

## Mainstream or an Alternate Universe? Locating and Analysing the Radical Right Media Products in the Hungarian Media Network

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\* Gabriella Szabó, PhD [[szabo.gabriella@tk.mta.hu](mailto:szabo.gabriella@tk.mta.hu)] (Centre for Social Sciences, Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Institute for Political Science) and Márton Bene, PhD Student (Corvinus University of Budapest; Centre for Social Sciences, Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Institute for Political Science)

### Abstract<sup>1</sup>

Despite voluminous literature explaining the emergence and the electoral contours of right wing radicalism in Europe, little is known about the location of radical right mass communication channels in the media sphere. The aim of this article is to fill the gap by identifying and analysing the positions of the radical right media within the network structure of the general media sphere. To do so, Hungary is an excellent illustrative case as a country in which the radical right wing Jobbik party won 21 percent of the votes in the 2014 parliamentary election that cemented its status as by far the largest radical right group in Central Europe. We provide an issue-centred approach in which the media networks of two of the most controversial political topics of the year 2014 in Hungarian politics are explored. To compose the networks, we concentrate on the interaction ties that are defined here as direct, and explicit citations or hyperlinks to the content of other media products. The empirical test of ideal typical networks reveals that the radical right products stay under the radar of the mainstream media. It is our finding that the representatives of the radical media remain on the fringe of the media sphere in Hungary.

*Keywords: radical right, media, network analysis, interaction, Hungary.*

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## *Introduction*

One of the toughest challenges for contemporary social science is to comprehend the characteristics of radical right politics in Europe. Monographs and articles address the question why right wing radicalism enjoys increasing electoral success at the national and local levels throughout the continent (Carter 2005; Norris 2005; Mudde 2007; Mammone et al. 2012), its effects on the party system (Mudde 2014) and public policies (Minkenberg 2001).

The majority of the literature concentrates on the causes by seeking demand or supply-centred explanations of the radical right's popularity (Rydgren 2007). Cross-country comparisons have highlighted the complexity and context of the growth of right wing radicalism. The advance and the performance of new movements and parties have been interpreted in multiple ways, but an important segment remained unconsidered so far: the position of the radical right media products in the media sphere. In this article, we provide an innovative social network analysis to map and measure the relationship between radical right and non-radical right media outlets by exploring their interaction patterns. Our results show that the radical right media products have not been integrated into the mainstream media sphere in Hungary. It is also demonstrated that right wing radicalism has not formulated a single or unified group of media outlets.

The first section of the article addresses the importance and the complex phenomenon of media visibility concerning right wing radicalism. The second section introduces the methodological terms of the analysis and explains the metrics of the examination. Then, we present and finally interpret our findings.

## *The radical right and the media*

Previous analyses have already highlighted the pivotal role of the mass communication channels in the rise of the right wing radicalism during the past couple of decades. Koopmans and Olzak (2004) introduced the concept of '*discursive opportunity structure*' into the literature on radical right politics. They argue that the political atmosphere is heavily influenced by the dominant public discourses. If the dominant discourses are favourable for the radical right politics, extremist parties have a very high chance to blossom and obtain political support from the electorates. The meaning of '*favourable*' varies in the different forms and at the different levels of political communication, but it is safe to say that the mass media as the main carrier of public discourse have made impact on the emergence of right wing radicalism (see: Mazzoleni et al. 2003; Walgrave and De Swert 2004; Boomgaarden and Vliegenthart, 2007; Ellinas 2010). The key question is in what ways media contribute to the current political situation in which radical right parties and movements have become non-negligible political actors in many European countries, including Hungary as well. Koopmans's work, published before the boom in social media, emphasises gatekeeping power; it is the press and the broadcasters who select the issues to be discussed and dominate the interpretations of the stories (Koopmans 2004). Nowadays it is dubious how strongly the traditional mass communication channels are

able to control the public agenda, the questions of visibility and access to mass media however, remain relevant factors. In other words: today's mediatisation of politics does not mean the dominance of old media, radical right parties and movements should simultaneously consider the mind set of different types of media outlets in managing their political activities (Krotz 2009: 26).

### *Radicalisation of media discourses*

There is also a wide consensus over the statement that the media partially responsible for the radicalisation of the public discourse by covering the preferred topics of the radical right intensively. Scholars suggest that there is a clear-cut correlation between the salience and framing of certain issues in the news media and the electoral fortune of the radical parties. Birenbaum and Villa (2003) assess the success of the Front National in France as a result of the emerging media attention to the topics that were introduced and forced by Jean-Marie Le Pen.

Stewart and her colleagues (2003) observe that due to financial reasons media tend to cover shocking stories (also in politics) and the radical right parties are more than happy to feed the news media with provocative actions and slogans. Boomgaarden and Vliegenthart (2007) also discuss the interrelationship between the prominence of the news dealing with immigrants and the dynamics of the public support of the radical right parties in the Netherlands. Their findings are straightforward: the more news on immigration was covered by the press in a certain period of time, the more individual intention for voting for the radical right was detected in the same period (Boomgaarden and Vliegenthart 2007). The radical right parties have often attracted media attention merely because they are the '*new kids on the block*' with often extravagant and charismatic leaders such as Pim Fortuyn and Jörg Haider (Rydgren and Holsteyn, 2004; Eatwell, 2005; Bos et al., 2010).

Research studies on the Hungarian public discourse highly resonate with the international literature. In studying the euroscepticism in the European Parliament Elections of 2009 in Hungary, Heller Mária notices that the lines between the discourses of moderate right and radical right politics have been blurring. As the boundaries become more and more porous, the languages of right wing radicalism become more and more accepted in Hungary (Heller, 2010: 15). The thesis of radicalisation is supported by numerous content analyses, especially when Roma people and issues of the Roma communities are covered by the mainstream media in Hungary. The increasing media attention towards the Roma people within the context of criminalisation and problematisation has been detected and connected to the growing popularity of radicalism in Hungary since 2006<sup>2</sup> and onwards (see: Gimes et

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<sup>2</sup> On 17 October 2006 in a small village of Eastern Hungary (Olaszliszka) a middle aged teacher was beaten to death by an angry mob after he accidentally hit a girl with his car. The attackers were members of the Roma community. The incident provoked emotional responses and a significant part of the discourse continued to rely on stereotyped representations of the event and the Roma people. There is a wide consensus on the statement that the public discourses of the attack in Olaszliszka was the early sign of the radicalisation of the public sphere in Hungary (see: Vidra and Fox 2014).

al., 2009; Bernát et al., 2013; Vidra and Fox 2014; Munk, 2013). Moreover, labelling the Roma and Jewish communities as foes of Hungarians has been studied to be the integral part of the discursive repertoire of radical right media (Glózer 2013, 2014).

