

Business-Firm Parties and the Czech Party System after 2010¹

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Abstract: *The case study presented in this paper applies the business-firm party concept to two political entities active in the Czech party system after 2010: the Public Affairs Party (VV) and the Action of Dissatisfied Citizens (ANO 2011) movement. We assess whether these actors meet the criteria of the business-firm party model and, thus, whether they can be considered representatives of this type of political party in the Czech Republic. The study concludes with a comparison of VV and ANO 2011 as two possible variations on what is known as the business-firm party model.*

Key words: *Czech Republic, party politics, business-firm party, entrepreneurial party, Public Affairs Party, ANO 2011*

Introduction

Modern politics is inconceivable without political parties (cf. Schattschneider 1942). These parties are one of the main forms of political representation in contemporary representative democracies. In recent years, however, political partisanship has generally seen a significant qualitative and quantitative shift, including the transformation of consolidated democracies. The Czech party system is no exception in this regard, and this new trend in its development dates back to at least the end of 2009 and start of 2010. At the same time, the current Czech political scene can hardly be understood if we fail to comprehend its party politics.

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Before 2010, established political parties in the Czech Republic based their electoral support on relatively stable electorates. A mostly closed party system also provided very limited opportunity for new political parties to enter the parliamentary arena. The 2010 elections, however, brought a significant change on this front and may can therefore be regarded as critical (Key 1955; cf. Norris – Evans 1999). These elections saw the erosion of electoral support for the established parties, an increase in electoral volatility mainly due to a shift by voters to new parties and the entry of those new political parties into the Chamber of Deputies (the lower house) of Czech parliament (Charvát 2014). By the time of the 2013 elections, the existing system of party competition based on the electoral rivalry between the Czech Social Democratic Party (ČSSD) and the Civic Democratic Party (ODS) had been disrupted.

Current developments in Czech party politics represent not only a crisis for established political parties but also some sort of crisis for Czech political partisanship in its existing form. The organisation of the new parties is characterised by several phenomena never before encountered in Czech politics. Political parties no longer behave programmatically, and traditional ideologically-oriented parties known for their conflicts along socio-economic lines (the axis of political competition) are being replaced by new political entities that offer the simplest possible solutions instead of elaborate political programmes. Only TOP 09,² which entered the Chamber of Deputies in the 2010 elections, still essentially has the profile of a traditional political party, based in its case on a conservative political ideology combined with a liberal (pro-market) view of economics and a pro-European view of foreign policy. Furthermore, it should be noted that both successful new political entities in the 2013 election, ANO 2011 and Tomio Okamura's Dawn of Direct Democracy Party, emphasised their anti-party sentiments and the fact that they were not political parties but political movements.³ Last but not least, these new political entities are closely associated with the person of their founder, a political entrepreneur for whom they are a political project. This applies to three of the four new political entities which have succeeded since 2010: the Public Affairs Party (VV), which entered the Chamber of Deputies based on the 2010 elections and subsequently the Action of Dissatisfied Citizens 2011 (*Akce nespokojených občanů*, ANO 2011)⁴ and Dawn

2 The TOP 09 acronym reflects the foundations of the party's programme and the main principles which it stands for. These include tradition, responsibility and prosperity. The numerals 09 refer to the year (2009) when the party was founded.

3 Both parties made an effort to capitalise on general criticisms of Czech party politics by relying on details of the law on political party organisation in the Czech Republic. This law allows for the formal registration of a political movement that can operate under the same conditions as a political party.

4 The ANO 2011 acronym (*ano* also means "yes" in Czech) refers to the group's origins as a civic association called the Action of Dissatisfied Citizens in the autumn of 2011. This followed several public appearances by current ANO 2011 leader Andrej Babiš in which he condemned the corruption of the Czech state administration and political scene and criticised Czech society generally. Soon afterwards, the

of Direct Democracy (the “Dawn”) movements, which both broke through in the 2013 early elections. We are yet to be convinced that VV and the ANO 2011 movement are indeed examples of a specific political party type such as the business-firm or entrepreneurial party (see below). Dawn, in contrast, cannot be called a business-firm party mainly due to its low level of professionalism and rather one-theme political orientation. We also take into account the campaign’s financing through a bank loan rather than direct sponsorship from the political entrepreneur Tomio Okamura or any companies associated with him and the movement’s limited use of external experts, e.g. for the creation of election programmes (for more details, see Kopeček – Svačinová 2015).

The focus of this paper is therefore on political parties, which despite many shortcomings, remain the key actors in contemporary European politics in terms of democratic representation. In what follows, we investigate several questions: Why have the “new” parties been successful vis-à-vis the established parties in the Czech Republic, a situation particularly clear at the end of the first decade of the millennium? And how different are these parties from the others? Our underlying hypothesis is that the features of both the political parties under investigation, VV and ANO 2011, reflect a new model of political party, the so-called business-firm party.

With these aims in mind, this article proceeds as a case study applying the original concept of the business-firm party to VV and ANO 2011. The first part provides a brief introduction to the business-firm party model and its basic classificatory criteria, which later serve as the start of an analytic framework. We then give a short account of the two entities examined with a special emphasis on the defined organisational criteria. The study concludes with a comparison of VV and ANO 2011 as two possible variations on what is called the business-firm or entrepreneurial party model.

As the name of this new party model itself suggests, one of the signature features of these entities is their close links with business, trade or economic structures. According to Miroslav Novák (2011: 559), entrepreneurial parties use “the weakness of states to attempt to dominate them” and are therefore “a typical expression of globalisation since the late 20th century.” The linking of party-political and subsequently parliamentary and governmental institutions on the one hand, with the holders of economic and business interests on the other hand, was until recently characterised as a conflict of interests and a source of potential corruption, i.e. a development that was unhealthy for politics and had to be strictly limited. The paradox here is that both investigated political entities representing business parties in the Czech Republic (see below) chose the fight against corruption as one of their key campaign topics.

civic association was transformed into a political entity, and in May 2012, ANO 2011 was registered with the Czech Interior Ministry.

Defining the business-firm party concept

The emergence of business-firm or entrepreneurial parties can be seen as a natural turn of events based on a political party development typology which describes the gradual transformation of political parties across four domains. These cover the party's origin, ideology, organisation and electoral appeal. This development typology emphasises the ability of political parties and movements to adapt in these particular areas as well as to changing contemporary circumstances and the realities of political development, whether domestic (e.g. professionalism, the personalisation of politics and changing political communication and campaign methods) or related to international politics (particularly the impact of European integration) or socio-economic, demographic and cultural-value transformations of society and the state.

