

Leader as a Focal Point: New Political Entrepreneurs and Candidate Selection in the Czech Republic¹

Vít Hloušek and Lubomír Kopeček

Faculty of Social Studies, Masaryk University, Brno, Czech Republic

e-mail: hlousek@fss.muni.cz, kopecek@fss.muni.cz

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Abstract:

The aim of this text is to evaluate the implementation of intra-party democracy in new parties that emerged and obtained parliamentary representation in the Czech Republic at the time when the consequences of the global financial economic crisis were manifest: Public Affairs, ANO and Dawn. The Czech Republic is a country that has not witnessed any strengthening of internal democracy in its political parties since 2010. The newly emergent protest parties are of the entrepreneurial type. By virtue of their structure, they seek centralised organisation and decision-making, and this affects their candidate selection procedures for parliamentary elections. The same applies for the established parties which do not counter the entrepreneurial parties with more intra-party democracy. Just on the contrary, centralisation of electoral campaigns seems to be accepted by the established parties as a cure and direct democracy as well as direct elections more as a threat.

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Introduction

As a consequence of several electoral shocks, once relatively stable Czech party system (Deegan Krause & Haughton, 2010) has been transformed. In 2010, elections to the Chamber of Deputies, the lower chamber of the Czech parliament, secured parliamentary representation for two new parties: TOP 09 and Public Affairs (VV) (Hanley, 2012). In 2013, there was an even larger electoral shock, when another new party, ANO (meaning ‘yes’ in Czech), became the second strongest force in parliament. Yet another new party, the populist Dawn of Direct Democracy (or ‘Dawn’), likewise crossed the five-per-cent electoral threshold of the Proportional Representation system, thus winning seats. Other noteworthy changes included the substantial weakening of what were previously the two strongest parties, the Czech Social Democratic Party (ČSSD) and the conservative-liberal Civic Democratic Party (ODS) (see Table 1). Viewed retrospectively, a situation had arisen in which voters not only abandoned established parties, but were quite willing to shift their support from new parties to even newer ones. For instance, in the 2013 elections, the bulk of former VV supporters voted for ANO (Median, 2013; Haughton & Deegan Krause, 2015, pp. 70-71).

This text focuses on candidate selection in the new, aforementioned, political parties. Not all of them were novel in terms of their organisational structure. One must distinguish ANO, VV and Dawn from TOP 09, which emerged in 2009 by splitting off from the Christian Democrats (KDU-ČSL), a party with traditions going back almost a century. Ideologically, TOP 09 was a conservative-liberal party. In its organisational structure TOP 09 resembles traditional Czech parties, though unlike them it is unusual in some respects; consider, for instance, the dominance of the parliamentary group over the party as a whole (Kopeček & Svačinová 2015). For these reasons we leave this party out of our discussion.

The three parties on which our analysis is centred – VV, ANO and Dawn – are entrepreneurial parties (Krouwel, 2006; Krouwel, 2012), in which the political entrepreneur has a key position and uses the party as their own vehicle to enter the political sphere (the description of a set of common party characteristics can be found below). The aim of our chapter is to analyse new patterns of candidate selection introduced by entrepreneurial parties into Czech politics, as well as any responses to this behaviour by established parties. The timeframe of our study is 2009-2016, during which period there were two elections to the lower chamber of the Czech parliament, which is the country’s crucial electoral arena. Analysing whether parties opt for more or less democratic procedures when selecting candidates for second-order elections is beyond the remit of this chapter.

Table 1: Votes cast for parliamentary parties in the 2006, 2010 and 2013 elections (% of total / mandates)²

Party	2006	2010	2013
ČSSD (social democrats)	32.3 / 74	22.1 / 56	20.5 / 50
ANO (populist, entrepreneurial))	-	-	18.7 / 47
KSČM (communist)	12.8 / 26	11.3 / 26	14.9 / 33
KDU-ČSL (Christian-democratic)	7.2 / 13	4.4 / 0	6.8 / 14
ODS (conservative-liberal)	35.4 / 81	20.2 / 53	7.7 / 16
TOP 09 (conservative-liberal)	-	16.7 / 41	12.0 / 26
VV (populist, entrepreneurial)	-	10.9 / 24	-
Dawn (far-right)	-	-	6.9 / 14
Other	12.3 / 6	14.4 / 0	12.5 / 0
Total	100.0 / 200	100.0 / 200	100.0 / 200

Source: the Czech Statistical Office.

