

Let's Keep It Fresh: Linking Electoral Manifesto Cohesion to Re-Election Success of Entrepreneurial Parties in Central Europe*

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Abstract /

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Over the past decade, an unparalleled shift in party systems could be seen in most European countries, especially in post-communist countries in Central Europe, with a plethora of new political parties and movements coming to power. A significant portion of them has been established by political entrepreneurs, who promised the electorate to fight corruption and bureaucracy, challenge the self-interested political elites, and bring well-being to the whole country. Often refusing to define themselves as left or right, these political parties question the traditional programmatic division, not adhering to any discernible ideology. Although the research revolving around new political parties tends to focus primarily on their initial success, the article investigates the newcomer entrepreneurial parties re-election success in the Czech Republic, Poland, and Slovakia. Through detailed qualitative analysis, it examines how shifts in electoral manifestos and visual campaign materials, such as billboards, influence the repeated success of these parties after their initial breakthrough. With the support of additional quantitative data, I confirm the initial suspicion, that for an entrepreneurial party, correctly reflecting the mood of the target electorate and accordingly adjusting the programme and the campaign is crucial and takes precedent over developing a consistent, cohesive ideological framework.

Keywords /

political parties; election success; entrepreneurial parties; programme manifestos; electoral campaigns

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Introduction

In the past decade, an unprecedented transformation of party systems can be observed across Europe (Hanley – Sikk 2016; Hobolt – De Vries 2015). In recent years, many new political parties have achieved significant electoral success, especially in the newer Central European democracies. This success was particularly noticeable with regard to entrepreneurial (by Hloušek – Kopeček – Vodová 2020),¹ anti-establishment reform parties (Hanley – Sikk 2011), anti-corruption parties (Bågenholm 2013), and niche parties (Wagner 2012) that, in their initial breakthrough, repeatedly chose to rely on anti-elite, anti-corruption, and pro-democratic political messages, emphasising the supposed distance, the lack of understanding and corruption of leaders of the established political elite. More often than not, these new political subjects defy the traditional left- and right-wing split, which leads many scholars to simply label them as “populist” (e.g., see Krause – Wagner 2019; Rooduijn 2018).

The current political science research addresses the organisational features of entrepreneurial parties (e.g. Arter 2013; Krašovec 2017; Hloušek – Kopeček 2017) and considers how the parties manage to enter the political arena and achieve their initial breakthrough (Hloušek – Kopeček – Vodová 2020). Nevertheless, there is a lack of understanding as to why certain entrepreneurial parties succeed *repeatedly*. In some cases, these parties become the leading political force and replace the political elite they were criticising in the first place; others “join” their rivals in coalitions to obtain power, many perish quickly after their initial breakthrough, succumbing to inner turmoil, political affairs, or loss of electoral support. Without a doubt, a plethora of factors contribute towards the reason why specific entrepreneurial parties repeatedly succeed in elections when others fail.

This article focuses on how the electoral manifestos contribute to the party’s success or the failure when it comes to their re-election success. Specifically, I look into whether a party that adheres to a particular set of values, repeatedly and consistently focusing on specific topics, and presenting ideological cohesiveness and integrity, fares better or worse than an entrepreneurial party that changes its programme flexibly based on the current preferences of the electorate, addressing the most critical or popular ideas, rather than consistently representing a particular standpoint. In order to maintain a representative sample, I look into the entrepreneurial parties that managed to achieve a parliamentary breakthrough in Central Europe.² The Visegrad Group allow for comparison when it comes to political history, general outlines of the political and party system and the history of their transition to democracy.

1 / Theoretical framework and hypothesis

The notion of entrepreneurial parties first appeared in the late 1990s; the new stage of political party development was outlined by Hopkin and Paolucci (1999) who introduced

the concept of a “business-firm party”. Hopkin and Paolucci (1999) and later Krouwel (2006, 2012) understood this type as an ideal concept for political subjects that originate from a political entrepreneur’s private initiative, and/or possessing a structure of a private company (for details on business-firm parties, see Hopkin – Paolucci 1999; Krouwel 2006; Krouwel 2012; Carty 2004: 20–21, Hloušek – Kopeček 2017: 86). However, other conceptualisations addressing the same entrepreneurial phenomenon exist. Von Beyme (1996), Carty (2004), Lucardie (2000), Harmel – Svåsand (1993), Arter (2013) or Seisselberg (1996) all focused their research efforts on parties that represent these traits and characteristics, contributing to the scholarly research with their conceptualisations of this new political party ideal type. As Kopeček aptly notes, “*the definition and descriptions of these new parties provided by individual academics differ. This is because authors highlight various aspects, and sometimes also environmental differences*” (Kopeček 2016: 3). This article will follow the “minimal concept” of an entrepreneurial party, as proposed by Hloušek and Kopeček (2017), as they manage to synthesise traits that can be identified in most relevant works on this topic.³

