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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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CHAPTER 4 Party Elite

4.1. Introduction

The previous chapters revealed that two different aspects of party organization, local branches and party members, matter for ANO electorally for various reasons. This chapter⁶ explores the role of the third aspect of ANO's party organization, party elite, in this party's electoral success. First, the literature is reviewed, and the main general theoretical concepts in the area are discussed. Then, the chapter continues with the debate about methodology, and finally, with the analysis of the empirical evidence. As discussed in the previous chapters, political parties are not unitary actors, and their electoral success is directly dependent on many factors related to their party organization. In particular, the findings in previous chapters indicated that the limited autonomy of local branches and the restrictions on party membership seem to matter for ANO electorally because they help the party leadership to prevent internal conflicts and divisions. ANO's capacity to efficiently address such scandals helps the party to diffuse negative impact on its public image, which helps the party to be more likely elected. Like the control of local branches' autonomy and the restrictions on party membership, the party elite represents another aspect of ANO's party organization that should matter for this party's electoral success via affecting party cohesion.

No institution operates in a power vacuum, and the struggles over the leadership positions often cause conflicts within organizations. It is even more case in organizations, where elites' positions rely on the votes (and loyalty) of others within that organization, such as it is the case in political parties. The organizational structures of most institutions operate in a hierarchical order, and the individuals constituting them tend to compete for power continually (Farazmand (1999). As such, all institutions, and political parties, in particular, perform in a power environment, their stability is directly influenced by elites' relationships (Moore 1979). As such, scholars refer to parties as to 'self-evidently collective entities not sharing a single brain' (Giannetti and Laver 2005), 'loose confederations of sub-parties' (Suthanintr 1985) or "miniature political systems made up of rival party sub-units competing

⁶ Part of the data used in this chapter was published as a co-authored article, see: Cirhan and Kopecký (2017).

for political and decision-making power” (Sartori 1976, 71), to emphasise their nature of constant potential for internal conflicts endangering their stability.

In theory, party stability results from two processes. The first of these processes is the application of *party discipline* (Andeweg and Thomassen 2010). Discipline is achieved by threatening or actual usage of various sanctions by the party leadership. Such sanctions may include leadership’s threats concerning party activists’ re-nomination, support for their nomination for various positions in the public office (or within the party organization), or personal campaign funding. The use of such disciplinary measures or threats of such measures (so-called sticks) does not have to be limited solely to MPs. It can be similarly applied at different levels of party organization. At the regional level, the relevant party executive bodies may be using actions or threats of actions to enforce discipline. It can take different forms like cutting party funding for certain local elections or individual candidates (or not showing support for specific nominations). Changing the composition of candidate lists for different types of elections may also serve this purpose. In extreme scenarios, they may even consider dissolving local branches may (as discussed in Chapter 2 concerning local party organization). In addition to the mentioned disciplinary measures and threats of these measures, party discipline can be achieved by offers of selective incentives (so-called carrots), which may also take different forms (Panebianco 1988). The most common examples include party patronage⁷ and other perks of the office.

The second process, when party stability is achieved by *party cohesion*, we talk about the process, by which party elites share political attitudes and policy preferences, which in turn results in a high degree of their ideological consensus. In contrast to the process of party discipline, where the stability is to a large degree enforced and manufactured by the party leadership, in case of party cohesion the stability is a result of commonly shared collective identities that may be based on many factors. Most commonly on the elite homogeneity stemming from elite’s shared social backgrounds and organizational links from outside of the party organization (Suthanintr 1985; Namenwirth and Lasswell 1970; Searing 1971; Edinger

⁷ For a detailed insight into the party patronage topic in the Czech context please see Kopecký (2012) and Kopecký, Mair and Spirova (2012).

and Searing 1967; Farazmand 1999). Both processes of party discipline and party cohesion take place simultaneously in the internal life of parties; one could even state that only a combination of both can help parties to preserve stability in the long term. However, when stability is attempted to be achieved by disciplinary measures in the absence of party elites sharing common political attitudes, these attempts are rarely successful (Heidar and Koole 2000). The limited effect of party discipline without the existence of party cohesion was also noted by Kopecký (2001), who analysed parliamentary elites amongst Czech parties in the 1990s; the enforcement of party discipline as a means to achieve party stability was not effective and brought only limited results. Other scholars observed that the party discipline approach often achieved the exact opposite outcome than anticipated and led to conflicts and divisions (Heidar and Koole 2000).

