will never forget this quarantine!*

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