Context, conceptualisations, hypotheses, and data

Firstly, we must briefly summarise existing trends: The long-established parties, the ČSSD, KDU-ČSL, ODS and the Communist party (KSČM), established their basic mechanisms for cadre selection back in the 1990s. Although they differed from each other in some respects, overall they tended to use exclusive models of candidate selection. For instance, although formally the candidate lists were open to non-partisans, such people rarely appeared on candidate lists in the top places, where election is virtually guaranteed.

Key influences in candidate selection are the substantial power of parties' grass-roots organisations – or more precisely of the elites of those organisations – and a circumscribed role for the inner, central party leadership. This situation is due to the design of the electoral system

² ČSSD: Czech Social Democratic Party (*Česká strana sociálně demokratická*); KSČM: Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia (*Komunistická strana Čech a Moravy*); KDU-ČSL: Christian and Democratic Union – Czechoslovak People's Party (*Křesťanská a demokratická unie – Československá strana lidová*); ODS: Civic Democratic Party (*Občanská demokratická strana*); Public Affairs (*Věci veřejné*); Dawn: Dawn of Direct Democracy (*Úsvit přímé demokracie*).

for the Chamber of Deputies. Since the turn of the millennium, the Czech Republic has been divided into 14 constituencies of varying sizes, the boundaries of which correspond to those of the country's self-governing regions, in which regional party organisations operate. Regional and local elites play an important role in the structure of traditional parties. A consequence of this is that there are 14 separate nomination processes occurring in parallel, primarily at the levels of district and regional organisations (Spáček, 2013, pp. 266-267; Outlý & Prouza, 2013, pp. 101-102). The central leaderships of traditional parties are limited in their ability to influence these processes, even though party statutes do give them certain options in this respect. For example, the central leaderships of ODS, ČSSD, KSČM, and KDU-ČSL have the right to intervene in the composition of candidate lists after their creation, but in practice they only do this rarely.

In awarding 'safe' places on candidate lists for elections to the Chamber of Deputies, parties show a tendency to give equal representation to the districts making up the region in question. It is a further characteristic that candidates are selected by elected bodies (assemblies of delegates) at the regional level, and that executive regional bodies, which usually are not formally authorised to select candidates, nevertheless play a substantial role in the process (Spáček, 2013; Outlý & Prouza, 2013). The rank-and-file have little influence on how candidate lists are compiled or who the candidates are.

The weak influence of the rank-and-file is correlated with the gradual transformation of traditional party organisation since the 1990s, with professional party elites playing an ever-stronger role. Conversely, the importance of the rank-and-file diminished over the same period (Kopecký, 2006; Polášek et al., 2012). Party membership today is very low, accounting for less than one per cent of the adult population (Linek & Pecháček, 2005; Van Haute et al., 2015). Consider these facts alongside widespread party patronage (Kopecký, 2012) and it becomes obvious that traditional parties have been little motivated to make their own practices more democratic.

Voter dissatisfaction with this state of affairs was one of the reasons why the Public Affairs party, which described traditional parties as political dinosaurs, succeeded in the 2010 elections, and why it decided to experiment with party democracy, albeit to a limited extent (Havlík & Hloušek, 2014). Two thirds of Czechs were dissatisfied with the political situation according to surveys before the 2010 elections, this was associated not only with economic problems, but also with a series of political scandals and government instability. This displayed a deepening trend and the surveys indicated the dissatisfaction of three quarters of Czechs before the 2013 elections. At the same time, the distrust towards traditional political parties

culminated in an opening for the new parties to rise (CVVM, 2010; CVVM, 2013a and 2013b) which, in terms of organisation, were highly centralised entrepreneurial parties.