In the past, the development of the political culture and political environment happened gradually. After an initial stage in which only parties of cadres (also known as elite parties or parties of notables) were established, the next stages of social development produced mass parties, catch-all parties, electoral-professional parties and cartel parties (Fiala – Strmiska 1998: 85–86; Hopkin – Paolucci 1999: 308; Krouwel, 2006: 252–260; Novák 2011: 554–559; Krouwel 2012: 15–25). At the turn of the 21st century, a new development model – the “managerial type modern elite party” – was added (Klíma 2015: 46). This model is also known as the business-firm party model (Hopkin – Paolucci 1999). It was generally defined and delimited by Jonathan Hopkin and Caterina Paolucci (1999) based on a study of two examples, Adolph Suárez's Union de Centro Democrático Party (Union of the Democratic Centre) in Spain in the 1970s and Silvio Berlusconi's Forza Italia Party (Forward Italy or Let's Go Italy) in Italy in the 1990s. These authors applied the concepts of the cartel party, and in particular, the professional electoral party, which had previously been formulated by Angelo Panebianco (1988). This party model is a recent phenomenon in continental Europe though not in the Americas (Krouwel 2006: 260; 2012: 25) and it appears when a new party system is being created (Hopkin – Paolucci 1999: 307). Later, the concept of the business-firm parties was further developed, specified, classified and systematised by André Krouwel (2006; 2012), who also coined the term “entrepreneurial party” as more or less a synonym for the business-firm party.

The business-firm party model is said to have six defining criteria (Hopkin – Paolucci, 1999: 332–334; Krouwel, 2006: 260–261; 2012: 25–27; cf. Havlík – Hloušek 2014: 561). The first of these is the existence and activity of a political entrepreneur who founds a party and significantly contributes to its management and financing. Business-firm parties generate financial resources from the private sector and here differ significantly from cartel parties that use state resources for their activities. As Miroslav Novák (2011: 558) points out, a major

source of the business-firm party's income is funding from an entrepreneur or entrepreneurs who was/were present at the birth of the party and strongly influence/s its political activities. This element is usually accompanied by the marked personalisation and centralisation of the political entity since the politician-entrepreneur stands at the centre of decision-making. This high degree of personalisation is also reflected in the electoral appeal of business-firm parties, which mobilise supporters through their leaders.

On the issue of financing, the business-firm party model varies significantly from the cartel party model, however when it comes to the other three defining traits, these models are relatively similar. The second key feature of business-firm parties is their low rate of party institutionalisation, which logically relates to the specific and dominant position of the political entrepreneur, their influence and the role that they play within party "structures." "Party bureaucracies are kept to a bare minimum, with technical tasks often 'contracted out' to external experts with no ties to the party" (Hopkin – Paolucci 1999: 333). According to André Krouwel (2006: 260–261; 2012: 25), this element, that is, the fact that "all party activities and tasks are brought under formal (commercial) contract in terms of labour, services and goods to be delivered to the party," seems to be the essence of the business-firm party model. The outsourcing of some party affairs and activities, i.e. their provision by external experts, or, in business terms, suppliers with no ties to the party, can, thus, be seen as another sign of the business-firm party model. The fourth defining criterion is the limited size of the membership base and a general resentment and indifference around the question of whether to significantly expand the membership or include in intraparty activities and decision-making itself. The consequence is that "a high proportion of party members [are] office-holders who see the party as a vehicle for acquiring political positions" (Hopkin – Paolucci 1999: 311).

Turning to the fifth criterion, business-firm parties are characterised by the absence of any unifying official ideology; instead, they manifest a related policy-making flexibility that allows for the changing of political positions based on the current public mood. Party policies are not pre-set but determined by the results of "electoral market" surveys. The party is, thus, conceived as an organisation with only one basic function – to mobilise immediate and superficial broad public support during elections. One useful tool for achieving this goal is direct control over the media. A final important defining feature of business-firm parties is their approach to voters as consumers rather than as individuals who should be identified with the ideology and values of a given party.

Although it is not a basic criterion set by Hopkin and Paolucci (1999), the context of the political party's emergence is another key factor that should be observed here. We argue that the party's entrepreneurial nature is already firmly anchored in the way that the business-firm party was established. Moreover, it is this mode of establishment that makes business-firm parties significantly

different from earlier types of political parties. Business-firm parties arise from an external source, having their origin in the private initiatives of political entrepreneurs who see politics as another business opportunity (cf. Keman – Krouwel 2007). Since for business-firm parties, the party and its ideology are no longer goals in themselves (see above), the party “becomes a kind of business firm, in which the public goods produced are incidental to the real objectives of those leading it” (Hopkin – Paolucci 1999: 311; Krouwel 2006: 261; 2012: 26). Furthermore, in addition to the fact that business-firm parties arise from private initiatives and private resources are used to establish them, political elites are recruited primarily from the business environment (Krouwel 2012: 36).

On the topic of party origins, André Krouwel distinguishes further between two basic sub-types of business-firm parties. The first of these is “based on an already existing commercial company, whose structures are used for a political project” (Krouwel 2006: 260; 2012: 25). In other words, the political entrepreneur is “in fact a businessman, and the organisation of the party is largely conditioned [on] the prior existence of [a] business firm” (Hopkin – Paolucci 1999: 320). The second sub-type is “a new and separate organisation specially constructed for a political endeavour” (Krouwel 2006: 260; 2012: 25). Silvio Berlusconi’s Forza Italia is a model of the first type of business party while Lijst Pim Fortuyn (Pim Fortuyn List) in the Netherlands might be a typical example of the second type (Krouwel 2012: 25).

In the context of the Czech Republic, which we describe further on, the case of VV presents us with a political party that was not originally connected with an entrepreneur or linked to a business. At a certain stage in its development and existence, however, the party was taken over by corporate structures and used to promote their influence in politics. Given the nature of the political parties that are analysed in what follows, it is to some degree justifiable and understandable that we enlist terms from the business environment. In this way, we can speak of certain forms of business acquisitions where the political party became an *acquired asset*.

Prerequisites for the emergence of business-firm parties in the Czech Republic

The development of political parties in the Czech Republic can also be analysed in the context of the particular stages of development of Czechoslovak and later Czech society. In contrast with the theoretical nature of the development typology, however, we can observe here certain variations, modifications and especially shifts in timing which are mainly due to half a century of limitations or prohibitions on the development of a pluralistic political party system followed by a discrete period in which the party system and its individual actors were formed in connection with the post-1989 transition to democracy.