Based on the concept of issue-ownership (see Petrocik, 1996), Karácsony and Róna (2010) compellingly demonstrate that the Hungarian media consciously or unconsciously but clearly supported the Jobbik by giving high visibility to the issues that were broadly associated with the party in the campaign period of the European Parliamentary Election of 2009. 2009 was the year of the electoral breakthrough of Jobbik in Hungary, when it gained 427,773 votes (14.7%) and delegated three MEPs to the European Parliament. Jobbik party achieved further support in the Hungarian parliamentary elections of 2010 gaining 855,436 votes (16.6%). Jobbik has cemented its status as by far the largest radical right group in Central and Eastern Europe by winning 20.54 percent of the votes in the 2014 parliamentary election.

The evident lack of journalistic consensus on reporting on Jobbik party and leading figures of the radical right scene suggests that there are multiple ways to respond to radicalism in Hungary. It is demonstrated that most of the journalists employ a strategy of exclusion against the radical right parties and politicians. In spite of the norm of objectivity and balanced coverage, the majority of journalists prefer to provide as little media visibility for Jobbik as possible. Paradoxically, the quarantine of Jobbik does not go hand in hand with neglecting the topics and frames that are heavily advocated by the radical right party (crime, corruption, criminalisation of Roma population etc.). Here is the confusing message: the issues and the narratives of right wing radicalism have appeared in the media discourse, but the party and the representatives have been treated as '*persona non grata*' of the Hungarian media space (Bernáth 2014).

### *The media behaviour towards the radical right actors*

The media behaviour towards the radical right movements and parties is explicitly criticised by Judit Barta (2008). The Hungarian left leaning media outlets tend to '*overdramatise*' the influence of the extremism on the Hungarian political landscape, other ones rather '*bagatelise*' it, while others from the moderate right scene '*accept and apply*' the language kits and the vocabulary of the right wing radicals to some extent. The study sketches the argument for media empowerment: Barta assesses the reaction of Hungarian journalists as '*inadequate*' and '*unprofessional*' which empowers the extremist parties and movements (Barta 2008).

The argument for the empowerment has been echoed and refined by Antonis Ellinas (2010). The author claims that the editorial boards and the journalists play an important role in determining how much prominence the radical right parties or their representatives are given by a certain media outlet. If the mainstream media, which are defined as the most popular television channels and written press with the highest circulation rates, are willing to deal with radical parties and present their viewpoints on certain political issues, it has a positive influence on the electoral performance of those radical right parties. Succinctly, the more media attention is paid to the radical right, the more votes they gain in national and sub-national elections. The case of Austria

has convincingly demonstrated that the *Neue Kronen Zeitung*, the biggest tabloid paper in the country, heavily supported the FPÖ<sup>3</sup> by giving them publicity and framing the political issues in ways that were favourable for the radical party during the 1990s. This supportive behaviour contributed to the great success of the FPÖ both at the local and state-levels in the elections of 1999 (Ellinas 2010: 41-75). At the opposite side of the argument, the German case reveals the way how representatives of the mainstream media firmly and strictly isolate the right wing radicalism by giving them zero visibility. According to Ellinas, the quarantine might be one of the reasons of the low electoral support that neo-nazi and radical right parties enjoy in the Federal elections in Germany (Ellinas 2010: 76-124).

The French case also shows that emerging media visibility correlates with an increase in popularity. As soon as Jean-Marie Le Pen, the leader of Front National, was granted regular exposure by the public broadcaster in 1984 after the long-term media boycott of his party, FN won 11% of the total votes in the European Parliament election and ten seats in the EP (Ellinas 2010: 167-198, see also Shields 2007: 196-197). Last but not least, the case of Greece is an example of the sudden rise of radical right parties. In his later article, Ellinas discusses the emergence of Golden Dawn in relation with the attitudes of mainstream media towards the party (Ellinas 2013). It is examined that most of the media outlets have kept '*critical distance*' from the party and have covered the Golden Dawn by using hostile tones. Surprisingly, the negative publicity of the party has been rewarded by the electorate: Golden Dawn received six times more votes in the parliamentary election of 2012 (6.97% of the overall vote) than in the one of 2009 (0.29 % of the overall vote).

The extended research of Antonis Ellinas suggests that the relationship between the media products and right wing radicalism does make a real difference. First and foremost, the visibility matters regardless of the tones and the frames of the coverage. If the media deal with the representatives of the radical right, they are able to exploit even any negative publicity to connect with the voters and offer them a viable political alternative which is more and more popular in many European countries. In addition, right wing radicalism is keen to establish its own media universe with a powerful mix of social media, traditional formats of written press and radio stations to balance the hostile mainstream media environment, which looks to be continuous in the case of the established radical parties too (see Skenderovic 2009; Udris 2012).