Our minimal definition of an entrepreneurial party comprises the following characteristics (modified from Hloušek & Kopeček, 2017): (1) The central role of the leader, his personal initiative to launch a new party and his crucial formative influence. (2) The leader uses the party primarily as a vehicle to promote his personal business and political interests. (3) The party seeks an exclusive membership, typically by erecting high barriers for admission. (4) The party is not a ‘product’ of a promoter/sponsor organisation or social movement, as is the case with mass parties. (5) The party is not connected with parliament, as a cadre party is, and it is not founded by MPs seceding from another party. (6) The party is very flexible ideologically and eclectic in its choice of issues, focussing on current views and demands in society.³

The basic hypothesis of our analysis does not predict a trend of increasing democracy within parties, but precisely the opposite: the centralisation of candidate selection processes in new political parties. This contradicts the general hypothesis and expectations of the book but stems from the literature on entrepreneurial parties underpinning centralisation and managerial way of intra-party processes instead of the IPD (Hopkin & Paolucci 1999: 333-334).

Our secondary hypothesis addresses the second research objective of our study: established parties did not respond to the rise of new parties by strengthening their democratic practices, but rather by inertia or even the further centralisation of candidate selection.

Public Affairs

Our first case is the Public Affairs party (VV). Its genesis was rather complicated. The party was founded in 2001 as a civic initiative in Prague. It focused on local issues and did not show nationwide ambitions. This changed around the middle of the first decade of the twenty-first century when new members joined the party. In 2009 it expanded beyond the local level for the first time by putting up a candidate for election to the European Parliament, polling 2.4% of the vote. The popular investigative journalist, Radek John, became the new chair and leader of the party, embodying the party’s electoral appeal, which combined populism (including the broad

³ Our definition is based on earlier papers that studied political entrepreneurs in ‘old democracies’ (e.g. Harmel & Svåsand, 1993; Hopkin & Paolucci, 1999; Lucardie, 2000; Lange & Art, 2011; Bolleyer & Bytzeck, 2013; Arter & Kestilä-Kekkonen, 2014).

use of direct democracy) with the party's central theme: the fight against corruption and 'robber barons and political dinosaurs', i.e. politicians and traditional parties. Despite these promises, after the 2010 elections VV entered into a coalition government with one of the chief 'dinosaurs', the ODS, alongside TOP 09, which initiated the quick political collapse of VV. Its performance in cabinet saw the party initiating or participating in a number of conflicts and scandals, followed by its ultimate disintegration in spring 2012. It did not contest the 2013 elections at all and soon after formally ceased to exist (Havlík & Hloušek, 2014; Havlík, 2015).

According to its 2009 statutes, Public Affairs operated similarly in many respects to established Czech parties. There was a significant difference, though, in that the party recognised the so-called *věčkaři* (the 'Vs') – registered supporters who were not party members. *Věčkaři* were allowed to participate in the election of party leaders, regional party bosses and electoral leaders, as well as in advisory and binding internal party referenda. Originally, these referenda were used to decide virtually all important matters in VV, from personnel to politics to the programme. Soon after the 2010 elections, however, reasonable suspicions were voiced that the party leadership had been rigging the referenda. Furthermore, only a small proportion of the *věčkaři* tended to vote in them: less than 1,000 out of a total of almost 20,000 as of summer 2010 (Hloušek, 2012).

There was another particular characteristic of VV: people wishing to join the party had to spend a period of time as candidates for membership, the conditions of which were strictly defined in detail, and not easy to meet.⁴ Thus, in spring 2010, the party had about 1,100 members and about 1,500 membership candidates (Aktuálně, 2010).