In the context of contemporary Czech (and generally Central European) politics, it is also important to bear in mind the public's particular perceptions of political parties as such. As a result of negative historical experiences, political parties have pejorative or at least not entirely positive connotations, and this remains an important reason for the low level of long-term trust in political parties (Pridham 2009: 281–282). During the communist regime, membership of the (Communist) Party was often coerced since it was a prerequisite for the career growth of the person concerned as well as that of their descendants and relatives. The controversy over the role of political parties in the political process was hardly exhausted during the first phase of the transition to democracy in 1990, and it has been a permanent and integral fixture of Czech politics since 1989. Moreover, as Vlastimil Havlík and Vít Hloušek recall (2013: 121), the criticism of political parties in the Czech discourse of the early 2010s was no weaker than it had been twenty years earlier. Recently, however, the debate over the role of political parties has taken on an important new dimension (see below).

If we focus on the electoral level, the advent of business-firm parties can be detected from the growing instability of electoral support for political parties. While the transformation of political parties from the catch-all to the cartel types was accompanied by a stabilisation or in some cases even a decline in the level of overall electoral and especially extra-system volatility,⁵ an upswing in such volatility in the age when political competition is increasingly staged among the established parties implies citizens' growing dissatisfaction with these mainstream parties. This, in turn, would suggest an opportunity for the entry of new political parties, including business-firm parties. Although we cannot automatically attribute the appearance of business-firm parties to this increase in extra-system and overall electoral volatility and we should also consider other aspects of possible shifts in party support, electoral volatility is a significant indicator of potentially transformative trends in the party system.

Looking closer at the stability of electoral support for Czech political parties, we find that overall extra-system and electoral volatility have both exhibited a downward trend since the 1996 Chamber of Deputies elections though there was an increase in overall electoral volatility between the 2002 and 2006 elections. That change was, however, mainly due to a broader shift in voter support among the established parties and particularly towards the two main poles of party competition, ODS and CSSD, which reached their peak electoral support in 2006. In contrast, extra-system volatility increased only slightly. The 2010

5 Overall electoral volatility reflects the aggregate rate of movement of electoral support among the political party candidates in two surveyed (compared) elections, which are usually consecutive. This overall volatility consists of two sub-components: intra-system volatility, which reflects the shifting of electoral support between established parties, and extra-system volatility, which indicates the level of the shifts in electoral support from established to newly formed parties. (For more details, see Powell – Tucker 2014; cf. Mainwaring et al. 2016).

parliamentary elections, however, significantly modified this picture. There was a striking rise in the level of extra-system volatility, which exceeded the rate of in-system volatility; overall electoral volatility saw a similar increase. The 2013 elections brought a decline in extra-system as well as overall electoral volatility, however both values remained very high. Since 2010, there have, thus, been signs of transformative trends in the Czech party system (see Charvát 2014).

Although at the outset of this paper, we introduced the concept of business-firm parties by reference to a text which focused on examples from Italy and Spain (see Hopkin – Paolucci 1999), we might also add that these entities have found better progeny in the post-communist space. In this context, Michal Klíma (2015) refers primarily to the phenomenon of state capture by which a non-transparent business segment is able to assert its interests in the decision-making realm. This leads to a systemic failure of the established parties and the demand for new parties; in other words, the established political parties are themselves seen as the source of this crisis. According to Klíma (2015: 25, 34–35, 45, 225), the emergence of business parties has been a public response to the “clientalisation” of the established parties, who are, thus, known as “clientelist” parties, and of democracy in general, and this has been characteristic especially of the “post-transformation state of the post-communist regime.”

Several reasons can be found for the onset of an obsession with business structures in the form of the personalised, institutionally weak and programmatically flexible parties of the Czech political environment at the end of the first decade of the 21st century. One important determinant of the electoral success of these ill-defined new parties in the post-communist context has been the perception of corruption, i.e. the belief that corruption was at a high level or was growing long term (see, e.g., Ilonszki – Olson 2012; Kostadinova 2012; Sikk 2012; Hanley 2014; Hanley – Sikk 2016). Another equally important factor which helps explain the emergence of the new parties and moreover closely relates to the corruption issue, has been the presence of a political crisis (Havlík – Hloušek 2014: 554). Last but not least, we should also mention the growing professionalism of election campaign leadership and the personalisation of Czech politics since at least the 2006 Chamber of Deputies elections as a significant factor contributing to the breakthrough of entrepreneurial political parties.

As in the debate over the role of political parties, past experience has an important influence on corruption, and a key concern here is the process of party appointments to public positions or so-called party patronage (see e.g. Kopecký – Spirova 2011). Under the communist regime, corruption was quite rampant: the problem grew gradually until the final phase in the 1980s when the regime had significant corrupt involvement, and some of these corrupt networks even survived the fall of communist power. Many authors agree that the level of corruption rose again after communist rule ended (Naxera 2012: 254–256, 265).

The most consulted empirical indicator of perceptions of corruption is the composite Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI), which is published regularly by the non-governmental non-profit organisation Transparency International.⁶ Although the CPI is sometimes criticised for only reflecting the level of perceived corruption and not capturing the true level, it is clearly a meaningful indicator. In fact, the actual level of corruption is very difficult, if not impossible, to record empirically. We should add that in the context of the present study, the CPI provides exactly the information that we need to capture. The actual level of corruption is not the cause of the diversion of voters from the established parties to the “anti-corruption parties,” as Andreas Bågenholm (2013) calls the parties that have stressed the fight against corruption as a major election campaign theme. That cause is the public perception of corruption.

In the case of the Czech Republic, some authors consider the period of the Opposition Agreement (1998–2002) to be the turning point for perceived corruption, noting that this agreement put the country on the path to a more corrupt and collusive form of government (see Hanley 2014; Klíma 2015). According to the CPI, we can discern an increase in perceived corruption in the Czech Republic throughout the reported period, i.e. from 1996 until the crucial year of 2002, when the trend reversed. Starting in 2002, the level of perceived corruption in the Czech Republic began to decline gradually. This culminated in 2007 and 2008, when perceived corruption dropped to the 1997 level. Even so, the Czech Republic has been assessed as a country with a relatively high rate of perceived corruption. Since 2009, the trend has turned back and perceived corruption in the Czech Republic is growing again.