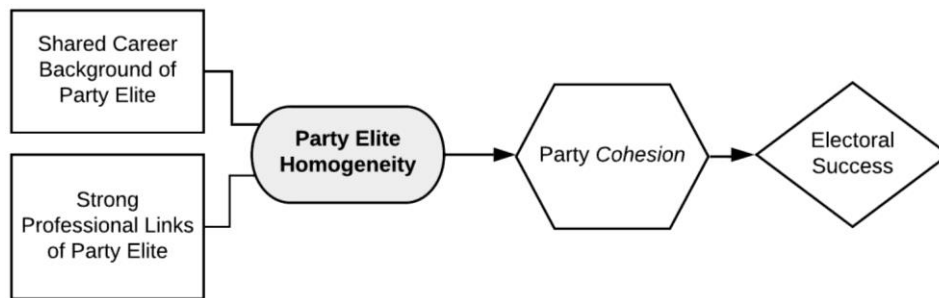
This chapter empirically explores only the impact of ANO's party elite on the electoral success achieved via party cohesion. In this dissertation party elite homogeneity refers to party elite's shared social backgrounds and their strong organizational links forged outside of the party organization. Party cohesion refers to common political attitudes of a party elite that support party stability, as explained in greater detail in the introducing Chapter 1. The theoretical arguments in this chapter are the following. The party elite homogeneity facilitates party cohesion that helps the party to present itself publicly as a unified entity. Potential voters will likely welcome a united party elite (manifested especially at the time when the party faces scandals). The common career backgrounds and shared professional links of party elite matter electorally via affecting party cohesion. When the party elite has shared career paths and knows each other from the same professional setting outside the party organization, they are more likely to hold common political attitudes. This resulting cohesion is electorally advantageous because such a party is more likely immune to internal conflicts and to the negative publicity they entail. Especially at the times of scandals facing the party (or other pressures related to holding public office), the party cohesion gets tested the most. When the party is cohesive, these scandals and pressures less likely trigger party divisions. Party with the homogenous elite is more cohesive and thus better equipped to withstand scandals as a united entity, which sends a positive message to the potential electorate. It positively resonates with voters, who more likely support such party in elections. The following section focuses on this theoretical debate (concerning the relationship between the background of party elite and party cohesion vis-à-vis the electoral success) in more detail.

4.2. Role of Party Elites in Electoral Success

“Parties, especially newly formed and newly governing parties, are as far from being unitary actors as any organization can be considering the different pressures they face, such as the need to hold the party together, to communicate and coordinate between the central party organization and the party in public office, and to manage internal conflicts and relations within the organization as well as with coalition partners” (Deschouwer 2008, 7).

Previous work concerned with the party elite homogeneity and party cohesion within new Czech parties demonstrated that scandals that took place in parties lacking cohesion transformed into conflicts (Cirhan and Kopecký 2017). These internal conflicts led to parties' marginalisation because they triggered their destabilisation. The lack of stability quickly transformed into party organizational crisis. Pressures associated with these crises tested parties' ability to remain united, and those parties that lacked cohesion failed such test. As a result, these parties have lost the confidence of the public, experienced organizational splits, and ultimately disintegrated, completely losing their relevance. In theory, party elite homogeneity is crucial for parties electorally because it facilitates party cohesion. As explained in introducing Chapter 1, party cohesion is defined as a state, in which the party remains united because it achieves consent in major political questions across the party. As such, party cohesion refers to the existence of shared political attitudes within party resulting in an internal party unity, which is a crucial ingredient of party stability (stable parties are less likely to divide, and the immunity to divisions is preferable by voters). *Party elite homogeneity* stems from shared social backgrounds of the elite and their strong links from outside of the party. Refer to Figure 4.1 that illustrates the relationship between the party elite homogeneity, party cohesion and electoral success. The following paragraphs review and discuss the existing theory related to the relationship between party cohesion and electoral performance more generally. This general theoretical discussion is followed by the debate focusing on the role of party elite homogeneity in this process.

Figure 4.1 Elite backgrounds and party cohesion



A party that is cohesive holds shared political attitudes across its organization. For instance, party cohesion translates into MPs' common voting patterns (a behaviour that is otherwise hard to achieve). Attempts to discipline party elite into voting the same way in the absence of shared political attitudes are rarely successful (Kopecký 2001) and even lead to opposite outcomes risking parties' factionalism (Heidar and Koole 2000). MPs belonging to a cohesive party will more likely vote alike in the parliament and will less likely quarrel in public. As such, sharing political attitudes supports the party's ability to present a unitary vision, and to spread a unified party message to its voters. Party cohesion is thus crucial for the party's ability to present itself as a united and predictable actor, which is awarded by the electorate in elections because the public prefers such parties.

This chapter empirically investigates how party cohesion manifests at the time of crises faced by the party. Examples of the most extreme scandals that the party experienced in recent years are used for this analysis. In theory, party cohesion gets tested most in times of crises. When the party faces scandals, party cohesion represents a crucial element for preserving the positive public image. Parties, whose elite share common political attitudes are more likely to remain immune to the party divisions that are often triggered by scandals. When party elite does not share political attitudes, parties face the constant danger of factionalism, splits and even disintegration (Tavits 2013). Parties function as collective entities, in which divided opinions (and competition) create internal pressures and potential for dissent. These pressures often "trigger the formation of factions that render the unitary actors" (Boucek 2009, 455-456). The problem of factionalism often triggered by scandals (and allowed by the lack of cohesion) is even more relevant to newly formed and especially newly governing parties. These parties face even stronger pressures associated with their participation in public office because their party organizations are new (and as such more likely fragile). Thus, the consequences of

internal conflicts may be more severe for their organizational survival. Such parties not only have less experience in the governance but simultaneously enjoy more media attention, which adds more pressures to holding a public office (Deschouwer 2008). Attaining party cohesion supports parties' capacity to prevent internal conflicts and divisions, which translates into better party's electoral outcomes because the way how the party operates internally strongly affects how the party is perceived externally in media and public discussions (Tavis and Letki 2014). When the party is not divided by conflicts, it positively affects the public image of the party and its popularity, that in turn has impacted the electoral success. Voters are more likely to cast a vote to parties whose elite represents a unitary vision and does not frequently fall into arguments between each other. Internal conflicts likely negatively resonate with the potential electorate, because divided parties appear as untrustworthy and incompetent to govern.