The main issue affecting the functioning of VV, however, was the discrepancy between the statutory and actual distribution of power in the party. John, officially the leader of the party, in fact merely represented the party to the media. The real decisions were made by a businessman, Vít Bárta, and his informal shadow body, the so-called Conceptual Council,

⁴ Former Communist party members were barred. Further, candidates had to produce a declaration that they were free from debt, a statement from the state-maintained criminal record repository, a curriculum vitae and a signed copy of the VV ethical code. Further documents could also be requested. Later, external professional personnel agencies were involved in selecting potential members (Stauber, 2015, p. 145). Interestingly, most of these requirements – sometimes in an even more severe form – have been subsequently adopted into the statutes of Andrej Babiš's ANO.

unmentioned in the statutes and consisting of his close friends and collaborators, many of whom were linked with his private security agency (Kmenta, 2011, p. 325).

This created a contradiction between an outwardly very democratic and internally very centralist and also rather opaque VV organisation. One of the areas where centralisation was manifest was candidate selection for parliamentary elections. The selection mechanisms for parliamentary and other types of election were not described in the statutes in detail (VV, 2009). According to the statutes, the leaders of the list for parliamentary elections were elected by *věčkaři* in given electoral district (which corresponds with the Czech regions) and the rest of the list was proposed mainly by the regional councils. Even rank-and-file, and – for local elections – local, party organisations could suggest candidates; but in those as well as other cases the right to actually nominate candidates was reserved for the party's Board (*Grémium*), staffed by members of the party's central executive body, the Council (which was different from the Conceptual Council mentioned above) composed of chair and vice-chairs of the party as well as unspecified members elected by the Conference of the party, leaders of regional organisations and their deputies, and regional secretaries and chairs of expert commissions. The important role of the Council in compiling candidate lists was confirmed by the provision according to which the Council established a Commission to select candidates for parliamentary elections, and similar Commissions for other types of election. What mattered was not just the fact that these Commissions had only a handful of members; candidate nomination and the make-up of the candidate lists were ultimately subject to approval by the Council. Theoretically, the *Grémium* was the last instance of veto power in regard to the electoral lists but for the reasons presented in the following paragraph, the veto power was not applied.

As the process of transforming VV from a local to a national party was somewhat spontaneous, and prior to the 2010 elections the regional bodies of the party were virtually non-existent, the phase of proposing names of potential candidates was in practice largely performed by local party associations. However, the local organisations only identified suitable candidates, and many of them were not party members. In the next phase, the leaders of the candidate list in each electoral region (constituency) were chosen. Here, democratic principles came into play as leaders of the regions were chosen in primaries in which members and registered *věčkaři* could vote. However, the inclusivity of this process was disrupted by the fact that candidates were pre-selected by the party's *Grémium* and election was by the first-past-the-post system. In a specific situation where the party's regional structures had not been completely established, the Board often formally confirmed nominations for leadership primaries, these nominations having been informally thrashed out by regional secretaries and the chairs of local party

organisations in the given region. The regional leader having been selected, these informal structures then compiled the rest of the candidate list, a process in which the regional leader intervened by suggesting the names of candidates and order of them on the list. Although, before the 2010 elections, the Board rarely intervened in the candidate lists thus obtained, in theory there was no limit placed on the Board's freedom to do so (Spáč, 2013, pp. 237-246).

The Board did intervene in the cases of a few candidates who refused to sign the so-called contract that set out aspects of the relationship between them and the party. The contract also obliged MPs to vote in accordance with decisions made by the VV leadership, and commanded them to express only such opinions in the media that conformed to the official line of the party (Smlouva, 2010). Given that these contracts contravened the constitutional principle of free mandate, they were legally unenforceable; however, they did have a certain disciplinary effect on the party's MPs, at least for a short period following the 2010 elections.

Thus, ostensibly substantial direct-democracy procedures in the nomination process for the 2010 parliamentary elections were in practice variously diminished and deformed. Further developments strengthened the centralised nature of the party in this and other areas, with the new statutes (VV 2011) confirming the key role of the Board and bolstering the role of regional party bodies in the selection (but not nomination) of candidates. True, the principle of holding primaries was preserved; but in practice centrally organised pre-selection was crucial. Despite this, in the history of Czech party politics, VV remains a unique attempt to implement strong intra-party democracy.