According to the CPI, in around 2010, the degree of perceived corruption in the Czech Republic was relatively high when compared with developing countries, and this rate continues to increase. Some space has, thus, been needed for the possible emergence of new parties. As Marko Klasnja, Joshua Tucker and Kevin Deegan-Krause show (2016; cf. Belanger 2004), for new parties to succeed, there is a need for something more than citizens who see corruption as a major problem. Voters are galvanised to vote on the corruption issue because of the appearance of a new political party which politicises corruption. While Klasnja, Tucker and Deegan-Krause (2016) draw these conclusions from

6 The CPI has been measured since 1995, and the Czech Republic has been included in this research since 1996. The composite index is based on the results of expert surveys about corruption (the respondents are typically academics, policy analysts, ratings agencies, prominent business leaders from the Czech Republic and abroad, top and mid-level managers, journalists and ordinary citizens). These surveys are undertaken by a variety of reputable independent international institutions. The CPI assesses issues including abuse of public office and public funds, corruption in institutions and fields of governance, the transparency of public institutions, the ability of governmental institutions to punish corruption and the effectiveness of anti-corruption measures. Since 2012, index values have ranged from 0 (indicating a high level of corruption in the country) to 100 (indicating a country with almost no corruption). Until 2011, the rating scale ranged from 0 (a high level of corruption in the country) to 10 (almost no corruption in the country).

an analysis of Slovak politics from 2004 to 2011, there is little doubt that their findings relate to recent developments in the Czech Republic. In his study of Canadian, British and Australian political practices, Éric Bélanger (2004) adds that if a new party fails to appear, voters do not cast their ballot for the main competing parties but instead abstain from voting altogether in the elections.

Shortly before 2010, new themes of corruption, clientelism and party patronage, often associated with the effects of the established political parties, began to come to the fore of Czech political discourses and agendas. A strong anti-corruption and anti-clientelism rhetoric was especially present among extra-parliamentary protest groups, and it was strengthened by the freeing up of the police force and state prosecutor, as well as the intensive work of investigative journalists and the establishment of various civic activities and initiatives.⁷ All this contributed to the discovery and exposure of a series of corruption cases closely linked to the political parties previously in office. These cases implicated not only the parties in power immediately before 2010, but all those entities that had taken turns at holding office since 1990.

These factors all contributed significantly to the loss of Czech public trust in political institutions, including political parties, and democracy in general (see Linek 2010; Štefek 2012), and consequently, to the onset of a political crisis. Aside from the more widespread association of established political parties, their leaders and the political elite in general with corruption, negative perceptions of Czech policy were exacerbated by the chronic inability of Czech governments to take any action (Havlík – Hloušek 2014: 555). The early fall of the second Mirek Topolánek government deepened voters' frustration with established parties. In contrast, Jan Fischer's newly established interim caretaker government was significantly more popular than its predecessor (for more details, see Just 2012: 423; Hloušek – Kopeček 2014). It created the impression that politics could be different from what had been seen to date from the established political parties; there was a sense, moreover, that the political realm might be made uncomplicated and free of mutual attacks.

Finally, there was an expansion of the role, importance and influence of political marketing. The first instance when professionalism in electoral campaigning could be observed (at least to some degree) in the Czech Republic was in the 2002 general election. However, it was only with the 2006 elections that we began to sometimes speak of a so-called marketing revolution in campaign leadership and of the Americanisation of campaigns in the Czech Republic. As well as the intensive use of negative and comparative advertising tools, one important aspect of these campaigns has been pronounced personalisation, with the electoral contest between the major parties ODS and ČSSD being

7 These initiatives included Reconstruction of the State, the Endowment Fund Against Corruption, Revival, Give Us Back Our State, Transparency's Anti-Corruption Academic League and many others.

transformed into a conflict between the leaders Mirek Topolánek (ODS) and Jiří Paroubek (ČSSD). The personalisation trend in politics has largely continued in the period since the 2006 election, creating a favourable environment for the success of the entrepreneurial political parties.

It is helpful to take a closer look at the two Czech political parties which probably represent the business-firm party model most faithfully. The first of these is the VV Party, which succeeded in the 2010 elections to the Chamber of Deputies, claiming 10.88% of votes and twenty-four seats in what was then the best election result for a non-parliamentary party since 1992. The second is the ANO 2011 movement, which made even more significant inroads in the 2013 election, garnering 18.65% of votes (the second highest share in the election after ČSSD, which held 20.45% of votes) and forty-seven seats.

Public Affairs

Public Affairs (VV) can be considered the first relevant political party in the Czech Republic with a closely linked business element. At the outset, it should be noted that the party's roots had nothing in common with these types of parties. Public Affairs was established in 2001 (and officially registered a year later) as a local political entity active in several districts of Prague (Matušková, 2010: 109; Havlík – Hloušek 2014: 556–557); its aim was to improve living conditions for young families with children in Prague. Until 2010, the entity was active only at the local level, initially operating solely in the Prague 1 district before extending to other districts of the capital as well as some smaller cities and villages (Černošice and Kostelec nad Orlicí).

In 2009, VV came under the influence of ABL, the largest private security agency in the country and ABL owner Vít Bárta. The latter originally expressed interest in gaining political influence in an internal company document titled “Strategy 2009–2014,” which he presented at an ABL managers’ meeting in October 2008. In that document, disclosed to the public through the daily *Mladá fronta DNES* in 2011, Bárta detailed his visions, goals and methods for expanding his economic and political influence (cf. Havlík – Hloušek 2014: 563; Klíma 2015: 107). One of the key tools and resources for strengthening his profile was said to be VV, where he later actually gained some influence without becoming a member initially.

Vít Bárta’s personality and activities can therefore be seen as fulfilling the first criterion for a business-firm party, namely the existence of a political entrepreneur. Bárta wasn’t present at the birth of the party, but he was there during its shift from purely local clusters into a relevant party operating within national political structures. At this point, it should be noted that Vít Bárta first exerted his influence on the party from outside as a purely informal leader. He became a member of the party in the second half of 2010 after he was elected as a VV

representative to the Chamber of Deputies and appointed as a member of government. The fact that a non-party member was elected to the Chamber as a party candidate and that he also became a member of the government was not surprising in itself. Vít Bárta, however, also took part as an outsider in the post-election coalition negotiations, which can be considered clear evidence of his impact on the political direction of the party. After joining the government which he had helped to negotiate and shape as an independent individual, he joined the party. Three years later, he became its chairman at a time when only representatives of a breakaway faction and the Bárta-led “remains” of VV comprised the opposition.

Even while he did not have a role in the party, Bárta influenced VV’s formal leaders, especially its chairman Radek John, who as a former presenter and at the time reporter for the very popular TV Nova investigative programme *Na vlastní oči*, was supposed to represent VV’s anti-corruption and anti-clientelist agenda. Thanks to this TV show in which John “fought for the rights of ordinary citizens,” he also enjoyed relatively high popularity (Matušková, 2010: 110). A confluence of factors including a popular leader who was moreover surrounded by young women candidates whose physical appearance was stressed in promotions, a critical attitude to established parties and politicians (whom VV labelled “dinosaurs” in the campaign), “a new project” (Sikk 2012) and a focus on appealing topics, can explain the party’s success in the 2010 parliamentary elections. Nevertheless, quite soon after its political debut, the party began to face crises that were often based on the conflict between its practices and its previously highlighted anti-corruption and anti-clientelist appeal (for more details, see Klíma 2015: 106).