How can party cohesion be achieved? This chapter looks at the party cohesion achieved solely by party elite homogeneity. As mentioned previously, party elite homogeneity consists of two aspects – common career backgrounds and strong links of the party elite. Regarding the first aspect, several authors associate party cohesion with the shared career backgrounds of party elite (Andeweg and Thomassen 2010; Eldersveld 1964; Siavelis and Morgenstern 2008; Kim and Patterson 1988). Common career background is seen as a key to shared values in life generally. In turn, it promotes shared political attitudes. Individuals with same career-paths will likely have similar interests, and thus hold similar preferences in politics too (Eldersveld and Siemieniska 1989; Janowitz et al. 1956; Lazer 2011; Lodge 1969; Mills 1956; Eldersveld 1964; Knoke 1993). Although career background is the most influential in forming common political attitudes, other aspects of social backgrounds, such as common educational attainment or similar social class origins can also influence them (Putnam 1973; Higley 1981; Higley et al. 1991; Wellhofer 1974). Concerning the second aspect of party elite homogeneity, in addition to the shared career backgrounds (and other common social roots), it also supports party cohesion when elites know each other from the organizational setting outside of the political party. There is a variety of organizations in which the elite can attain such links. They include universities or other educational institutions, private companies, public offices, student associations, unions, churches and other religious organizations, pressure groups, civil society movements, volunteer groups or any types unpolitical or political movements. However, the cohesion is said to be strengthened most when elite share professional occupational links (Farazmand 1999).

For the purposes of this chapter, the homogenous party elite refers to the party elite sharing both common career backgrounds and professional links. I am aware that part of the existing literature dedicated to the study of party elite backgrounds focuses on various aspects of backgrounds such as social class, education or gender. However, I have decided to omit these aspects and focus only on career backgrounds and professional links between party elite. These two criteria were used chiefly because they were expected to matter most in the case of ANO. The focus on careers and professional association of party elite was a rational choice, considering the business background of the party leader and the presentment of the party as a project of successful managers. More discussion regarding this aspect will be included later in this chapter. I acknowledge ANO's rhetoric emphasizing the necessity of managerial approach towards the administration of the state and the business background of Babiš. Therefore, I have a hunch that career past and professional association of party elite will likely play a more fundamental role in ANO, than other aspects of social background, such as education or social class.

The existing theory emphasises that those elites, who share not only common career backgrounds, but also have occupational links form so-called 'social circles' (Edinger and Searing 1967). Members of these circles have similar occupational socialization experiences and very likely hold similar political attitudes (Mills 1956). Relationships forged between the party elite in such organizations, before their joint participation in the same political party, help them to form a network (Lodge 1969), which "positively influences attitudinal consensus within the party, leads to shared views on specific public policies and broad ideological orientations" (Moore 1979, 674). When the party elite share both career backgrounds and professional links, there is a high chance that they have worked in the same organization in the past (although potentially in very different occupational roles) or even know each other from that setting. In theory, the highest levels of party cohesion are achieved when common career backgrounds and professional links of party elites concur simultaneously; scholars refer to this phenomenon as to the existence of so-called dual hierarchy within party organization (Janowitz et al. 1956; Siavelis and Morgenstern 2008). Such dual hierarchies lead to the overlap of affiliations of elite members, when "elites hold key posts simultaneously or successively in many types of organizations, as they can coordinate diverse activities, create an affinity and common sharing of interests" (Janowitz et al. 1956, 36-40). When the party elite shares common professional links acquired in the same organization outside of the political party,

they are likely to form an informal network within the party structure that is similar to a friendship. Different scholars refer to these informal networks (formed by party elites with same career past and professional links) by different terms, such as ‘communities of fate’ (Wellhofer 1974), ‘consensually integrated elite’ (Putnam 1973) or ‘interlocking networks’ (Farazmand 1999). When a large proportion of the party elite is homogenous (they simultaneously share career backgrounds and belong(ed) to the same business organization outside of the party organization), they form a corporate network and are much more likely to nurture and maintain party cohesion. Such party cohesion translates into party stability, which mirrors into a more attractive public image for the party that is electorally advantageous (as explained previously).

4.3. Methodological Approach

This chapter pursues the theoretical argument of party elite homogeneity shaping the public image of the party positively as a cohesive entity, translating into better electoral performance. As such, the analysis first explores the relationship between the ANO’s elite’s homogeneity (a combination of their career backgrounds and professional links) and party cohesion. As a second step, the analysis progresses and explores the relationship between the party cohesion and ANO’s electoral success. How is the relevance of this theoretical argument tested? We know the party is electorally successful, but the rest remains unclear. We do not know how homogenous is its elite (in regards to their careers and professional links). We do not know how such party elite homogeneity would translate into making the party more cohesive. Nor we know how such party cohesion would manifest electorally by influencing the public image of the party.