ANO

ANO's founding father in 2012 was Andrej Babiš, the owner of Agrofert – a large chemical and agribusiness holding company – and one of the richest people in the country. Babiš defined his new entity as a movement of dissatisfied citizens and, like VV, sharply deprecated politicians at the time as corrupt, thieving and incompetent. Unlike VV, he did not put forward a vision of direct democracy; rather he presented the technocratic idea of better governance of the state according to commercial principles, as shown by one of the key ANO slogans, according to which 'the state should be managed as a business' (Havlík, 2015).

Another substantial difference between VV and ANO was that from the outset Babiš was publicly presented as the focal figure of the new political project. The leader's privileged position was enshrined in ANO statutes, allowing him to act independently in all matters unhindered (ANO, 2013). The establishment of ANO's grass-roots organisation relied on a top-down model managed from Agrofert headquarters, exclusive concept of membership, and was

accompanied by the extensive vetting of founding party cadres, involving even human-resources-style checks, and limitations placed on the autonomy of the party's local units. For instance, according to the statutes, the power to confirm regional heads in office lay with the party presidium (ANO, 2013). At the end of 2014 and similarly to VV, ANO had only around 1,800 members; many more – about 6,500 – were candidates for membership (Válková, 2014). A distinctive managerial culture and hierarchy of superordination and subordination was also pressed on the organisation. These are nicely illustrated by the words of one regional leader of ANO: “Mr. Babiš is the boss, he has charisma and knows how to make people dance to his tune. (...) There's no way I'd not fulfil a given task, and that's how it should be.” (Zeman, 2013; in details Kopeček, 2016).

Professional election consultants and experts played an important role in the ANO campaign for the October 2013 parliamentary elections. In the preparations for the elections, ANO's local organisations were assigned merely service tasks, and this was reflected in the candidate selection process. According to the statutes, the candidate lists were to be put together by regional organisations, specifically by the assemblies of regional organisations – the supreme regional bodies – whose delegates would themselves be elected by assemblies of district organisations. The candidate lists were to be subsequently approved by the Committee of ANO, i.e. the broader party leadership had the power of veto (ANO, 2013). In practice, however, the Committee of ANO was not complete. Similarly, party organisations were not fully developed in many regions, and they were weakened following the intra-party conflict mentioned above. Furthermore, the assembling of candidate lists took place under pressure of time, as the elections were called early. Thus, the job was largely done by regional presidiums, i.e. the executive bodies of regional organisations. A semi-informal circle around Babiš, made up of hired electoral experts and members of the party presidium, had the most important influence. The circle had the final word in allocating the most attractive places at the top of candidate lists, where the probability of election was high (Matušková, 2015). These places were filled by public figures who affiliated themselves with ANO before the election, and were assigned to regions where it was thought they would make the greatest contribution to the party's electoral success. They included, for example, a popular actor, a well-known political commentator, a former university rector and a successful businessman. This situation is redolent of the founding period in the Italian party Forza Italia in the mid-1990s, when the largely informal circle around Silvio Berlusconi played the role of gatekeeper as far as nominations were concerned (Hopkin & Paolucci, 1999).

The degree to which the party centre interfered with the placement of candidates at the top of candidate lists was, nonetheless, limited by the number of celebrities ANO had at its disposal and by the fact that the number of seats allocated per region varied, as well as by lack of time – given that these were early elections. Thus, in reality, the dominance of the ANO leader was not limitless, and the regional organisations retained some influence, even over the top places on the candidate lists (Kopeček, 2016). For example, the candidate list proposed by the regional organisation in Karlovy Vary was simply approved by the Prague centre as suggested, with the party's regional chair as leader. Only a few seats were elected in this region, and according to the election experts working for ANO, the party only had a real chance of winning one. Thus it was simply not worth 'parachuting in' a candidate from the outside. In another region, South Moravia, where many more seats were up for election, the regional organisation accepted the three candidates at the top of the list as proposed by the centre, but rejected another candidate (a former university rector) whom the local members considered controversial due to his colourful political past, when he represented different parties. Babiš accepted this and moved the candidate to another region (Matušková, 2015; Vlčková, 2015).