Building on this, I then look into the electoral manifestos, as well as other campaign materials, of selected parties over time. Electoral manifestos provide (at least in theory) a compendium of party positions, streamline the campaign, and are used as campaign material. Parties compete in elections rallying behind their manifestos, and behind their leaders who commit to them publicly (Eder et al. 2017). In the following campaign, voters not only judge parties according to their policies proposed for the next term, but they also retrospectively scrutinise the party’s performance and whether they kept their promises (see Dalton et al. 2011). The research focusing on campaigns and manifestos shows that political actors traditionally have distinct ideological identities, discernible on the left-to-right continuum, emerging from a hierarchy of core ideas, which are embedded in a network of supporters who substantially restrict their freedom to change their basic political positions (Dalton – McAllister 2015: 761; Johnston 1988: 59; Dinas – Gemenis 2010: 427). Having a consistent attitude has been believed to be normatively desirable for the role that both citizens and political parties play in democratic representation (see, e.g., Converse 1964), as keeping an ideologically coherent and consistent programme is associated with voters easily identifying with the party and understanding what the party stands for.

The existing research on political representation in Europe emphasises the linkage between parties’ policy positions and their supporters’ policy beliefs (Adams et al. 2011: 370). Therefore, it is perceived as desirable, that parties’ policy programmes match the views of the party’s core supporters. Dozens of studies have analysed the mass-elite policy linkage, and they typically report reasonably close matches between parties’ positions and their supporters’ policy preferences, particularly concerning policy debates over left-right social welfare issues (Adams et al. 2011: 370; Dalton 1985). However, there is a common belief among researchers that parties strategically alter their political positions between elections to increase their share of the vote (Dalton – McAllister 2015: 761). In the ever-changing political environment, where the parties and voters shift their policy positions,

policy correspondence between parties and their supporters is often maintained through a combination of party elites responding to their supporters and these supporters responding to party elites. Therefore, the elites may dynamically adjust policy positions in response to shifts in their supporters' beliefs (Adams et al. 2011: 370).

So how does this affect the party manifestos and electoral programmes of entrepreneurial parties? Entrepreneurial parties commonly build their image in contrast to the country's (current or former) political elite. These elites are viewed as detached from the needs, interests, and mores of the "ordinary citizens" (Pop-Eleches 2010). With these claims, the entrepreneurial parties call for change, often combining populist strategies with anti-elite and anti-corruption voices, addressing new political issues and topics across the ideological spectrum (Polk et al. 2017). For this reason, the traditional positioning of political parties on the left-right political spectrum often fails in the case of new, entrepreneurially based political actors.

At first glance, entrepreneurial parties vary significantly in how they organise their programmes and how ideologically consistent they are; not only in comparison to their established counterparts but also with regard to each other. Political science research has been trying to explore the different angles of how this affects the success of a political party after its initial breakthrough (see, e.g., Bolleyer – Bytzek 2013; Zulianello 2019; Arter 2010). However, research into the electoral programmes and manifestos and how they relate to the party success leaves room for examination of the electoral programme's influence over the party's success and its significance. I will argue that contrary to catch-all parties, it is not beneficial for an entrepreneurial party to try to encompass *all* the possible voters from the centre of the political spectrum. Instead, it behoves them to invest funds to identify the most salient issues for the next elections and, using well-developed PR and media strategies, sell those to the electorate in their programmes. I assume that traditional parties position themselves on the left-right continuum, and then follow this line with some level of consistency. Contrary to that, I presuppose, that entrepreneurial parties tailor their political programme from election to election to reflect the utmost current frame-of-mind of the electorate to ensure electoral gain, with little concern to how cohesive their programme is;

H1: The more flexible the entrepreneurial party is with its programme and succeeds to suitably reflect the electorate's current desires, the more successful it is in the elections after its initial breakthrough.