To empirically investigate these relationships, first, an in-depth analysis of the elite’s backgrounds is conducted. The following aspects of ANO’s elite’s backgrounds are empirically treated: their occupational background, their former political experience and the existence of professional links amongst them. This research approach will identify the proportion of ANO’s elite that share career backgrounds and professional links (i.e. it will indicate how homogenous is the party elite). The second step will incorporate the analysis of this potential homogeneity’s manifestation in making the party more cohesive (and in turn more attractive for voters). Exploring various real-life examples from Czech media should enlighten whether ANO held together when the party faced major scandals (and whether its public image benefited as a

result). The analysis will integrate public electoral polls conducted at the time of these substantial scandals to demonstrate the relationship between party cohesion and the public image of ANO.

What kind of data do the analyses mentioned above depend? ANO's elite's backgrounds are the chief source of data in this chapter. Following the terminology coined by Katz and Mair (1993), this chapter explores the background of the elite in 'the party in public office', as well as the elite in 'the party in central office'. ANO's MPs, ministers and mayors constitute the first group, while the second group consists of party praesidium members, leaders of regional organizations and central party staff. In total, online profiles of ninety-two ANO's elites are analysed. In regards to ANO's MPs, the investigation took place on the Czech parliament website. For the other elites, the official party website of ANO has been used as the main source of data. For the lower levels of political representation and especially for some of the internal party elites the data were not disclosed on the party website, additional research took place on social networks, and sites such as LinkedIn were used as the source). When collecting data, the focus was on the career past of elites, that is on their career patterns (the occupation party elites held before being appointed to the party post). The attention was also paid to the political experience of ANO's elites (any previous political party membership, candidacy or nomination by the party as an independent candidate). Finally, the professional links between party elite were investigated (the actual specific companies, where elites held posts before their political careers in ANO). Public electoral polls and media articles serve as other sources of information in this chapter.

4.4. Empirical Analysis

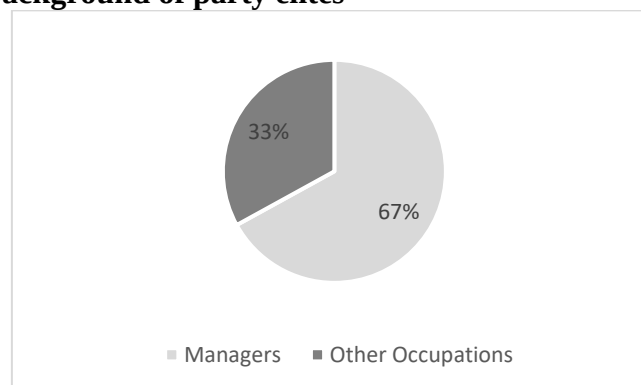
This section explores how homogenous ANO's elite is in two aspects, looking at their career backgrounds (and political experience) and the professional links between the elite. This section then proceeds with investigating how the party elite homogeneity matters for party cohesion, and in turn for ANO's electoral success.

4.4.1. Career Backgrounds and Political Experience of ANO's Elite

The analysis of ANO's elite's backgrounds shows that one kind of profession constitutes the single largest category in the sample (the full dataset with party elites' names, posts held in ANO and specific careers of these elites is attached as a part of Appendices 10-16). The data

presented in the appendices indicate that managers are the most represented profession amongst ANO's party elite. For this analysis, the managerial category encompasses many career roles, such as company directors, individuals in executive positions and entrepreneurs. As illustrated in Figure 4.2, individuals with such managerial career background account for sixty-seven per cent of the party elite. The other professions include highly heterogeneous groups of the party elite with various careers (ranging from lawyers, teachers, journalists, doctors, actors social workers and others). In terms of the 'party in public office', out of forty-seven MPs, twenty-seven are former managers or entrepreneurs (from various business industries and at different levels of seniority). Six out of its seven mayors have managerial career past, and four out of six ANO's ministers have been previously employed in managerial positions. In regards to the 'party in central office', the party elite replicates the same phenomenon of 'managers' infiltration'. Nine out of twelve members of ANO's party praesidium have managerial career background. Twelve of the fourteen ANO's regional leaders have managerial career background, representing the highest proportion of ANO's elites with common career background out of all elite categories. Four out of six of ANO's employees in party secretariat have former managerial career past. The above yields that ANO's elites are indeed predominately composed of managers.

Figure 4.2 Career background of party elites



Source: www.anobudelip.cz, LinkedIn profiles, parliamentary websites, refer to Appendices 10-16.

This prevalence of managers within ANO's party elite is consistent with this party's public image (and with the rhetoric used in the electoral campaigns). The common managerial career backgrounds of party elite observed above can be seen as a part of ANO's broader strategy to build a public image as the party of managers. From the beginning, ANO praised the role that experienced managers with hands-on experience and pragmatism from real-life can bring into

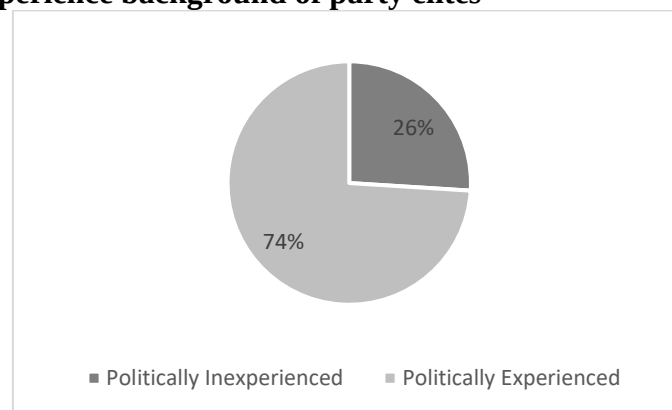
politics. This pragmatic problem-solving managerial ideology in ANO stems from the media appearances of its party leader. As evident from the findings, this part of ANO's ideology mirrors in the career composition of its party elite as well (in particular within 'the party in public office'). This 'managerial pragmatism' is based on ANO's views on the state as a business firm, and the role of politicians as managers in it (Němec 2012). ANO's communication style with the public relied extensively on such pragmatic, manager-like, business perspective of running the public administration.