Even when he did not hold a formal leadership position in VV, Bárta’s influence as a political entrepreneur was reflected less in the weak organisational structure of the party (i.e. one of the elements of business parties) than in the gradual dependence of that structure on Bárta. After all, in contrast with the later ANO 2011 movement, Public Affairs became a business-firm party *after* it was taken over by an entrepreneur (Bárta); up to that point, it had operated similarly to other political parties, even in terms of its organisational structure. After Bárta’s takeover, the party became substantially dependent on his financing whether in the form of donations from himself as an individual or from his company ABL (Bureš 2012: 149). Before the 2010 parliamentary elections, Bárta was one of the four largest sponsors of the party, with donations representing a key and, compared with the situation in established parties, significantly above-average income source for VV. After the party’s entry into the Chamber of Deputies, state contributions, of course, became the main item in the revenue part of its budget, and their share of its total revenue more or less corresponded with the picture for established political parties (Outlý – Charvát 2016).

Bárta also gradually strengthened his institutional position by “special” means, including the fact that one of the party’s vice-chairpersons – and after

the election, the deputy speaker of the Chamber of Deputies – was his girlfriend, fiancée and later wife Kateřina Klasnová. Party leadership meetings often took place at Bárta's home instead of at the party's offices and this was common even when Vít Bárta was not yet the formal head of the party. These additional factors confirm the hypothesis that Bárta enjoyed a dominant position and influence as a political businessman standing at the centre of party affairs and decision-making.

Outsourcing could also be observed in VV, albeit only for some partly party-related activities. This outsourcing did not always involve sources that were fully external since in some cases, Bárta used the services of his own company ABL, which had a *de facto* connection with VV. As a business party, VV also fulfilled the requirement of having a relatively small number of members. Although precise member numbers data are not traceable, the figures available suggest that during its existence, the party had between 800 and 1,600 members (Chvojka 2016: 75–76). Aside from its regular party members, the party also set up a system of so-called registered supporters, who numbered up to 16,000. These people did not, however, have the same rights and obligations as members. The party used them to conduct indicative polls on certain issues, but positions arrived at in this way were not binding on party authorities. These intra-party polls were in fact more of a façade which complemented the emphasis on elements of direct democracy in the party's campaign rather than an actual and relevant part of the internal decision-making process.

The party did not identify with any ideologies, and nor did it sign up to any party affiliations. Its election agenda lacked any unifying conceptual framework and was more of a reflection of various voters' interests and demands. This was clear, for example, from the less than coherent language of its election programme (Eibl 2010: 74). Jan Bureš describes Public Affairs as “less transparent” and the party's policies as a combination of “(often contradictory) liberal, radical-social and populist rhetoric” (Bureš 2012: 148). The reluctance to be identified on the Left–Right spectrum was demonstrated by party chairman Radek John himself, who at a VV press conference in May 2010 (one month before the election) described the election programme as follows: “We don't want to move to the right nor to the left, we want to move forward” (quoted in Kraus 2010). In a study that measured the ideological distance between the parties based on their programmes, Otto Eibl placed VV in the middle of the political spectrum (Eibl 2010: 83–84). The exit polls during the 2010 elections and subsequent sociological surveys also indicated that support for VV came from the former voters of both right-wing and left-wing parties (Bureš 2012: 142,150; Matušková 2010: 110).

Turning to the party's attitude to voters as consumers, i.e. the last of the characteristics of business-firm parties, we find that VV in fact worked with this concept in its internal documents. The party maintained that voters did not seek

out ideologies but they wanted to be offered immediate and simple solutions. In formulating its policy objectives and strategies, VV relied heavily on surveys and the voting preferences of its registered supporters. Its references to the desires and demands of the public highlighted a space outside the parties. A key point of VV's election agenda was the introduction of other elements of direct democracy into the political system not only at Czech national level (Public Affairs, 2010: 5, 13) but also at European Union level (Public Affairs 2010: 40).

The Action of Dissatisfied Citizens 2011 (ANO 2011)

ANO 2011 was founded in 2011 by Andrej Babiš as a political movement critical of political corruption. The reference to “dissatisfied citizens” in the movement's name might suggest that it arose from the bottom up based on the activities of civil society but in fact the opposite is true. From the start, this initiative has been fully in the hands of Andrej Babiš and nothing has changed even since the movement's development and establishment as a relevant player in the party system after its entry in the Chamber of Deputies in 2013. The status and role of the political entrepreneur-founder have been even more pronounced in this case than they were in the earlier one of Public Affairs and Vít Bárta.

Andrej Babiš, the owner of Agrofert group and its many subsidiaries which are active in the agriculture and food sectors, the chemical industry, healthcare and the media, founded the ANO 2011 movement and from the beginning, he has been the party's head and the main donor to its activities. As ANO 2011 chairman, he represented the movement in the post-election negotiations, and after joining the government, took up the positions of first deputy prime minister and finance minister. He has always had unanimous support for his position at the forefront of the movement. ANO 2011 has, thus, been organised around the principles of strong personalisation and centralisation,⁸ with founder Andrej Babiš taking a dominant position from the outset, whether through formal or informal mechanisms. Since 2015, the movement has also followed the principle that the chairman is irreplaceable in political negotiations; an exception is allowed for “specified matters” where the vice-chairman may obtain written authorisation from the presidium. Andrej Babiš, thus, spoke honestly when he told *The Financial Times* in a mid-February 2016 interview that “the party is connected to my person. The party is me” (Foy 2016).

The dominant role of Andrej Babiš within the movement has been observable since the spring of 2013. Before this, there was a “rift” caused by the results of the ANO 2011 leadership elections at the March 2013 movement convention. As a consequence, Babiš began to pay full attention to building up his political

8 The ANO 2011 presidium has even confirmed the chairpersons of its regional organisations in their positions, for example.

career while also controlling ANO 2011 as though it was a 100%-owned company. Though Babiš himself was elected as party chairman without any complications at this convention, to his great surprise, the delegates did not elect any of the Agrofert holdings-associated candidates whom Babiš had chosen for the vice-chair positions (these individuals included Babiš's closest political collaborator, Jaroslav Faltýnek, who until then had, in fact, exercised executive power in the movement). In a bid to ensure the power of territorial groups vis-a-vis the operation and decision-making of central authorities, the delegates awarded the majority (four out of five) of the vice-chair positions to regional organisation representatives contrary to Babiš's wishes as chair. The upshot was conflicts in the ANO 2011 presidium when these vice-chairmen showed their tendency to behave independently of Babiš. In contrast, Babiš opted to ignore the other members of the presidium when making decisions, comparing them to regional godfathers who had attempted to dominate the movement and justifying his own actions on the axiom "I pay, I decide" (Koděra 2013; Menschik 2015: 15). The four vice-chairmen continued to defy the chair for twenty-six days before resigning from both their positions and the movement. These vice-chair positions remained vacant, however, until the next convention in 2015 (no extraordinary convention session was convened). No convention was even held after the movement lost its statutory vice-chairwoman in autumn 2014, when the last vice-chair of ANO 2011 Věra Jourová left her role to take up a position as European commissioner. Since that time, the ANO 2011 presidium has consisted of a single person, the movement's chairman Andrej Babiš.