The same is obviously true for Hungary as well: the changes in the public sphere have been beneficial for the radical right and the actors of the radical right have successfully navigated themselves into the new media/discourse opportunity structure (see Jeskó et al., 2012). The mainstream position of the Jobbik party in Hungarian politics is not a forecast or a prophecy any more, it is a political fact. Jobbik seems to be well aware that contemporary politics is heavily influenced by the media. Little information is available about the media management strategy of the party, it is however known that the leaders of Jobbik regularly initiate legal cases against television broadcasting companies to demand more visibility for the party and

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<sup>3</sup> Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs (Freedom Party of Austria).

balanced coverage in news programmes.<sup>4</sup> Jobbik seeks the attention of the mainstream media. The radical right is however very active in the online spaces: social media platforms, blogs ('Bombagyár'), online news portals (alfahir.hu; hunhir.hu), web-based radio station ('Szent Korona Rádió') and video channel ('NITV') have been operating. 'Kuruc.info', a semi-illegal online news portal, is the iconic platform of right wing radicalism with approximately 60000 individual page visitors per day<sup>5</sup> and is owned by a Hungarian-born American citizen.<sup>6</sup> The political weekly 'Barikád' is directly connected with the party; its editor-in-chief is known to be an advisor of the Jobbik president Gábor Vona.<sup>7</sup> Right wing radicalism is present in the market of free-sheets as well: 2 million copies of 'Hazai Pálya' are claimed to be distributed bimonthly.

This observation immediately raises the question about the location of the radical right media outlets in relation to the mainstream media.

Inspired by Ellinas's conclusion, this study addresses the issue of media visibility of right wing radicalism in Hungary. Visibility has been mostly conceptualised by focusing on textual aspects; quantitative and qualitative content analysis of the media coverage of radical parties or hot issues is a fruitful way of analysing radicalisation (see Vliegthart et al. 2012). Visibility however can be approached as chains of *interactions* between the key actors of the mainstream and radical media, which is rather a neglected aspect in researching right wing radicalism.

### *Why do interactions matter?*

Interactions are important indicators of connections. The characteristics of connections between the media products perfectly outline the structure of the media sphere. If the mainstream media outlets connect strongly with radical platforms and vice versa, the media sphere can be evaluated as an integrated space. One might say that this condition indicates the mainstreaming of the extreme which legitimatises the position of radicalism. Zero connections indicate that the mainstream media isolate right wing radicalism by refusing any interactions, neither positive nor negative references as is demonstrated in the case of Germany by Ellinas. If the representatives of the right wing radical media are integrated into the mainstream public sphere, it suggests that they are legitimate and important participants in the public discussion. Or on the contrary, if the mainstream does not connect with radical right media outlets, it means that they are excluded from the circle of the speakers whose voices matter in debating public affairs. In our mind, the interaction ties signal the moments of inclusion or exclusion as far as the media sphere is concerned. A negative context of publicity therefore does not necessarily create an isolation of the radical right. The case of the Greek Golden Dawn party shows that hostile interactions between

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<sup>4</sup> Több Jobbikot a tévébe!, mertek.hvg.hu, May 4 2014.

<sup>5</sup> Data available at webaudit.hu for December 2014.

<sup>6</sup> Bemutatjuk a kuruc.info tulajdonosát, atlatszo.hu, September 4 2012.

<sup>7</sup> Pörzse Sándor távozik a parlamentből - bemutatták a Jobbik listáját, atv.hu, February 5 2014.

journalists and party leaders are rewarded by certain segments of the electorate (Ellinas 2013: 550).

Interactions provide new insights for the branch of literature, which concerns itself with the discourses of radicalism (Wodak et al. 2013) as well. The interaction ties or the lack of them between media products indicate which agents of communication are able to influence the direction of public discourses. It is plausible to assume that the more radical right media are integrated into the flow of the mass communication, the higher their chance of producing effects in public discussions. And also the other way around: it is likely that little or no interaction ties create an unfavourable climate for right wing radicalism to have an impact on political debates.

Therefore, we claim that interactions do matter in understanding the relationship between right wing radicalism and media. In the present study, we investigate the interaction ties between the media products in order to shed some light on the location of right wing radical media outlets in the media sphere in Hungary. To evaluate whether the radical right media have entered the mainstream or not, we provide issue-centred empirical examinations of two of the most controversial political issues of the year 2014 in Hungarian politics. As for the method, we run network analysis (for the application in political science, see: Waugh et al. 2009; Conover et al. 2011). We test five ideal types of the network to assess which one is valid for describing the general structure of the media sphere and analyse the location of the radical right media products within the media networks in Hungary.

## *Research question and method*

### *Research question*

The examination is driven by the main research question:

*What is the location of the radical right products in the interaction network of Hungarian media outlets?*

To answer the question, we study both the general connection structure of the media network and the ego network of the radical right media outlets. The ego network provides information on the neighbourhood of the radical right media products. However, we need to comprehend the general structure of the whole network to assess the embeddedness of the radical right media.

Five ideal typical network structures are defined to measure the general structure of the whole network. The ideal types model the distribution of ties between nodes of the network. The number of ties is presumed to be a basic characteristic of the network. Our aim is to discover how the ties have been distributed among the nodes and whether the distribution follows any specific patterns or not. The ideal typical structures were predefined by the metrics as follows: the maximum modularity

score of the edge-betweenness community detection algorithm<sup>8</sup>, fitness score of the core-periphery model<sup>9</sup>, global clustering coefficient<sup>10</sup> and the average shortest path<sup>11</sup>.

We propose making distinctions between cohesive and non-cohesive structures. The structure in cluster-free networks and in small-world networks (see: Watts-Strogatz, 1998) is cohesive because we can easily reach all nodes of the network by taking very few hops. Certain nodes of a small-world network tend to cluster together. The groups are however strongly connected with each other. In the case of the cluster-free type, as the name suggests, the nodes do not form tightly knit groups. Clusters are also lacking in the diffuse network. The diffuse network however differs from the cohesive networks (cluster-free networks and small-world networks) by requiring many

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<sup>8</sup>The idea of this algorithm is that it is likely that edges connecting separate modules have a high edge-betweenness score and if we remove this edge, we can get cohesive subgroups. It is a hierarchical method: first, all nodes are in separated groups and finally all nodes are in one group (Girvan and Newman 2002). The algorithm indicates the division, which has the highest modularity of the network. The modularity discovers the strength of the group division in the networks. "The modularity is, up to a multiplicative constant, the number of edges falling within groups minus the expected number in an equivalent network with edges placed at random" (Newman 2006). The higher scores (score ranges from -0.5 to 1) signal that there is a strong community structure. Based on Clauset et al. (2004) 0.3 score is often deemed as the benchmark value of the relevant community structure, but the modularity value is sensitive to the network's size and the overall connectivity. Hence, in addition to accepting the 0.3 score as a kind of benchmark value, we also examined the deviation of the observed value from the mean value of 1000 random reshuffled versions of that network.

