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THE ROLE OF PARTY ORGANIZATION IN THE ELECTORAL SUCCESS OF ANTI-ESTABLISHMENT PARTIES:

ANO in the Czech Republic

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More and more anti-establishment parties succeed in elections at the expense of their established competitors in contemporary European democracies. However, a large proportion of these parties fall apart and disappear as quickly as they appear. What is the relationship between the way these parties organize and their electoral performance? This dissertation proposes a framework to explain the role of organizational features such as local party branches, party membership and party elites in this process. It argues that these features facilitate party stability, cohesion and legitimacy and, as a consequence, parties do better at elections. A single case study explores these relationships in the case of the Czech party ANO, and is then complemented by a comparative analysis of three other anti-establishment parties. The dissertation argues that party organization matters for the electoral success of anti-establishment parties. The control of local branches´ autonomy, restrictions on party membership and professional links between party elites help new anti-establishment parties to present themselves as stable, cohesive and legitimate entities. In the case of ANO, this effect is further strengthened by the infiltration of its party organization by the structures of the business-firm owned by the party leader.