As founder and chairman of the movement, Babiš therefore affects virtually all aspects of ANO 2011's existence and makes the majority of decisions and the movement depends on him financially. The campaign before the 2013 elections was financed by Andrej Babiš largely from his own funds with most other revenue coming from the companies of Babiš Agrofert holdings. At this point, it should be noted that the movement had the most expensive campaign of any of the candidate parties (Gregor – Matušková 2014: 59, 71). Just before the elections, however, a turnabout in the party's revenue sources occurred, when ANO 2011 accounts revealed major sponsors who were not part of the Babiš business empire. The success in the 2013 parliamentary elections significantly changed the revenue structure. Although the level of ANO 2011's sponsorship remains exceptionally high when compared with the picture for established parties, the main source of its income is state contributions, which represent a similar share of revenue to the situation in those parties (Outlý – Charvát 2016).

A number of high-ranking representatives in the movement as well as its candidates and officers in various state government positions originally worked as managers of companies belonging to Agrofert group, a link that significantly strengthens Babiš's position. These include, in particular, one of the party's founding members and since 2015, its first vice-chair and chair of the

ANO 2011 parliamentary caucus, Jaroslav Faltýnek, who was one of the Agrofert board members. Another such person is the current Minister of the Environment Richard Brabec, who was brought into politics by Babiš from his position as CEO of Lovochemie, a company belonging to Agrofert holding. The circle of people that Andrej Babiš recruited into politics and state administration from various positions in Agrofert group is, however, much broader.

The Babiš movement also meets the business party criteria when it comes to the issue of the outsourcing of many of the party's activities. The most obvious example is the movement's permanent co-operation with professional public relations agencies and political communications experts. These arrangements go beyond the scope of election campaigns where the use of external agencies is also common among other political parties. ANO 2011 uses these agencies' services in the periods between elections. Media outlets owned by Andrej Babiš play a specific role in the movement's marketing and public relations (ANO 2011 does not communicate with its supporters primarily through its membership structure but instead uses "his" media). These outlets were acquired by Babiš less than five months before the 2013 Chamber of Deputies elections. The Babiš-owned Mafra media group includes two influential national dailies (*Mladá fronta DNES* and *Lidové noviny*), two related news websites (*idnes.cz* and *lidovky.cz*) and the free newspapers *Metro* and *5 plus 2*. Babiš later also purchased the most popular Czech radio station, Radio Impuls.

The extremely exclusive nature of membership is also characteristic of the ANO 2011 movement: becoming a member is quite a complex process, and there is a semi-annual waiting period for prospective members, which may be shortened or extended based on a decision of the presidium. In addition to consenting to the party's ethical code and statutes, applicants must submit specific documents such as their CV, a statement concerning indebtedness and impunity since 2015 and even their criminal record. The party's very first members, the co-ordinators who founded the ANO 2011 regional organisations, also had to pass psychological tests, a situation largely due to the party's origins in Babiš's Agrofert holdings (Kopeček – Svačinová 2015: 188). As such, the movement registered 732 members in the first year of its existence as a fully-fledged political entity (approx. from mid-2012 to mid-2013). This was despite the presence of around 7,000 candidates for ANO 2011 membership at the time of the 2013 elections. The most recent (end-of-2015) data show that the membership base stands at only 2,750 members (Chvojka 2016: 65). This corresponds entirely with the characteristics of a business-firm party.

The movement also operates with a relatively small number of members who are all targeted deliberately. The rhetoric of its leading representatives clearly shows a preference for maintaining a small membership base and even restricting numbers further. Even before the 2013 elections, Andrej Babiš claimed that "our aim isn't to have thousands of members, but to have supporters and

prospective voters” (quoted in Válková 2013). The then vice-chairwoman of the party Věra Jourová made a similar point in a statement to idnes.cz before the 2013 elections where she described the ANO 2011 movement HR strategy as follows: “Quantity is not our priority, we are interested in people who have experience and a strong professional sense.” She added that “the reason for not accepting [someone] may be [their] extensive political tourism or bad references from previous political activities. Of course, there is also the criterion of integrity, and regarding the elderly, we also look at their influence in the Communist Party. Basically, we don’t accept members who were in leading positions of the party” (quoted in Válková 2013). This distancing from Communist Party officials creates some embarrassment about the communist past of not only Andrej Babiš but also some other movement representatives although it is true that none of these individuals had leading positions in the Communist Party hierarchy. To date, ANO 2011 has maintained the strategy of maintaining a limited membership base, warning repeatedly about opportunists who want to join ANO 2011 in order to take advantage of the movement. Some of these people, it claims, have already infiltrated ANO 2011.

It must be noted here that as well as controlling the size of the membership base and the process for admitting new members, the ANO 2011 leadership seeks to review accepted members, who are, for example, obligated to inform the leadership of any infraction or enforcement or criminal proceedings affecting them. ANO 2011 currently has systems in place which make it fairly simple for the movement to expel any member. The expulsion is decided on by the presidium, and the reason may be merely “acting against the interests of” ANO 2011; decisions on this issue have immediate effect (Kopeček – Svačinová 2015: 188–189). Thus, at a meeting with movement members before the Senate and regional elections in early May 2016, ANO 2011 chairman Andrej Babiš openly stated that one of the “most important tasks before the next parliamentary elections is the cleansing of our movement of (...) opportunists” (Bartoníček 2016).

The limited size of ANO 2011’s membership base is partially offset by its co-operation with independents, who run in elections as ANO 2011 candidates. This is perhaps most obvious in the case of ANO 2011’s representation in European Parliament (EP); of the four MEPs who were elected for ANO 2011 in the 2014 EP elections, none was a member of the movement at the time of the elections (Czech Statistical Office 2014a). The same situation precisely applies to the four senators who were elected for the ANO 2011 movement in 2014: all of them were independents as well (Czech Statistical Office 2014b).