H1a: Parties that go beyond their initial appeal in the subsequent elections are more successful than parties that keep repeating their promises.

Additionally, we need to consider the possibility that an electoral manifesto may not dispose of any particular importance; it could be just a compulsory exercise, a recurring ritualistic element of the electoral campaign as Eder et al. (2017: 83) points out. It could be argued that nowadays, the electorate will not read – or even skim through – a lengthy document on policies and standpoints, preferring the social media, television, billboards and posters as a source of information on candidates and competing parties. Therefore, I will

also look into the link between the party's manifesto and the electoral campaign conducted on billboards, posters and internet banners, assuming that:

H2: Political parties are more successful after their electoral breakthrough if they display consistency between their electoral campaigns (e.g., billboards) and manifestos.

2 / Case selection and method

Altogether, since 2010⁴ nine political parties within Central Europe comply with the conceptualisation of entrepreneurial parties. Therefore, the parties examined, together with electoral years and results are outlined in Table 1.⁵

Table 1: List of parties examined

Czech Republic		2010	2013	2017
ANO 2011 (ANO)		x	18.65	29.64
Public Affairs (VV)		10.80	X	x
Dawn of Direct Democracy (Úsvit) / Freedom and Direct Democracy (SPD)		x	6.88	10.64
Poland		2010	2015	2019
Palikot's Movement (RP)		10.77	0	x
Kukiz'15		X	8.81	1.3
Modern		x	7.6	1.74
Slovakia	2010	2012	2016	2020
Freedom & Solidarity (SaS)	12.40	5.88	21.10	6.22
Ordinary People and Independents (OLaNO)	x	8.55	11.03	25.03
Boris Kollár – We are Family (Sme Rodina)	x	x	6.60	8.20

Source: Volby.cz 2020; Volby.statistics.sk 2020; Wybory.gov.pl 2020.

In this article, I follow the logic of a qualitative content analysis, focusing on detailed comparison of the programme documents that were presented by each party before the nationwide election. I investigate the programme manifestos of examined parties, as they provide a more accurate and representative picture of where the party stands in the policy space, without requiring further knowledge about their policy records (see Dinas – Gemenis 2010). To support this qualitative observation, I also take the Manifesto Project results into consideration, that provide quantitatively based support for most parties and election years, that were included in this dataset. Furthermore, the Manifesto Project (Volkens et al. 2020) database was also used to distinguish and conceptualise the categories of topics discussed and presented in the electoral programme. Altogether, 60 distinct topics were identified,

with more than 45 topics being commonly addressed by the electoral programmes under scrutiny.⁶

The Manifesto Project focused on the quantitative measurement of the instances in which a defined topic was mentioned, calculating the share of each topic to the total instances coded. Following this logic from a qualitative perspective, I analyse each programme for the topics discussed and then compare the amount of space a particular topic has been given, as well as any changes in approach to this issue, or any significant differences in what the party is advocating through their election programme. To provide additional insight, I also examined various shorter programme documents, e.g., the lists of priorities or essential party values the subjects had published on their websites. Regarding the intensity of a programme change, the following options, which are not necessarily mutually exclusive, can be distinguished (see Table 2).