The party's success in the 2013 elections opened for ANO the possibility of substantial participation in the new coalition government, and this included the position of finance minister for Babiš. ANO subsequently managed to consolidate its party organisation and avoided the serious internal crises that wrecked both VV and Dawn (see below). Further professionalization and stronger control over the cadres was instrumental in this, as were the establishment of formal rules for candidate selection and amendments to the statutes (ANO, 2015), which gave the party presidium more clout, including the power to nominate candidates for all elected public offices, including elections to the Chamber of Deputies. The formal completion of the unrestricted position of the party leader was a further amendment of the statutes at the beginning of 2017, which supplemented his power to veto candidates on lists (ANO, 2017).

Dawn of Direct Democracy

As with ANO, Dawn of Direct Democracy depended from the outset on a single central figure, Tomio Okamura, a businessman of mixed Japanese, Korean and Czech ancestry, who was involved in the travel industry and enjoyed significant media exposure. In late 2012 Okamura was elected as an independent senator by taking advantage of his image of self-made man and popular tribune who deplored the incompetence of politicians and offered simple solutions – in particular, the direct participation of citizens in political decision-making. Founded in summer 2013, shortly before the early elections called for October, Dawn was able to pick up the threads

of VV's participatory rhetoric and that party's anti-corruption and anti-establishment appeals. In these respects Dawn was also similar to ANO. This was augmented by Okamura's mildly xenophobic diatribes against some minorities unpopular with the majority, notably the Roma (Havlík, 2015). However, Dawn's most important assets or source of 'know-how' were probably Okamura himself, his specific charisma and life story, which secured success for the party in the 2013 parliamentary elections.

That this was a one-man show was reflected as well in the way the party statutes were constructed. The leader of Dawn was elected for the comparatively extremely long period of five years; he had 'general responsibility for the party's activities' between the sessions of the party's supreme body (the Congress); and the leader's powers encompassed everything that was not explicitly given to another body (Úsvit, 2013). The statutes were terse, comprising only a few articles, and any changes to them would be difficult to enact; this granted the leader nearly limitless scope for independent decision-making (Kubát, 2015; Kopeček & Svačinová, 2016). Also of essence was the fact that Dawn was impregnable closed to new members; throughout the years of Okamura's leadership, 2013-2015, the party had only nine (sic) members and the leader could veto any new admissions. Okamura not only refused to let any further members in, he also showed no interest in establishing a regional structure for the party, which was not even envisaged by the statutes.

This organisational configuration provided the leader with an even more privileged position than his counterpart in ANO. Sharply contrasting with Okamura's slogans about direct democracy, his firm grasp on the party was crucial for candidate selection ahead of the 2013 parliamentary elections. On this matter the statutes succinctly stipulated that the candidate lists would be compiled and approved by one of the party's bodies, the Committee, consisting of the leader (chair of Dawn), the executive secretary of the party and three further members elected by the Congress (Úsvit, 2013). As with other processes unfolding in Dawn, the candidate lists were largely created by an informal circle of people around the leader – over and above the members of the Committee. As in VV and ANO, the greatest attention was given to choosing leaders of the candidate lists in individual electoral regions and, in the more populous regions, also the candidates in the places immediately below the leader on the lists, as these actually stood a chance of winning a seat. The selection was largely based on the leader's personal contacts. There were criteria, though they were vaguely applied: regional leaders were expected to broadly chime in with Dawn's goals, especially the notion of direct democracy, and have at least some backing and popularity in the given region, which was important for campaigning (Zilvar, 2017).