<sup>9</sup>Borgatti and Everett (1999) have formalised the ideal structure of the core-periphery model and they worked out an algorithm for detecting core/periphery structure. It finds a partition of the observed network which best fits the idealised matrix. The fitness score shows how well the observed network fits the ideal core/periphery structure. The 0 value of the fitness indicates there is no core-periphery structure in the observed data and a value of 1 shows that our network perfectly fits the idealised network. In accordance with other studies we pre-defined the 0.5 score of fitness as a benchmark value (see also: Vercellone-Smith et al. 2012),

<sup>10</sup>The global clustering coefficient is a measure of the clustering tendency of nodes based on triplets of nodes. A triplet consist of three nodes connecting by either two (open triplet) or three (closed triplet) ties. The clustering coefficient is the number of closed triplet over the total number of triplet (Opsahl and Panzarasa 2009). We used Opsahl and Panzarasa's generalisation of the global clustering coefficient of a weighted network (Opsahl and Panzarasa 2009). The value of global clustering coefficient lies between 0 and 1. A lower value means most triplets are open, the network is low-clustered. A higher value means most triplets are closed, that is the network is highly clustered. However, the value is sensitive to the overall number of links and nodes which makes it difficult to define what 'high' and 'low' values mean exactly. Defining the benchmark value, we create 1000 random networks with the same properties (number of nodes, links, weights) as those of the observed network by reshuffling the links among nodes (Opsahl et al. 2008). The benchmark value is the mean value of the 1000 random networks, but an observed value is deemed significantly high or low if it deviates from the mean value of the 1000 random networks by at least 2 standard deviations.

<sup>11</sup>The shortest path is the shortest distance between two nodes, and the average metric of that says something about the cohesiveness of the whole network. A low value indicates that there are no greater distances between nodes which mean the network is cohesive. In contrast, a high value shows that there are substantial distances between nodes which reveal the non-cohesiveness of the network. However, as in the case of global clustering coefficients, it is hard to define what counts as a 'high' or 'low' value as this metric is also sensitive to the overall number of links and nodes. We use Opsahl's generalisation of the average shortest path to the weighted network which takes into account the weights of the links in the calculation of the shortest path between nodes (Opsahl et al. 2010). The benchmark value is defined in the same way as the clustering coefficient.

hops to reach all the nodes. The core-periphery type has a non-cohesive structure by having some densely connected nodes in the core position and the other one in the periphery. It assumes that the core nodes is maximally connected to each other, there are no connection among periphery nodes, and the connections from periphery to core are more frequent than the reverse. We can also observe non-cohesive structure in the polarised networks, in which there are clusters with dense in-group connections and sparse out-group ties.

The comprehensive summary of the ideal types can be found in Table 1.

Ideal typical community structures	Characteristics	Measurement	
		Indicators	Conditions (benchmark values)
Cluster-free network (CFN)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- cohesive network</li> <li>- there are no tight-knit groups in the network.</li> </ul>	Modularity Clustering coefficient Average short path Fitness	low (<0.3) not high (< EV+2SD )  low (< EV+2SD) not high (<0.5)
Small-world network (SWN)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- cohesive network</li> <li>- most nodes can be reached from every other by a small number of steps.</li> <li>- there are clusters in the network which are strongly connected with each other.</li> </ul>	Modularity Clustering coefficient Average short path Fitness	low (<0.3) high (>EV+2SD)  low (< EV+2SD) not high (<0.5)
Core-periphery network (CPN)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- generalization of the maximally centralized graph (see Freeman 1979)</li> <li>- well-connected core</li> <li>- a periphery which sends links toward the core, but inverse is rarely, and nodes from the periphery do not connect to each other (see: Borgatti – Everett 1999).</li> </ul>	Modularity Clustering coefficient Average short path Fitness	low (<0.3) higher in the core; lower in the periphery Average or low high (>0.5)
Polarised network (PN)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- highly clustered subgroups with no or sparse connections between them.</li> </ul>	Modularity Clustering coefficient Average short path Fitness	high (>0.3 and >EV+2SD) high (>EV+2SD) varied not high (<0.5)
Diffuse network (DN)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- there are no tight-knit groups in the network.</li> <li>- huge distances between the nodes.</li> </ul>	Modularity Clustering coefficient Average short path Fitness	low (<0.3) low (<EV)  high (>EV+2SD) not high (>0.5)

Table 1: Ideal typical community structures of networks (features and measurements)

		RRM nodes connect to RRM nodes	RRM nodes are connected by non-RRM nodes	RRM nodes connect to non-RRM nodes	Hypothetical occurrence of ideal types of network
<b>Integrated position of RRM nodes</b>	Clusters of RRM nodes with connections between almost any two nodes within the network.	+	+	+	Small world (cohesive network)
	No clusters of RRM nodes with connections between almost any two nodes within the network.	-	+	+	Cluster-free (cohesive network)
	Clusters of RRM nodes with incoming connections from non-RRM nodes.	+	+	-	Small world (cohesive network)
	Core position of RRM nodes.	-	+	-	Core-periphery (non-cohesive network)
<b>Isolated position of RRM nodes</b>	Clusters of RRM nodes without connections of non-RRM nodes.	+	-	-	Polarised (non-cohesive network)
	No clusters of RRM nodes without connections between the nodes of the network.	-	-	-	Diffuse (non-cohesive network)
<b>Peripheral position of RRM nodes</b>		-	-	+	Polarised (non-cohesive network)
<b>Fringe position of RRM nodes</b>	Clusters of RRM nodes with outgoing connections from RRM nodes towards non-RRM nodes.	+	-	+	Small world (cohesive network)

Table 2: The main variation of the hypothesised position of the radical right media outlets within the ideal types of network (RRM nodes=radical right media nodes, non-RRM nodes=non-radical right media nodes).