Table 2: Programme Change Intensity Conceptualisation

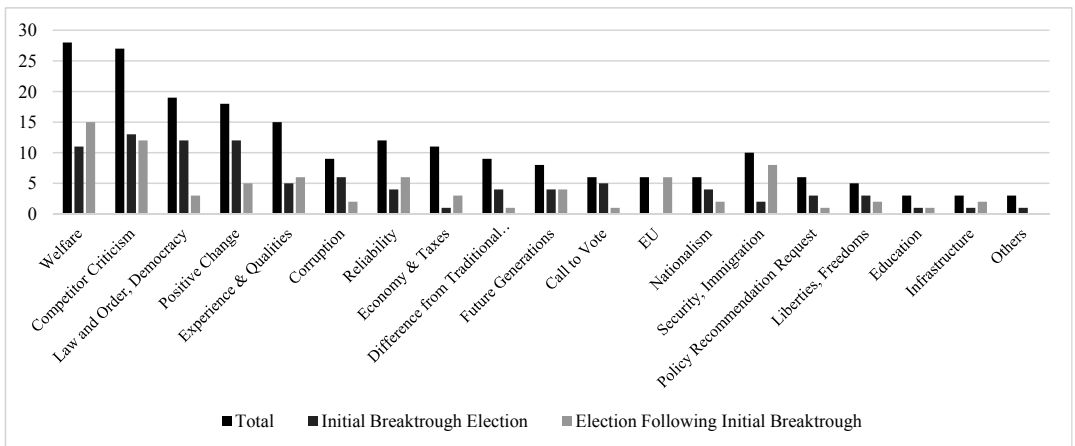
Difference	Conceptualisation ⁷
No change or minimal changes between programmes	The party emphasises the same topics and issues and presents a cohesive approach to policies; predominantly similar values and policy changes are presented with a comparable share
Change in share of space dedicated to particular topics	The party changes the amount of space dedicated to one or more issue compared to other topics discussed in the programme but does not change party position on these
Change in share of space and shifts in policy proposals	The party changes noticeably how much space is dedicated to an issue and shifts the position on this issue to a degree.
Complete overturn of party position	The party either dedicates a dramatically different programme share to a topic or changes its position on altogether.

To address the concern that voters do not actually read electoral manifestos, I enrich the analysis by looking into claims, slogans and mottos that were presented by individual parties on their electoral billboard, posters, and internet banners. Overall, 19 different, mutually nonexclusive categories of statements were identified, and 161 samples were gathered. Included were all billboards, posters and banners that were obtainable on the internet and in the internet archives (see Figure 1).⁸

To improve the understanding of the survival of entrepreneurial parties, I define the success of a party as the ability to achieve re-election after the initial breakthrough. If, by definition, political parties are mortal (Pedersen 1982), their life can end after one re-election or after fifteen. As Bolleyer and Bytzek (2013: 775) show, from a party’s breakthrough, we cannot conclude its success in medium and long-term performance. Many new political parties may (and did) succumb to failed mergers, unsuccessful splits, electoral failure due to

government fatigue (Bakke – Sitter 2013). The ability to get re-elected for the first time after the initial breakthrough suggests that a new party was able to compete at another national election successfully. More fundamentally, it managed to continue to persist as a party, the exposure to the new responsibilities and pressure coming with the parliamentary public office not having the immediate disintegration effect.⁹ Even if the party’s performance is weak on a parliamentary level during its first time in office, the electorate may be aware of the party’s inexperience and give it another chance. Therefore, only repeated re-election indicates that the party adapted to the challenges of operating in parliament and can portray its achievements to the electorate during their campaign reasonably well and in a positive light (see Bolleyer – Bytzek 2013).

Figure 1: Campaign content analysis



To capture the performance of newcomer parties in their re-election, I investigate the percentage difference between the share of seats gained between the first (breakthrough election) and the last election where the party managed to win seats. Therefore, the party can achieve successful re-election, if re-elected with increasing or (more or less) the same percentage of seats, or can be re-elected unsuccessfully, when losing mandates, or failing to get re-elected altogether. The scale is constructed as depicted in Table 3.

Table 3: Percentage Change Conceptualisation

Very successful	Positive balance between first and last electoral result expressed as a percentage of seats gained in the lower house of parliament: difference higher than 100 %.
Moderately successful	Positive balance between first and last electoral result expressed as a percentage of seats gained in the lower house of parliament: difference between 15-100 %.
Sustainably successful	Neutral balance between first and last electoral result expressed as a percentage of seats gained in the lower house of parliament: difference lower than 15 %.

Moderately unsuccessful	Negative balance between first and last electoral result expressed as a percentage of seats gained in the lower house of parliament less than 50 %.
Very unsuccessful	Negative balance between first and last electoral result expressed as a percentage of seats gained in the lower house of parliament of more than 50 %.
Failed	The Party has not been re-elected to the lower house of parliament in the elections following the initial breakthroughs

In this manner, it is possible to reflect on the development of electoral trends in all examined countries with differences in the electoral systems and to respect different strategies possibly employed by various political parties under scrutiny. The focus here is to capture the re-election success as relative to the party size and goals, whether the party aims at first to become a major player, or focuses on smaller electoral gain in their initial breakthrough.¹⁰ For the political parties under scrutiny see Table 4.