As in the case of the Public Affairs Party, the ANO 2011 movement’s programme has not been built on any unifying ideological base. The tone of its original policy documents was mainly negative and oppositional, criticising the state of Czech politics and the way the country was being managed. The

campaign drew mainly on citizens' dissatisfaction with the current political situation (Gregor – Matušková 2014: 60). In its election programme, the movement offered short-term quick solutions rather than long-term conceptual and strategic plans. Reflecting on the development of this election platform, Lubomir Kopeček and Petra Svačinová (2015: 197) describe the situation before the early elections in 2013. A product marketing survey found that some points of the programme might be confusing and even discouraging for voters and so it was continuously edited. The result was that the final version was completed just before the elections. This, in fact, reflects two key features of a business-firm party: the crucial role of communications and marketing experts and consultants and the flexibility of the movement's policies.

Like the Public Affairs Party, ANO 2011 did not seek out a position on the Right–Left continuum. After the EP elections, however, the movement joined the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE) faction. Nevertheless, it remains unclear to what degree this was an ideological step and to what extent it was a pragmatic one. Representation in this European faction, the third largest in European Parliament, may be an attempt to gain some form of international recognition. ANO 2011's integration into European Parliament's ALDE group was significantly advanced by the leader of the ANO 2011 line-up in the EP elections, the former chief negotiator during the Czech Republic's EU integration talks and later European commissioner Pavel Telička.

Although, ANO 2011, like VV, has been programmatically quite vague, its voting base, unlike that of VV, has been formed mainly from the former supporters of the right-wing parties ODS and TOP 09 (see above). Just under a quarter of votes (23%) for ANO 2011 have come from people who voted for ODS in 2010; almost one-fifth (19%) of supporters were recruited from the ranks of former TOP 09 voters. The same percentage are former VV voters (Gregor 2014: 207). In sum, the Babiš movement has received more than three-fifths of its votes from former supporters of the parties of the 2010–2013 coalition government comprised of ODS, TOP 09 and VV. The rest, forming just a few percent of the ANO 2011 electoral base, are previous non-voters or supporters of other political parties (Gregor 2014: 207). It may be that the profile of these voters has ultimately played a role in the movement's gradual shift to the right of the political spectrum. These right-wing elements in the party may also be an attempt to challenge the main competitor on the political scene, the left-wing ČSSD.

The ANO 2011 movement's election strategy clearly focuses on the market and consumers. This is also reflected in the extensive use of public opinion research, an emphasis on advertising and marketing and the recourse to simple slogans without concrete and substantive content, for example "YES. It will be better!," "We're not politicians. We work hard," "Clear rules for everyone. No

exceptions,” “We can give people jobs,” “So our kids aren’t ashamed of us” and “We can do it simply.” For political communications and campaigning purposes, the name of the movement was simplified to ANO without formally renaming the movement that continues to be registered as ANO 2011.

The voter as consumer is the centre-piece of the ANO 2011 campaign in the lead-up to the upcoming (autumn 2016) regional elections. The movement’s main election slogan is “We want a better Czechia.” This is accompanied online by the message “What do you want to change in your region? Just tell us, and things will start to happen” and an interactive box labelled “Add a comment” where voters can leave feedback for the movement.

Comparing Public Affairs and ANO 2011

Although at first sight it seems that Public Affairs and ANO 2011 were similar entities, their fates have been different. ANO 2011 is now in its third year in government in 2016 and it remains in the lead in terms of preferences. At the same point in its history, Public Affairs was already declining. Under the leadership of the then deputy prime minister Karolina Peake, one faction of the party founded the Liberal Democrats (LIDEM) while a second faction – the remainder of VV – was perilously hitched to Bárta’s problems and concerns. The two entities had disputes with one another and both were below the threshold for entering the Chamber of Deputies. According to the election model of the Centre for Research on Public Opinion at the Institute of Sociology of the Czech Academy of Sciences (CVVM), ANO 2011 has maintained strong and stable support since the 2013 elections. In twenty-eight public polls carried out from November 2013 to June 2016, ANO 2011 occupied the top spot in twenty-three cases while ČSSD “won” in the remaining five polls. According to the CVVM, ANO 2011 had its lowest level of support in March 2016 (at 22.5% according to the CVVM’s electoral model) while the highest levels were reached in May 2014, March 2015 and May 2015 (33% in all cases) (Červenka 2016: 3). For now, there is no indication that the ANO movement will follow the fate of the Public Affairs Party.

Where does the difference between Public Affairs and ANO 2011 lie? The first major distinction concerns these parties’ origins. While VV originated as a small local political party which was later taken over by political entrepreneur Vít Bárta, who made it a nationwide party, the ANO 2011 movement actually began as the top political project of entrepreneur Andrej Babiš. Although political entrepreneurs played a dominant role in both these political parties, and they were moreover surrounded by a narrow set of managers from their own businesses in line with the business-firm party concept, VV was never officially led by a charismatic and strong personality despite the presence of a political entrepreneur. Vít Bárta was initially kept in the background while the party

was officially driven by Radek John.⁹ When Bárta finally did become chairman, the party was already in disarray due to its previous affairs. In contrast, ANO 2011's Andrej Babiš has been a strong leader from the beginning; he not only drives the party from behind the scenes but is also its official chairman and its main face to the outside world. ANO 2011 has also been more successful in maintaining efficient and professional political communications and it is helped here by favourable coverage from Babiš-owned media, particularly in combating the political competition.

Despite its participation in government, ANO 2011 continues to behave in many cases like a protesting opposition party rather than one responsible for governance. In their public criticisms of the Social Democrats as the strongest government party and Prime Minister Bohuslav Sobotka (CSSD), ANO 2011's ministers headed by Minister of Finance and ANO 2011 chair Andrej Babiš give the impression that theirs is a protest movement fighting "against those above." At the same time, ANO 2011's partly oppositional rhetoric has taken the wind out of the sails of the opposition, which has failed to effectively attack this unwieldy coalition government.

Another key element of the success of the Babiš movement is the high degree of discipline among its representatives in parliament, where a key role is played by faction chairman and the movement's first deputy chair Jaroslav Faltýnek, one of Agrofert's managers. It is true that this discipline is relative, and we highlight it here in relation to those at the central level of government, i.e. primarily in the Chamber of Deputies. In contrast, at the municipal level, there are in fact comparatively frequent within the movement's caucuses in municipal assemblies; a number of town hall coalitions have had to face their own disintegration and many of the party's mayors have been removed from office due to problems in local ANO 2011 clubs. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that Public Affairs failed to ensure stability within either its clubs or the Chamber of Deputies. Most strikingly, in the three years and four months which the party spent in the Chamber of Deputies, five separate chairmen headed its parliamentary caucus.