Once we have identified the ideal typical structure of the networks, we have to define the main variations of the hypothesised location of the radical right media products within the networks. If our data show that the networks of the Hungarian media are cohesive, we can expect very little or no difference between the location of radical

right media nodes and the place of non-radical right media nodes. This finding would indicate that the radical right media outlets are highly integrated into the mainstream media sphere and function as important actors of the public space in Hungary. Given the fact that the radical right Jobbik party is the third biggest formation in Hungarian politics, this is not an inconceivable scenario.

If we find evidence for the non-cohesive networks of the Hungarian media, we expect the radical right media nodes to be placed in the periphery of the network. This result would mean that the radical right remain on the fringe of the public sphere in Hungary. Alternatively, the radical right media nodes can form into a cluster that is characterised by dense in-group connections and few or zero out-group ties. In this constellation, we might conclude that the radical right media are the products of an alternative communication universe which has its own distinctive mechanisms to discuss politics. The main variations of the hypothesised location of radical right parties is summarised in the Table 2.

It must be emphasised that the above discussed formation of structures and the locations of radical right media nodes should be considered as hypothetical constellations. Our aim is to assess which one describes the interaction networks of the Hungarian media outlets in the best possible way or highlight a hybrid pattern, if data suggest that.

### *Nodes and edges of the networks*

We provide an issue-centred network analysis that investigates the interaction ties between media outlets. In our study, two media networks have been compiled. First one is to describe the media network of Paks-issue and the second one is to describe the media network of Tamás Sneider-issue. Both are  $n \times n$  directed, weighted networks. The media outlets are considered as the nodes of the networks. Edges are the connections between nodes which are defined here as interaction ties. This means that we examine the connection between media products via their interactions (references, citations, quotations and hyperlinks of other news items).

### *Issue selections*

Two controversial issues of the Hungarian politics have been examined; the Paks-issue and the Tamás Sneider-issue. The Paks-issue is organised around an agreement that was signed by Russian President Vladimir Putin and Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán. According to the deal, the Russian state-owned nuclear firm Rosatom is to build additional units to extend Hungary's nuclear power plant. Russia would provide loans for financing the two units.

The parliamentary opposition parties and the NGOs which have been advocating anti-corruption policies urged the government to withdraw the signature by claiming that the process lacked the requirement of transparency and open

consultation. The issue has been quickly politicised; thousands protested in the streets of Budapest against the agreement and anti-government organisation made huge efforts to mobilise electoral supports around the issue. It is safe to say that Paks-issue was one of the most important topics for the left-leaning and liberal political forces in attacking the right wing government which was led by PM Viktor Orbán. From that point of view, the Paks-issue can be considered as a *typical case* of the Hungarian politics. In the Tamás Sneider-issue, the protagonist of the story was an MP of Jobbik party, Tamás Sneider, who was nominated as one of the five deputies of the President of the Hungarian Parliament on the 24th of April 2014. As soon as his nomination has been publicised, Tamás Sneider's controversial past (he was known as a leading figure in violent skinhead groups in the 1990s, and he is a convicted felon as well) has received increasing media attention. This issue was an excellent opportunity for radical right media to make them attractive for the mainstream media by providing exclusive information on Tamás Sneider or introducing new arguments, frames and narratives of the topic. The Tamás Sneider-issue, therefore should produce evidence that could compellingly demonstrate whether the radical right media have moved closer to the mainstream public sphere or remains on the fringes. This is the reason we consider that the Tamás Sneider-issue is a *crucial case* for locating the radical right media in the Hungarian media sphere (see Gerring 2007).

### *Data collection*

The systematic data collection of the study required a complex procedure with several steps and careful observation of the material. The entire coding process was done by the authors of the article and two other competent raters, then the results were compared. When discrepancy was detected the research team discussed the issue and took a stance on it. The intercoder reliability was estimated by using Krippendorff's  $\alpha$  which resulted in 0.70 (see: Krippendorff, 2004). First, we made an ex-ante calculation of the products of mainstream media: these are the most read, most watched and most listened daily newspapers (including tabloids), online news portals, television and radio broadcasts that contain editorial work covering politics. We compiled a list of 36 media products to start the data collection.<sup>12</sup> In addition, we pre-defined the list of radical right media outlets to include them in our analysis.<sup>13</sup> All in all, 43 media products were involved in the data collection.

Second, we scrutinised all of them by searching the keywords for the Paks-issue as follows: 'Paks', 'atomerőmű' (nuclear plant), 'Rosatom' (name of the Russian state company which was contracted) and keywords for the Tamás Sneider-issue as follows:

<sup>12</sup>List of the starting points of data collection concerning the mainstream media: ATV, mmo.hu, origo.hu, vs.hu, nol.hu, index.hu, hvg.hu, borsonline, M1, Hír TV, Magyar Nemzet, Népszabadság, Magyar Hírlap, Világgazdaság, Népszava, RTL Klub, Kossuth Rádió, TV2, 444.hu, Mandiner, napi.hu, cink.hu, nepszava.hu, magyarhirlap.hu, Hír 24, Blikk online, info.radio, portfolio.hu, Blikk, HVG, Magyar Narancs, Figyelő, Magyar Demokrata, 168 óra, Heti Válasz, Metropol.

<sup>13</sup>List of the starting points of data collection concerning the radical right media: kuruc.info, alfahir.hu, N1 TV, Barrikád, Deres TV, Szentkorona Rádió, Hunhír.hu.

'Sneider Tamás', 'skinhead', 'szkinhed'. The time-frame of the data collection of the Paks-issue was the seven day period between 14th of January 2014 and 21<sup>st</sup> of January 2014. The time-frame of the data collection of the Tamás Sneider-issue covered the days between 24th of April 2014 and 15th of May 2014. All the news items which cover the Paks-issue or the Tamás Sneider-issue have been included into our database. Third, every quotation, reference, citation or hyperlink of other media products has been coded as an out-going interaction tie (excluding self-references), if they signified published news items of the time period between the starting and closing day of data collection. Following the rule of the saturation, we were continuously expanding the data collection with the media outlets that had been referred by other ones. In the last stage of the data collection, our database contained 59 elements of the Paks-issue and 49 elements of the Tamás Sneider-issue which refer to 59 and 49 media products. We found 12 nodes in the Paks-issue and 16 nodes in the Tamás Sneider-issue that had no ties. These were labelled as isolated nodes and were removed from the network analysis.