Amongst other things, the strong emphasis was put on promising to run the state like running private business corporations. ANO repeatedly made this claim as the main slogan in its electoral campaigns. Especially in the campaign before the 2013 parliamentary elections, in which the party made an electoral breakthrough. In 2013 the party emphasized to 'manage the state like a firm' and revisited this idea in the 2016 regional elections. The updated slogan to 'lead a region like a firm'. This idea is based on the premise that people with hands-on managerial experience from the real world will provide a better solution to the malfunctioning state bureaucracy, growing state debt and other issues. Managers were presented as the opposition to the career politicians of established parties with no 'real-life' career achievement. This business problem-solving idea as a recipe for fixing the state administration was from the beginning, the main slogan of the party. Considering the overall lack of any signs of party ideology in ANO, it was also the only clear symbol of its political views. The findings demonstrate that the career composition of ANO's elite is related to the business image of the party. Common elites' backgrounds are de-facto connecting the managerial-like ideological view of the party with its organizational practice. By the opening of public office to the individuals with the managerial experience of running private enterprises, ANO has turned these ideas into practice. It created a party elite with a comparatively high degree of occupational homogeneity.

In addition to the career backgrounds of ANO's party elite, this analysis includes another aspect of their background – the previous political experience. For this analysis, political experience refers to any elite's previous party membership or candidacy before participating in ANO. The findings indicate that twenty-six per cent of the party elite had some political experience before joining ANO (see Figure 4.3 for the graphical illustration of the data presented as part of Appendices 10-16). It yields that seventy-four per cent of ANO's elite had no political experience at all, which is again in line with the ANO's public image as a party

of managers opposing political establishment. ANO repeatedly emphasised its newness in politics, as well as its strong opposition to the entire political establishment. Because ANO frequently labelled all established parties as corrupt and incompetent in its campaign message, it would come as a surprise if the majority of its party elite would be recruited from the other parties. The anti-establishment rhetoric was strong within ANO. Even the word politics or politician were perceived as pejorative terms. ANO's party leader himself repeatedly insisted that he is not a politician, despite being MP and minister of finance at the time.

Figure 4.3 Political experience background of party elites



Source: www.anobudelip.cz, LinkedIn profiles, parliamentary websites, refer to Appendices 10-16.

The political strategy of aiming at pragmatic managers from outside of politics is not an entirely new idea in the context of contemporary post-communist Czech politics. A similar strategy was implemented in the case of ODS in the '90s (electorally strongest Czech party at the time). In this respect, Hadjiisky (2011) talks about an essential group of so-called post-normalisation technocrats, who were individuals that formed the ideology and public image of ODS throughout the '90s. These individuals heavily influenced not only the ODS party in the years to come, but their perspective and ideas also had an impact on the crucial economic policies and reforms adopted in the country at the time. This ODS elite shared similar political attitudes based on their common professional past as managers or financiers, and their educational profiles as economists. Several scholars noted that in 1995, one-third of ODS's party leadership had the technical or economic educational background (Kostelecký and Kroupa 1996). Such

composition of party elite was not a coincidence, Václav Klaus⁸ as a conservative, right-wing economist created the party elite from individuals with similar professional and educational profiles, because he came up from this background too. A large proportion of ODS party elite comprised competent professionals, who in addition to having similar career backgrounds knew each other from economic and financial circles. The overlap between the professional network of these technocrats and the formal leadership of the party was crucial for the party cohesion. Hadjiisky (2011, 102) referred to ODS as to a business enterprise because of the influence of these professionals on the party ideology. For similar reasons, Hanley (2004) described ODS as the tool of technocratic modernisation, emphasising the substantial impact these professionals had on the party. Although later the difference between economists and engineers within the party leadership led to widely-spread disputes and tensions and the struggle for control over the party, in the '90s, it unified the party ideologically. The common ground on main policies and common-sense technocratic approach shared by the elite aided ODS's party elite to share common political attitudes. In turn, this party cohesion protected the party organization from larger conflicts and risk of disintegration. In particular, the technocratic make-up of the party elite and its common ideological profile was crucial for ODS in the '90s. It helped to navigate the party through the critical phase of its institutionalization when it struggled for control over the party (for more details on Klaus's party leadership of ODS see Cirhan and Kopecký 2019). The example of ODS shows that the party elite with similar social backgrounds more likely shares political attitudes, which minimises internal conflicts and divisions within the party. Common career backgrounds of ODS's elite translated into their common political views. Similarly to ODS, in ANO, the common career backgrounds of the party elite help to facilitate party cohesion (as the discussion presented later in this chapter will demonstrate).