Table 4: Election Results Percentage Difference for Selected Parties

Party	The percentage difference between first and last election contested	Re-election
ANO	45.51	moderately successful
VV	0	failed
DAWN/SPD	42.92	moderately successful
Palikot's Movement	0	failed
.Modern	-111.1	very unsuccessful
Kukiz'15	-50.14	very unsuccessful
SaS	0.33	sustainably successful
OLaNO	25.33	moderately successful
We are Family	21.62	moderately successful

Source: Volby.cz 2020; Volby.statistics.sk 2020; Wybory.gov.pl 2020.

3 / Electoral Programmes: Comparative analysis

ANO 2011: from centre-right to centre-left in four years

In 2013 Andrej Babiš and his political party ANO 2011 entered the lower house of the Czech Parliament, skyrocketing to the second most powerful party in the country. Although rarely appearing in public before his political endeavour, Babiš started an intensive campaign right from the very beginning, focusing on anti-establishment and managerial messages (Tintl 2011; Mařík 2011; Hloušek – Kopeček 2017). In a successful attempt to attract voters from the centre-right,

ANO placed a significant emphasis in their 2013 electoral programme on two topics: the quality of democracy and the government and administrative effectiveness. With slogans like “*We are not like the politicians, we buckle down!*” in 2013, the party promised to eliminate corruption and bureaucracy and improve the state of politics, leaving culture, education, or welfare on the sidelines. In their billboard and online campaign, the party also primarily focused on criticising the level of corruption and former elites, listing promises for a brighter future for Czech children. The party then encouraged the electorate to participate in the decision-making process related to programme creation, asking the public what the party should stand for, allowing the electorate to provide ANO with the outlines of their electoral promises.

In 2017, ANO aimed more towards the centre-left electorate, disappointed by the Social Democrats; topics related to democracy, law and order, environmental protection, equality, or economic goals, prominent in the previous programme, were present, but given patently less importance this time around. Instead, the party focused on the need for technological and infrastructure improvements, as well as welfare development, improving culture, supporting market regulation and the military. The billboard and poster campaign also changed noticeably – promises of welfare and security dominated the billboards, together with the criticism of their former governmental colleagues.

The approach to EU cooperation and foreign politics in general also shifted noticeably in the 2017 campaign. Where in 2013 ANO was predominantly Euro-positive but did not elaborate on this in detail, for their second elections the party took a more cautious and detailed approach (ANO Programme 2013). The security of the country – related to the migration crisis and terrorist attacks in Europe – was emphasised on the list of four high-level priorities that Andrej Babiš personally named in the introduction of the 2017 programme. ANO pointed out that the country must face the issue of extreme Islamism and ISIS. Newly, protecting national identity became the party’s priority, stating that ANO will “*loudly assert its security within the EU and NATO*” (ANO Programme 2017: 2) and promising “*A better Czechia. More secure*” on their billboards, claiming that “*We will protect Czechia. Strictly and uncompromisingly*”. The 2017 manifesto provided concrete propositions regarding the purchases of military vehicles and aircrafts and cybersecurity, and it addressed the size of the Czech army, as well as the approach of the party towards the EU and NATO regarding military activities, protecting borders and fighting Daesh.

As the party wanted to appeal primarily to the centre-right minded electorate in the 2013 elections, it emphasised the excess of bureaucratic measures and promoting an unobtrusive state, and translated these notions to the billboards as well, leading an overwhelmingly positive campaign, promising change to the corrupt, and inexpertly lead country. Nevertheless, in 2017, the topics of democracy and civil liberties were almost absent, overshadowed by the focus on technology and infrastructure, digitalisation and eGovernment (Programme ANO 2017: 21). Instead of democratic improvement, the party focused on welfare, making specific promises to senior citizens, young parents, and families in need, emphasising them both in the programme as well on billboards and posters.