As a software support for calculation, we applied the igraph (Csárdi and Nepusz 2006) and the tnet (Opsahl 2009) packages for R as well as the Ucinet 6 software (Borgatti et al. 2002). To visualise the findings, NetDraw has been employed.

## ***Results***

In this section of the article, we present and discuss our findings concerning the two issues that we analysed. Let us commence with the *typical case* of our study which is the Paks-issue.

### *Typical case: Paks-issue*

Here, the interaction ties signal a network in which web-based, non web-based and mixed media products connect strongly to each other. It means that both online and offline media channels are important components of the contemporary media sphere in Hungary. Interestingly, there are no tabloid dailies in the Paks-network, and out of the largest commercial television channels only RTL appeared in our analysis. Apart from only one example (SzegeDMA.hu), the local media outlets are also missing. The lack of in-coming and out-going ties suggests that the tabloid daily papers, commercial broadcasters and local journals might have covered the issue, but their coverage remained unreported by other media outlets. And vice versa, they also did not initiate any interactions with other media products. For a visual illustration of the Paks-network, please see Figure 1.

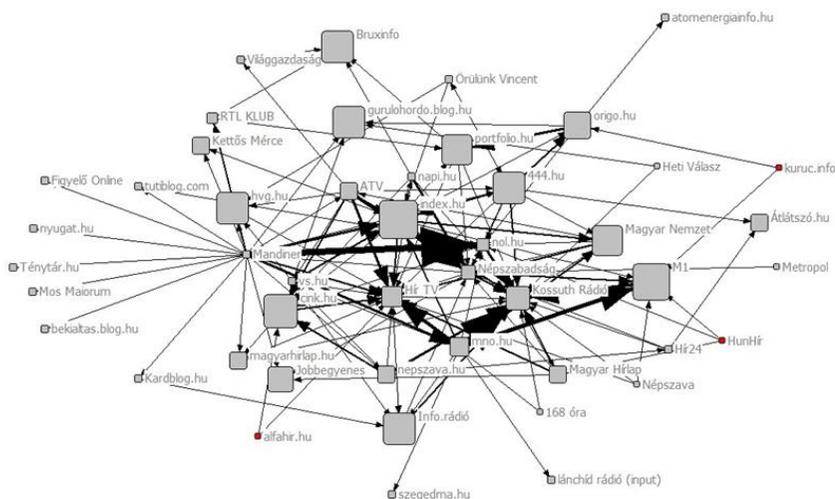


Figure 1: Network of the Paks-issue (isolates are removed; sizes=in-degree centrality; red=radical right media).

The structure of Paks-network is in accordance with the *core-periphery* network type. The low level of the maximum modularity score of the edge-betweenness community detection algorithm ( $0.075 < 0.3$ ) indicates that there are no strong clustering activities between the nodes. The distance between the nodes is quite large as is demonstrated by the mean shortest distance metric which happens to be greater (but not significantly) than would be expected randomly ( $4.079 > 3.7$ ). The fitness score of the network provides more support for the applicability of the core-periphery network type. The algorithm has made a distinction between groups of nodes with dense interaction ties (core) and groups of nodes with sparse connections with each other (periphery). The round value of the fitness score is 0.5 (the exact figure is 0.458) which is exactly the same figure that we pre-defined as the threshold value for signalling a core-periphery type of structure in our findings. More precisely, it is observed that the nodes with dense interaction receive more in-coming ties from the nodes that have sparse connections. The latter rather initiate out-going ties towards the core nodes than receiving in-coming ones from the core. This is a text-book indicator of the core-periphery network structure which seems to be valid for the Paks-issue. Therefore, we can say that the Paks-network fits quite well into the ideal core-periphery structure as it was elaborated by Borgatti and Everett (1999).

Following the intuitive idea of Borgatti and Everett's block modelling (1999: 376), one class for core nodes and another one for peripheral nodes were created. In the matrix of Table 3 items in the upper left corner are the core nodes and items in the right-bottom corner are the nodes of the periphery. The core contains only nine nodes, but the density among them is quite high (0.861). The connections among the periphery nodes are sparse and there are slightly more links from periphery to core than the reverse. All the radical right media items are located in the periphery.

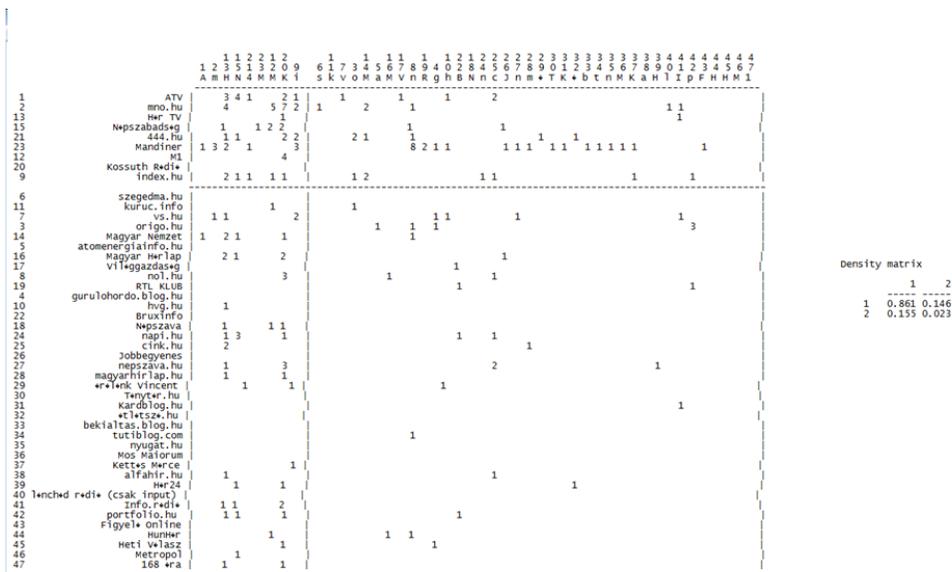


Table 3: Blockmodelling the core-periphery structure of the Paks-network.