4.4.2. Professional Links Between Elites

This section looks at another aspect of the party elite's backgrounds – their professional links. As explained in detail earlier, in addition to party elite sharing career pasts, professional links

⁸ Founder of ODS, party leader from 1991 until 2002, former minister of finance, prime minister and president.

of the elites should further contribute to the party cohesion. In theory, party elite with professional links from the past should more likely hold similar political views and stick together to cooperate in a united manner at times of pressures (considering the relations with each forged outside of their party organization). It should help the party to avoid divisions that should be electorally advantageous by diffusing the negative impact of these conflicts on the public image of the party.

———~~The findings indicate~~ that a not negligible proportion of ANO's party elite has been in the past appointed to (or currently still holds) a managerial position within Agrofert business conglomerate of ANO's party leader Andrej Babiš. To be specific, seventeen per cent of the ninety-two elites⁹ have former or current professional links to Agrofert (see Appendices 10-16). The fact that nearly a fifth of ANO's leadership is professionally associated with Agrofert means that part of ANO's elites forms a corporate network with an unofficial chain of command within the party. Babiš, being a party leader and simultaneously (for part of the elite), either their former or current employer, is creating a chain of dependence. When the party leader's business pays some of the party elite, they will be more loyal to the party leadership as a result. The loyalty stems from the financial dependency of these individuals on the party leader. This informal relationship based on the financial dependencies has an impact on the party cohesion in ANO and on the position of the party leader. The discussion in the next section will show how party elite homogeneity (common career backgrounds together with shared professional links) translates into party cohesion. The financial dependency of some of the party elite on the party leader further strengthens the effect of the party elite homogeneity on party cohesion. As discussed in Chapters 2 and 3, the data from the party elite's profiles also indicate that the managers from Agrofert occupy crucial party posts within ANO (see Appendices 10-16). The post of party manager is held by a former Agrofert Human Resources manager, who oversees the overall management of the party behind the scenes. The leader of ANO's parliamentary faction (the most crucial post in relation to the cohesion of ANO's 'party in public office') is in the hands of another Agrofert's manager (a current member of Agrofert's board of directors,

⁹ Because many individuals hold multiple posts within the party (for instance Andrej Babiš is simultaneously MP, minister and a member of party presidium) the percentage refers more to a proportion of party posts professionally associated with Agrofert, rather than a proportion of individuals per se.

and ANO's first deputy party leader in one person). The fact that all ANO's MPs have to account to the individuals professionally connected to (and financially dependent on) party leader's business greatly enhances the cohesion within this party. Simultaneously, ANO's party cohesion is strengthened by a significant overlap of party posts at different levels of leadership hierarchy; some posts within the leadership are held by the same individuals.

Three members of ANO's party praesidium are simultaneously leaders of regional organizations; eight members of party praesidium are also MPs. It also appears from the interviews conducted with ANO's elites that different levels of party leadership regularly hold meetings to discuss party agenda and communicate daily via email to keep all individuals in crucial positions informed and updated. The above findings indicate that the party elite is homogenous in regards to their career backgrounds and professional links. The next section will enlighten how this party elite homogeneity manifests in regards to the party cohesion. The cohesion will be tested on the recent scandals experienced by the party. ANO faced the most extreme scandal concerning its party leader, which represents the most difficult challenge to the party known to date. Special attention is paid to the party elite's behaviour and ANO's ability to avoid party divisions when facing this scandal.

4.4.3. Homogenous Party Elite and ANO as Cohesive Party

How can we relate the ANO's party elite homogeneity (in regards to their career backgrounds and professional links) to its electoral success? According to the existing theory, the party elite homogeneity (the shared career background of the elite, enhanced by professional links between them) helps parties to stay more cohesive. In theory, such party cohesion facilitates electoral success, because the party is better equipped to prevent internal conflicts and party divisions, which is welcomed and rewarded by their potential electorate. At this point, we know that ANO is electorally successful and that it has a homogenous elite. The following paragraphs explore how this homogeneity within ANO's elite manifests in the party being more cohesive and more immune to negative consequences of organizational crises.

From the very beginning, ANO managed to preserve its public image as a cohesive entity. The cohesion manifested itself strongly in the disciplined voting behaviour and obedience of ANO's MPs to the party leadership (Procházková 2018). However, in addition to this day-to-day example, the party cohesion within ANO was most strongly tested and

exhibited during the recent scandals experienced by the party. When the party faced serious scandals concerning the party leader, the party elite stayed firmly united behind him. The cohesion and unified nature of the party first showed when several controversial short-notice replacements of ANO's ministers took place (ČTK 2011; Česká televize 2014; Lidovky 2015; IDNES.cz 2015; Česká televize 2015), and nobody from the party elite voiced any concerns (ČTK 2015b). It was a clear signal that the obedience and loyalty to the party leader are vital to pursuing a successful political career within ANO. Those who tried to criticise the leadership were replaced, and the rest of the elite stood quiet, supporting the choices made by the leadership. The major test of ANO's cohesion came with the most extreme scandal concerning the party leader being accused of financial fraud. The (not only Czech) mainstream media focused on this case when the allegations of misuse of the European Union funding by one of ANO's party leader's businesses became publicly known. Babiš's Stork's Nest Farm conference centre and pet zoo were under the investigation for fraud by The European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF) and by the Czech police for receiving a grant intended for small and medium-sized firms (Neurope.eu 2016). Agrofert, as a large conglomerate of more than two hundred companies, was not eligible. The ownership of the farm was changed, and the application for the grant was made under an anonymous stock shareholding (Holub 2016). Following this scandal, the media attention was fully paid to ANO's leader, his business and 'his' party. In other parties, such scandal concerning the party leader would likely trigger internal party dissent, and attempts to overthrow him would start. But in ANO at the party elite level, nobody voiced any concerns related to Babiš's position. There was no publicly visible opposition or faction within ANO against Babiš asking for his resignation, questioning his position, or even suggesting changes in the leadership. On the contrary, in the months and years following the scandal, all members of ANO's elite continue to support Babiš publicly in the media (Junek 2019; Spěváčková 2017a; Spěváčková 2017b; Blažek and Pokorná 2019) and the parliament (Kosová 2018; Novinky.cz 2016).