Importantly, when choosing people for the leading places on candidate lists, politicians from various other entities were included, in particular from Bárta's VV and several small local parties and civic associations, from whom at least some political experience was expected. Vít Bárta himself became the candidate list leader in one of the regions and generally played the role of *eminence grise* at the founding of Dawn. Testifying to his position is the fact that he was involved in the final debate when the circle around Okamura approved the leaders of the regional candidate lists (Adam, 2017).

Sometimes the selection of candidate list leaders seemed more or less random. In the peripheral and largely rural constituency of Vysočina, the leader chosen at the last movement was a local radio anchor who had conducted an interview with Okamura and 'seemed sympathetic' (Adam, 2017). This arbitrary element was even stronger when candidates were chosen for the other places on the lists: in all regions, candidates were recruited from supporters who put themselves forward, and their order was decided on an *ad hoc* basis with no clear rules by people surrounding Okamura. The regional candidate list leaders wielded some influence here too.

After the elections, the effect of this strategy was that Dawn's parliamentary party was not homogeneous but politically rather colourful. Only three of the 14 MPs elected on the party's ticket were members of Dawn; a further three originated from VV and the rest were largely without party affiliation. Soon after the elections, the lack of connections between the party and its MPs caused a crisis, which was substantially exacerbated by Okamura's unwillingness to allow his own MPs to become party members or to build up permanent organisational party structures, as well as his opaque management of party funds. In the conflict that occurred in early 2015, not just the majority of the parliamentary party but, ultimately, five of the party's nine members opposed Okamura, who then left and founded a new party, Freedom and Direct Democracy.

Minimal response by established parties

The electoral success of entrepreneurial parties in the 2010 and 2013 elections elicited a response from established parties. However, this was largely limited to their programmes and rhetoric, and they did not attempt to make their own organisations more democratic. During the period observed, some established parties did change their statutes – ČSSD in 2009, 2011 and 2015; KDU-ČSL in late 2002; KSČM in 2012 and 2016; and ODS in 2012 and 2015 – but in ODS and KDU-ČSL these changes neither introduced new nor strengthened existing democratic practices. If a trend can be observed in established parties in response to the

breakthrough made by new entrepreneurial parties in 2010 and 2013, it is that of some strengthening of their leaders' position and weakening of local and regional elites. However, the beginnings of this organisational adaptation of traditional parties can be dated to before the rise of entrepreneurial parties, when traditional parties had responded to the limited weight of central party leadership and the conversely great importance of regional and local elites. To date, these organisational shake-ups have met with limited success.

This does not mean that the direct involvement of members in decision-making would be wholly absent in traditional parties. The statutes of the parties of the left, ČSSD and KSČM, have provided for the option of holding intra-party referenda since the 1990s. In practice, such votes are extremely rare in both. There is, then, a clear difference between the *de iure* and *de facto* status of intra-party democracy in the two parties. The discrepancy between *de iure* and *de facto* is even more pronounced in the process of the direct election of the leader by all party members, formally enshrined in ČSSD statutes as an alternative to the election of the leader by the Congress. Direct election was adopted as an option near the close of the first decade of the twenty-first century when Jiří Paroubek was the leader of ČSSD. The reason behind the change was not to make the party more democratic. A direct election would clearly boost the leader's legitimacy and, conversely, indirectly weaken the influence of regional and local elites (Polášek et al., 2012). Therefore, the Central Executive Committee, which is dominated by the elites and which has responsibility for choosing between direct election and election by Congress, has so far always opted for the latter option. It needs emphasising that the formal introduction of direct leadership elections occurred prior to the rise of entrepreneurial parties and in this respect the entrepreneurs' electoral success has changed nothing.

The change of the ČSSD statutes in 2015, which modified the rules on drawing up candidate lists, likewise originated from internal party discussions and not in response to the rise of entrepreneurial parties. The ČSSD statutes (2015) newly state that 'the final version of the candidate list for elections to the assembly of municipality, city, region, Senate and Chamber of Deputies shall be decided by a direct vote of all ČSSD members in the corresponding constituency.' In practice, and compared with the original draft that sought to limit the power of local party elites, this was a significant concession to local and regional party authorities, as the provision for the involvement of local and regional party bodies in the assembling of candidate lists was preserved in the statutes. Under the new system, the rules for putting together candidate lists are to be set by a new intra-party regulation adopted on an *ad hoc* basis for individual elections. Thus, we need to wait for some time before we are able to

analyse the real impact of these changes in terms of strengthening internal democracy in party-political practice.