Table 4 provides a comprehensive summary of the metrics and values concerning the media network of the Paks-issue.

	Modularity (edge betweenness)	Clustering coeff.	Mean shortest distance	Fitness
Paks-network	0.07508162	0.3635606	4.079266	0.458
Random networks (mean, Standard Deviation)	M= 0.03758791 SD= 0.02137029	M= 0.3363052 SD= 0.02904479	M= 3.703475 SD= 0.48031	-
Deviation (in SD)	1.754478	0.9383932	0.7823923	-

Table 4: Summary of metrics and values in the media network of 'Paks'-issue.

After identifying the structure of the Paks-network as a core-periphery type, our second task is to assess the place of right wing radical media outlets within the network. Do we find them in the periphery or in the core? Data suggest that right wing radical nodes are located in the periphery of the media network of the Paks-issue. If we take a look at the visual image of the ego network of the radical right nodes, we will immediately see that they are represented as either peripheral or isolated nodes (see Figure 2).

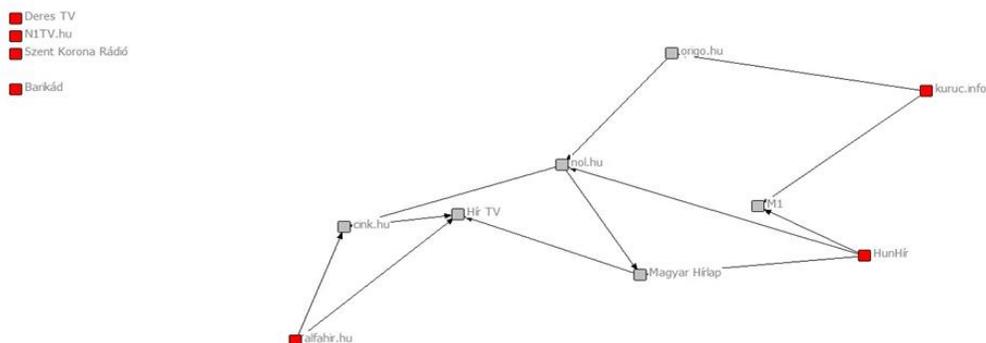


Figure 2: Ego network of radical right media in the Paks-issue (sizes=in-degree centrality; red=radical right media).

The peripheral radical nodes prefer connecting with non-radical right nodes. Table 5 shows which nodes are the most cited in the network.

Media products in the core of the Paks-network	In-degree centrality (alpha=0.5) <sup>14</sup>	Number of in-coming ties of core nodes from radical right media products
Kossuth Rádió (public service radio broadcaster)	26.514147	-
Hír TV (private broadcaster, right wing)	22.449944	1 (alfahir.hu)
Népszabadság (left leaning daily newspaper)	12.247449	-
nol.hu (online edition of the Népszabadság, left leaning daily newspaper)	9.899495	1 (HunHír.hu)
Index.hu (independent online news portal)	9.165151	-
MTV 1 (public service television broadcaster)	6.000000	2 (kuruc.info, HunHír.hu)

Table 5: Nodes with the highest in-degree centrality scores in the network (excluded references of the radical right media) and the number of in-coming ties of this most central nodes from radical right media products in the Paks-network.

The non-radical right media nodes however, do not send any interaction ties towards the radical right. Interestingly, the radical right nodes keep a distance from

<sup>14</sup> In-degree centrality after removing the radical right media.



to the score of the Paks-network, which signals that our second branch of findings might be evaluated as a core-periphery structure.

To examine whether the core-periphery structure is valid for the Tamás Sneider-network we run the core-periphery block model. The model highlights the directions of connections from core to periphery and backwards and the density values of the interactions between and within blocks. It tells us that the core creates a sub-graph with less dense interactions than in the case of the Paks-network (density=0.431). In addition, the peripheral nodes tend to connect with the core as is generally observed in the core-periphery structure. Remarkably, the block modelling analysis suggests that there are two radical right media nodes in the core of the network (kuruc.info and alfahir.hu). This is the case because these two nodes have out-going ties towards the other elements of the core and there are mutually initiated ties between the kuruc.info and the alfahir.hu. It is tempting to assess that the representatives of the radical right media possess a core position in the Tamás Sneider-network. The lack of in-coming interaction ties of the kuruc.info and alfahir.hu from the core however, signals the need of careful interpretation concerning the location of the radical right media outlets.

Our doubts regarding the core position of the radical right nodes has been confirmed by the re-run of the block modelling. Once we removed the out-going ties of the kuruc.info and the alfahir.hu, the model immediately placed them out from the core. Moreover, the value of the fitness score is now a lot lower than our previously defined threshold values ( $0.333 < 0.5$ ) which indicates that there is no core-periphery structure in the Tamás Sneider-network.

In spite of the fact that one of our criteria is not perfectly realised, as the mean shortest path is not smaller by two standard deviations from the random expected value, we suggest describing the Tamás Sneider-network as a kind of cluster-free network, because it has a more cohesive structure than the 'Paks'-network and lacks any tight-knit groups.

To summarise our findings in the Tamás Sneider-network, please see Table 6.

	Modularity (edge betweenness)	Clustering coeff.	Mean shortest distance	Fitness
Tamás Sneider-network	0.1043721	0.2795244	1.421875	(0.416) 0.333
Random networks (mean, Standard Deviation)	M=0.09567168 SD=0.03056954	M=0.23515; SD=0.04241483	M=2.456609; SD=0.7609575	-
Deviation (in SD)	0.2846116	1.046202	-1.359779	-

Table 6: Summary of metrics and values in the media network of Tamás Sneider-issue.

Now, our task is to locate the radical right media nodes within this cluster-free network. We provide the visualisation of the ego network of the radical right media products in the Tamás Sneider-issue (see Figure 4).