The following real-life examples from the media illustrate how the cohesion within ANO manifested publicly and how the party elite helped to defend the party leader and the public image of the party following the media coverage of this scandal. For example, when the media questioned tens of ANO's regional and local party leaders, they have all voiced unanimous support to the party leader (Čevelová and Kolajová 2019). A similar survey has been conducted with all ANO's MPs, and senators, a vast majority of them expressed strong

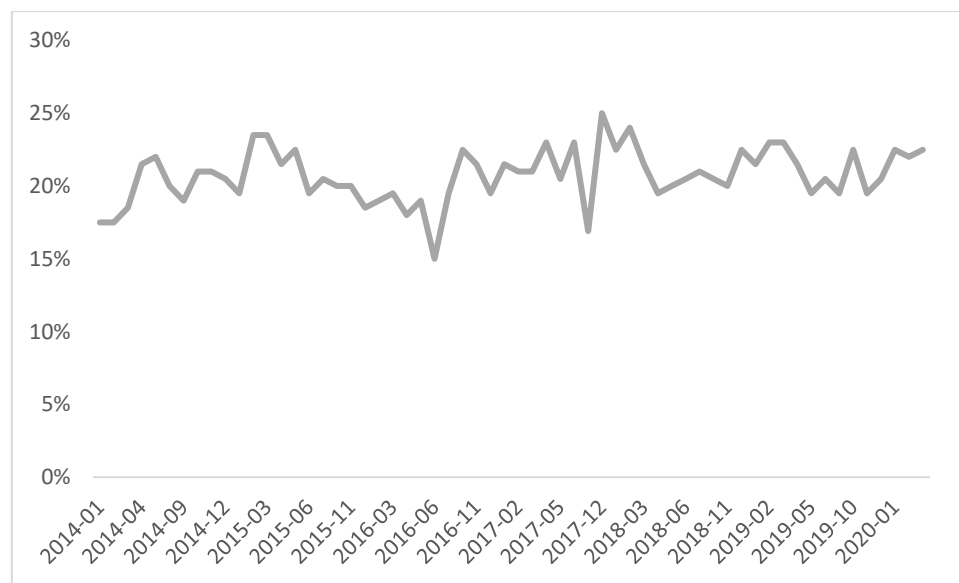
support to the party leader (only several of them shared that they do not know enough about the scandal to comment) (Guryčová et al. 2019). Several ANO's MPs and ministers also defended Babiš in interviews that they provided to the media, emphasising their full trust to the party leader (Veselovský 2018a; Drtinová 2019; DVTV and Drtinová 2019). One of them was also ANO's first deputy leader Jaroslav Faltýnek (and simultaneously a manager in Agrofert), who strongly and frequently supported Babiš in interviews provided to the media. Faltýnek repeatedly questioned the credibility of the investigation and claimed it is manipulated and artificially created case aimed to damage the leader and the party (Veselovský 2018b). Richard Brabec, minister for the environment (former manager in Lovochemie company, part of Agrofert) also regularly supported Babiš in numerous interviews to the media, claiming that "the investigation report is full of errors and unverified or false information" (Janda 2019). Brabec emphasised the inaccuracy and false claims in reports related to Babiš's investigations on more occasions and supported the party leader fully (DVTV 2019). Other times, Brabec and Havlíček (minister of industry and trade) defended Babiš and stated that "the accusations are personal attacks and should be answered legally" (ČT24 2019). One of the MEPs (Member of the European Parliament) elected for ANO also defended Babiš and claimed the misuse of EU funding should not even be discussed in the European Parliament (Smetana 2019). One of ANO's senators went even further by referring to Babiš's investigation as to part of the negative campaign against the party, asking for legal punishment of those involved (Veselovský 2018b). Some party elites, such as ANO's party manager, was even involved in the organization of public demonstrations in support of Babiš (Aktuálně 2018). The cohesion of the party was perhaps best manifested when Babiš had a speech at the Czech parliament concerning this scandal, and all ANO's MPs stood up and applauded him afterwards (Novinky.cz 2016).