Conclusion

We have analysed intra-party democracy in three new parties: Public Affairs, ANO and Dawn. From the fact that these are all entrepreneurial parties we have derived our basic hypothesis questioning the general assumption that democratic practices in parties would increase in consequence of the rise of new political parties. Our study was based on the premise that the rise of new entrepreneurial parties was accompanied by the centralisation of candidate selection processes. Furthermore, we assumed that established parties do not respond to the rise of new parties by strengthening their own democratic practices. Both of these assumptions contradict the general trend expected in other countries covered by this book.

Of the new entrepreneurial parties, a centralised process of candidate selection involving no democracy is clearly identifiable in ANO and Dawn. These parties were or are managed in a highly centralised manner, and the role of the rank-and-file is effectively eliminated by a combination of the overwhelmingly dominant role of the leader and the organisational make-up of the parties. Dawn has brought this organisational type to the extreme by making membership absolutely exclusive and totally neglecting to build the party on the ground. There is no internal democracy in these parties, not even in the procedure of candidate selection. The explanation of centralised candidate selection and organisation of ANO and Dawn is based on the conceptions of their founding fathers; Andrej Babiš and Tomio Okamura. Babiš and Okamura's conceptions differed in some aspects, which were mainly related to their diverse financial, media, personnel and other resources. However, both political entrepreneurs built the party as their own political vehicle, which allowed them to successfully enter politics. Inclusion of wider grassroots members and supporters to the decision-making party process were alien to them.

In the now defunct VV matters were somewhat different. The party envisaged broad deployment of internal party democracy and the idea was crucial for establishing its profile. However, looking more closely at how, generally, internal referenda were used in practice and, particularly, what role democracy played in the process of compiling candidate lists, we must note that the role of intra-party referenda diminished as time went on and, rather than by rigorous internal democratic procedures, the process of assembling candidate lists for the 2010 elections was marked by an element of spontaneity. True, primaries were used to formally confirm the candidate lists. However, these were preceded by centralised pre-selection and

accompanied by informal mechanisms that limited and deformed intra-party democracy in practice.

Our secondary hypothesis concerning the behaviour of established parties was confirmed for all with the exception of ČSSD. Apart from ČSSD, no established party responded to the rising tide of new parties by introducing new or by strengthening existing internal democratic measures. Rather, in established parties the responses to the electoral success of entrepreneurial parties included attempts to centralise decision-making; however, arguably there were other, earlier reasons for that. Even in the ČSSD, where a mechanism for approving candidate lists by all members was introduced, this was not primarily in response to the rise of new parties. More likely, this was a compromise outcome of a longer-term internal discussion.

To sum up: the Czech Republic is a country that has not witnessed any strengthening of internal democracy in its political parties since 2010. The newly emergent protest parties are of the entrepreneurial type. By virtue of their structure, they seek centralised organisation and decision-making, and this affects their candidate selection procedures for parliamentary elections. Established parties also carefully seek to apply a centralist strategy, not just in party organisation and decision-making, but also in the manner in which they conduct electoral campaigns. Figuratively speaking, for most Czech party elites direct democracy and direct elections pose a challenge rather than a welcome change, a threat rather than an opportunity.

For the Czech voters and citizens, passive expression of general dissatisfaction with political parties and politicians as a reaction prevails clearly over any demand to foster the internal democracy within the parties. The distrust to political parties is so high that it prevents voters even to believe that the things can go better with more direct democracy within the parties. The Czechs are apparently opting for exit (from the parties) than the voice (within the parties). Together with declining party membership in general and cartel or business-like organisational practices within the parties, this does not constitute any favourable conditions for the rise of IPD.

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