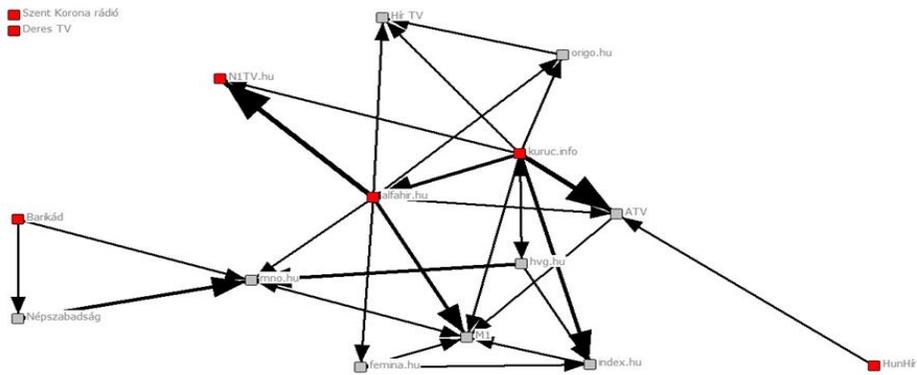


Figure 4: Ego network of radical right media in the Tamás Sneider-issue (sizes=in-degree centrality; red=radical right media).

The ego network is conclusive regarding the location of the radical right nodes: fringe and isolated positions can be detected in the Tamás Sneider-issue. We however must observe that there are dense ties and triangle shape of interaction flow between three online radical products: kuruc.info, alfahir.hu and N1TV.hu. Perhaps it is more than just pure speculation if we say that this triad contains the key actors of the media force of right wing radicalism in Hungary.

Those which are on the fringes prefer connecting to non-radical nodes as well. Moreover, most of the out-going ties of the radical right nodes go towards the prominent nodes of the Tamás Sneider-network as is illustrated by Table 7.

Most prominent media products of the Tamás Sneider-network	In-degree centrality (alpha=0.5) <sup>15</sup>	Number of in-coming ties of most prominent nodes from radical right media products
Euronews	9.486833	-
MTV 1	7.483315	2 (alfahir.hu) 1 (kuruc.info)
mmo.hu (online edition of Magyar Nemzet, right wing daily newspaper)	6.324555	1 (Barikád) 1 (alfahir.hu)
Index.hu (independent online news portal)	3	2 (kuruc.info)
ATV (private broadcaster, left leaning)	3	3 (kuruc.info) 1 (alfahir.hu) 1 (HunHir.hu)
Hír TV (private broadcaster, left leaning, right wing)	2.449490	1 (kuruc.info) 1 (alfahir.hu)

Table 7: In-degree centrality scores of the most prominent nodes and the number of in-coming ties of the most prominent nodes from radical right media products in the Tamás Sneider-network.

<sup>15</sup> In-degree centrality after removing the radical right-wing media.

## *Conclusion*

We set out to provide empirical evidence for the importance of location of radical right media products in the network structure of the media when explaining the rise and the performance of right wing radicalism in Hungary. We argue that interaction is key to comprehend the relationship between radical right media and other media products. In our concept, dense and strong interaction ties would indicate that right wing radical press products have entered into the mainstream media sphere by being integrated, and are hence important and legitimate actors in public discussions. Surprisingly, our findings confirm neither the 'mainstreaming the extreme' nor the 'alternative media universe' theses concerning the location of the radical right media. Relying on the data of the network analyses of two issues in Hungarian politics in 2014, it is safe to say that the radical right products possess neither the core nor the prominent place in the Hungarian media sphere. In our typical case, the radical right media outlets are located in isolated and peripheral positions of a core-periphery type of media network. Only three products connect to the mainstream media: *kuruc.info*, *hunhir.hu* and *alfahir.hu*. Radical right media outlets receive no incoming ties at all, which supports the claim of the quarantine of radical right actors as was highlighted by previous studies.

The Tamás Sneider-issue, the crucial case of our study, has been expected to give chance for the radical right media to make them more important and worthwhile to be quoted, cited, referred and hyperlinked which might create a constellation of mainstreaming the extreme in the public sphere in Hungary. The cluster-free cohesive media network of the crucial case shows fewer isolated radical right nodes (*Barikád* and *hunhir.hu*) than the typical case does. This indicates that the interactions of the radical right have been dynamised by the Tamás Sneider-issue. Unlike the typical case, here we identify a triangle formation of connection between three radical right media nodes (*NITV*, *kuruc.info* and *alfahir.hu*). The components of the triangle however, do not create an exclusive cluster of interactions: *kuruc.info* and *alfahir.hu* initiate out-going ties towards the non-radical right nodes as well. Our findings suggest that some actors of the radical right media scene aim to enter into the mainstream. The mainstream media, however, do not respond compliantly to that ambition. Again, quarantine works.

Despite all the differences, the radical right remains on the fringes in both networks. Radical right media outlets may connect to each other closely in issues important to them, but the interactions do not construct an ideologically homogeneous cluster. In other words, there is no sign of a well-identifiable tight-knit radical right media sub-network in the Hungarian media sphere. From the radical right media's point of view, there were no relevant differences between the typical and the crucial cases of our analysis. Regardless of the dissimilar structure of the two observed networks, the places of the radical right are very much alike.

Of course, the research has its limitations. The probability of other potential constellations can never be excluded: we might reach different findings in the case of a media network which is organised around an issue that is initiated by the Jobbik party. In addition, our study does not reflect on the context of the interactions. Further qualitative analysis is much needed to discover whether media outlets quote, refer or

cite each other in positive or negative ways. More empirical knowledge is needed to explore to what extent media interactions contribute to identity construction in right wing radicalism.

However, we believe that our results are sufficient to conclude that the mainstream media separate the right wing radical products and restrict their influence on public debates. This observation does not contradict previous studies on the radicalisation of media discourses in Hungary, on the contrary, it resonates with the investigation of Gábor Bernáth (2014): the media, or at least a part of the mass communication channels may accept the vocabulary and the narratives of the radical right, but the representatives of radicalism are treated as pariahs. Perhaps this phenomenon contributes to the evolution of Jobbik's strategy which makes tremendous efforts on establishing face-to-face and direct interactions with citizens.

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