The failure of Public Affairs was also influenced by the problematic evolution of the party after 2010, which was marked by a series of publicly discussed intra-party clashes, corruption scandals involving (but not limited to) Vít Bárta, the frequent departure of members from both parliament and the party itself and ultimately the party's actual disintegration. The performances of the party's official leaders and Bárta as their unofficial boss were clouded by more embarrassments, and none of these individuals seemed to be a strong and charismatic party leader. Unlike ANO 2011, Public Affairs could not depend on the goodwill

9 Interestingly, TOP 09, the second new parliamentary party to take shape after the 2010 elections, chose a similar strategy, placing a popular figure, the former foreign affairs minister Karel Schwarzenberg at the head of the party, while the *de facto* leader (in TOP 09's case, Miroslav Kalousek) remained in the background. (Kalousek was the party's first deputy chairman.)

of a section of the media which would either not report any problems or divert attention elsewhere, for example, to the problems of coalition partners.

Conclusion

At the end of the 2000s, Czech party politics underwent some kind of internal crisis which took the form of an impasse both for the established political parties due to the erosion of their electoral support and decline in their membership, etc., and for political partisanship in its existing form. An ongoing and ever deepening loss of confidence in political institutions, including political parties, and democracy in general, caused by corruption scandals around the established parties and political elites and compounded by the persistent inaction of Czech governments, culminated during the 2010 and 2013 Chamber of Deputies elections. Reflecting on the results of the 2010 parliamentary elections, some authors have written of a political earthquake (Haughton – Novotná – Deegan-Krause 2011; Havlík – Hloušek 2014; Maškarinec V Bláha 2014; Klíma 2015). These elections brought new trends and phenomena to party politics in the Czech Republic, which had in many respects excluded them from the transformations of the party system between 1996 and 2010. They also transformed the Czech party system, which until then had been considered one of the most stable in post-communist Central and Eastern Europe by various domestic and foreign experts (see, e.g., Birch 2003; Deegan-Krause – Haughton 2010; Stegmaier – Vlachová 2011; Charvát 2012; Maškarinec – Bláha 2014 etc.).

At the electorate level, there was a weakening of the positions of the established parties as citizens mobilised against them and their leaders in 2010 while also undermining the existing system of party competition. In the 2013 parliamentary elections, the qualitative transformation of the Czech party system continued in certain ways.¹⁰ At the same time, the crisis in both major parties intensified with ODS being occupied in many respects by ANO 2011, the political movement led by Andrej Babiš. The erosion of support for traditional political parties necessarily brought an increase in electoral volatility along with the entry of new political entities into the realm of deputies. Until 2010, parliamentary newcomers had held seats representing just slightly over 5% of the electoral threshold. In contrast, Public Affairs, which had the lowest level of support of any elected entity in the 2010 ballot, still received almost double the proportion of votes of the weakest newcomers elected in previous elections.¹¹ In

¹⁰ Given the self-sustaining and cyclical patterns that are observable not only in the Czech political system but in the systems in other Central and Eastern European countries, Tim Haughton and Kevin Deegan-Krause (2015: 68–69) suggest that “hurricane” may be a more suitable metaphor than the popular designation of “earthquake.”

¹¹ The Public Affairs Party received 10.88% of votes in 2010 in the first (and only) election of its representatives to the Chamber of Deputies. By way of comparison, the Green Party, a newcomer and the smallest entity elected in the 2006 ballot, received 6.39% of votes. Freedom Union entered the Chamber of

this regard, ANO 2011's achievement was even starker: the movement finished in second place in the 2013 elections. With a gain of almost 19 %, it trailed only slightly behind the winner of the elections, i.e. ČSSD.

Both the Public Affairs Party of 2010 and the ANO 2011 movement of 2013 took advantage of public discontent with existing political circumstances, especially targeting the performances of political elites and the established political parties. Their campaigns therefore invoked an anti-establishment and protest rhetoric which criticised the current political establishment and stressed the need to fight the corruption that (apparently) directly affected existing political elites. The presentations of these parties were based on the fact that they were new political actors with new projects (Sikk 2012) that offered an alternative to established political parties and their past practices. They were also innovative when it came to the use of modern communication technologies, marking a significant difference from the established political parties. VV and later both ANO 2011 and Andrej Babiš himself made far greater use of social media networks, especially Facebook, than the established parties.

At the level of the party system, there was a transformation of the parties in terms of their themes (the appearance of new ill-defined and programmatically flexible parties) as well as their organisation (a new dependence on both corporate structures and personalised and institutionally weak business-firm parties). At the thematic level, the experiences with both the Public Affairs Party and the ANO 2011 movement confirm that electoral success can now be secured based on the appeals of protests along with novelty and a popular image, as André Krouwel aptly notes (2006: 261; 2012: 26) "the best wrapping for these popular policies is an attractive candidate (or even a single leader) so that the marketing of the policies can be reduced to the promotion of an individual."

At the organisational level, these new political entities are closely associated with the person of a political entrepreneur and they serve as this individual's political project. This applies to three of the four new political entities which succeeded after 2010: VV, ANO 2011 and Dawn. These political parties were managed as private companies, with a focus on profit, i.e. election success, which was the subject of all their strategies. This was also reflected in their organisational structure which was substantially similar to that of a private company, with senior party management, i.e. the party presidium, playing a key role. Both the successful new political parties which took part in the 2013 elections, ANO 2011 and Dawn, further emphasised that they were not political parties but political movements.

Deputies with 8.60% of votes in 1998. In 1996, the Civic Democratic Alliance was elected with 6.36% of votes. In the 1992 elections, three political parties each received less than 6% of the votes [Alt. Wording/meaning: "three political parties together received..."]. (Czech Statistical Office, data for each election available at <http://www.volby.cz>)

While the VV party and ANO 2011 movement differed in a number of respects, both political entities can be described as cases of the business-firm party model. Though previously non-existent in Czech party politics, that model has to some extent become a new phenomenon in political partisanship in the Czech Republic since the 2010 elections. What has not changed, however, despite the introduction of business-firm parties to the Czech political scene, is the enormous importance of state funding for political parties (van Biezen 2003: 192–193). Even business-firm parties primarily generate their income from state contributions, beginning, of course, from the time of electoral success, and the level of these provisions is comparable to that for the established parties. The experience with VV and ANO 2011, however also confirms Lucardie's (2000: 179) earlier conclusion that for a new political entity to succeed, it requires an investment of specific resources, including among other things funding from members (and we may add in the case of business-firm parties, from a political entrepreneur directly), and an effective self-presentation in the media (ideally under the direct control of the business-firm party itself). In other words, the successful political debut of a new party can be facilitated by an investment of private financial resources and a well-chosen communications strategy. At the same time, the recent Czech experience shows that a political party may be a suitable vehicle for businesses in the political sphere.

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