4.4.4. ANO's Positive Public Image Stemming from Party Cohesion

How does the party cohesion, discussed in the previous section reflect in ANO's public image and its electoral success? When the severe fraud allegations concerning ANO's party leader became publicly known in 2016, a significant negative impact was expected to hurt the credibility of the party severely. But ANO withstood the pressures associated with this scandal unharmed. ANO should have suffered electorally from its leader's scandal, but it did not. Since the media coverage of the scandal, ANO was electorally successful in all successive elections

in different electoral arenas held in 2016, 2017, 2018 and 2019 (Refer to Figure 1.1 in the introducing Chapter 1 for details). Also, the electoral polls from the time of the scandal indicate that ANO's popularity was not significantly affected by this scandal becoming known publicly (CVVM 2020). Refer to Figure 4.4 illustrating the data from electoral poll indicating that the popularity of ANO did not suffer as a result of the scandal. The popularity of ANO in 2016 and 2017 did not decrease below twenty-five per cent of the 'vote'. It was in the period directly following the media coverage of the Stork's Nest Farm scandal (medialised in spring 2016). After the initial minor decrease to twenty-five per cent in April 2016, ANO's popularity went up over the summer months and from July 2016 until October 2016 is reached over thirty per cent. This increase in popularity (in most of the public electoral polls) was recorded despite Babiš's scandal being widely publicly-known and being continuously discussed in the mainstream media.

Figure 4.4 ANO's popularity, Electoral Poll



Source: CVVM (2020).

When the other new Czech parties that lacked cohesion faced scandals, these quickly transformed into internal conflicts that led to their marginalisation (Cirhan and Kopecký 2017). When ANO faced a major scandal (perhaps even more serious than those of the other new parties), its public image should have been shattered similarly, but it was not because the party was cohesive. The examples of elite's behaviour demonstrate that ANO is cohesive, its party

elite is indeed united and the public image of the party benefits from this party cohesion. As the electoral polls show, the unified reaction of the party elite (standing firmly behind its leader as the time of crisis) translated into the image of the party as a cohesive entity. This party elite's reaction is attractive to the public as the electoral polls indicate. The electoral performance of ANO in several successive elections following the media coverage of the scandal also shows that voters reward it too. The party elite homogeneity (in managerial career backgrounds and strong professional links of the elite) transforms the party into a cohesive entity. This state seems to be electorally advantageous as the previous studies (as well as the electoral polls) show.

4.5. Discussion and Conclusions

This chapter pursued an argument about two aspects of ANO's party elite's background and electoral success via party cohesion. The existing theory states that the common career backgrounds of elites lead to shared political attitudes (Farazmand 1999; Putnam 1973; Wellhofer 1974). When elites share views, it facilitates party cohesion, which in turn translates in the party's image of unitary entity (Andeweg and Thomassen 2010; Suthanintr 1985). This effect of common career backgrounds is even strengthened when elite also shares professional links. This chapter refers to such party elite as to homogenous elite. Party elite, whose members share career background and are also professionally associated is likely to form an interlocking network within the party, which significantly enhances party cohesion (Janowitz et al. 1956; Siavelis and Morgenstern 2008). The party cohesion resulting from party elite's professional links positively influences attitudinal consensus within the party, which helps parties to keep united especially at the times when pressures associated with holding public office influence the party (Mill 1956; Lodge 1969; Moore 1979). When the party is cohesive and preserves unified image by being able to prevent internal conflicts and divisions, it will likely be rewarded electorally as the previous studies in the area show. Voters prefer parties that are not in a constant state of conflict because they find them more trustworthy, which positively resonates with them. The previous studies have shown that party cohesion stemming from party elite homogeneity improved parties' capacity to defuse internal conflicts and divisions and to tackle public scandals (which has a positive impact on their public image). This assumption is warranted in this particular case of ANO.

The findings presented in this chapter indicate that ANO's party elite is highly homogenous (in regards to the managerial career backgrounds, and the party elite's professional links). The party elite homogeneity in career backgrounds and professional links facilitates party cohesion necessary for dealing with scandals. ANO's elite's cohesion stems directly from the fact that part of it consists of Agrofert's managers. At the time of crises faced by ANO, its party elite manifested cohesion and strong support to the party leadership. Other new parties in the country quickly fell into internal conflicts and divisions following the media coverage of their scandals (which cost them the valuable trust of their voters who punished them in the next elections). Similar findings have been concluded in the article I have co-authored (Cirhan and Kopecký 2017), devoted to the relationship between electoral success and composition of party elite of Czech anti-establishment parties. The electorally less successful parties, VV and Dawn, were haunted by internal conflicts, and splits that were motivated by the scandals of their party elite (Cirhan and Kopecký 2017). In the absence of party cohesion, stemming from party elites' common career and professional backgrounds, these two parties quickly fell apart and completely lost relevance (Cirhan and Kopecký 2017). When ANO faced such scandals, its party elite stood firmly united behind its leader and defended him whenever possible. No internal opposition was formed within ANO because of the party cohesion stemming from its homogenous party elite. ANO's party elite supported the party leadership unanimously, and the party's public reputation did not suffer as a result. The findings in this chapter not only demonstrated that ANO has highly homogenous elite, but also pointed out that the party leader's business is strongly incorporated into the party organizational structures. This infiltration of party leader's business network into party organization reminds us of the business-firm parties and entrepreneurial parties (Hloušek 2012; Hopkin and Paolucci 1999), known for their reliance on business activities of their party leaders. Party organizational features of such parties, found by political entrepreneurs as instruments of their private interests in politics (Klíma 2015), will be discussed in the next chapter in a comparative perspective.