Altogether, what could be perceived as lingering ideological ambiguity, which was not resolved even after defined ANO as “*a right-wing party with a social conscience*” (Kálal 2014; Kohutova – Horvat 2018) eventually benefited the party as it allowed for programmatic flexibility after the party’s initial breakthrough. The broad lines of the programme remained mostly consistent between 2013 and 2017 and similarly to Matovič (see below), Babiš centred both campaigns around himself – his persona and business story provided the core of the party’s communication (see Hloušek – Kopeček 2017: 103). This was especially true for the billboard campaign, which displayed continuity in rhetoric and visual presentation, adhering to a high PR standard. However, Babiš’s party exemplified skilful acrobatics in choosing topics to represent election to election: the programmatic focus dramatically shifted throughout the years and the electoral campaign with it. The billboard topics and slogans shifted together with the programme and the rhetoric and style of communication remained familiar to the electorate, the party putting their stakes on informal communication and positive (often quite vague) promises.¹¹

Public Affairs: broken anti-corruption promises

In 2002, Public Affairs began to build a local following in Prague and several other locations. After 2008, the party fell under the influence of Vít Bárta, who aimed to use the party as a platform for the monetary gain for his business. However, VV did not manage to return to the Chamber of Deputies after its initial breakthrough; it crumbled due to internal discord before starting the campaign for the 2013 elections.¹²

Since its origins, the party successfully built its local image, representing citizens in several districts of Prague and occasionally venturing beyond the borders of the capital. In its programme, mostly topical issues were prevalent, focusing on reducing pollution, improving traffic situation, improving the availability of primary education, and advocating for more greenery around the neighbourhood (see Public Affairs Programme 2006a, 2006b). Before entering the 2010 parliamentary electoral race, VV had to create a full-fledged nationwide programme; similarly, to ANO the party asked their voters through an internet campaign what legislature the voters want VV to support. The finished document, although quite verbose, offered a medley of different goals without any perceptible ideological focus. For this reason, the party’s puppet leader Radek John famously claimed that the party neither stands on the right, nor the left, but marches forward (see Hloušek 2012).

The final programme mainly presented economic goals, focusing on tax policies, rent regulation, political parties financing and pension system reform. A significant portion of the programme dealt with law-and-order related topics emphasising the need for more efficient and independent justice and reliable and accountable police force (Public Affairs programme 2010a). However, the short version of the programme focused primarily on corruption, direct democracy, leaner state, social solidarity, gambling taxation, healthcare reform, internet safety and support of nuclear energy. This was partially reflected by the

billboard campaign that criticising the elites (famously the party wanted to “*Stop the political dinosaurs!*”). Similar to other parties in this analysis, the anti-corruption and democratic-improvement topics were prevalent in the first electoral manifesto, as well as the public campaign; the short Public Affairs programme introduced an imaginary voter called Pavel and stated on its first page “*Pavel likes the VV highly-developed anti-corruption programme, containing concrete policy proposal on how to fight bribery*” (Public Affairs Programme 2010)

In its communication, the party focused on direct democracy and increasing the accountability of politicians who would be ideally directly elected by citizens. The party provided voters with a set of proposals for improvements in various areas but did not bridge them with an overarching ideology. This then resulted in an electoral presentation that was by some political scientists perceived as an incoherent mixture of reactions to what the party assumed the voters wanted to hear (see Hloušek 2012) and reinforced the populist undertones of the party’s political communication (Hloušek 2012). It is noticeable that the voters were persuaded by the promises of improving democracy, strengthening personal freedoms, and battling against corruption. When it became apparent, that the Movement itself does not adhere to these qualities and will not be successful in delivering on its promises, the electorate quickly shifted its attention to new parties with a similar message. Especially dooming was the fact that the party focused heavily on anti-corruption and anti-elite slogans in their PR; the discovery of its internal corruption repelled the party supporters that entrusted them with their vote in 2010.

Dawn/SPD: stable core values, flexible on the inside

Tomio Okamura launched his project, the Dawn of Direct Democracy of Tomio Okamura in 2013, following his failed presidential run. As the name of the party suggests, the initial idea of the project was to introduce more principles of direct democracy. Yet, the party introduced a mix of ideas in sharp rhetoric and brief messages to the electorate. Not quite the single-issue-based-party, but ideologically hard to define, Okamura’s party was short-lived, as two years after its establishment and success in the parliamentary election, inner turmoil led to the expulsion of the party’s founder Okamura and his second man, Radim Fiala from the party. Soon after, Okamura launched a new project called Freedom and Direct Democracy, which built on the original ideas of the Dawn and – according to the results of the 2017 elections – took over Dawn’s electorate.

Although both projects of Tomio Okamura targeted the same voters, and SPD’s electorate predominantly voted for the Dawn in the previous elections (Behavio 2017), the programme of the two parties changed significantly between 2013 and 2017 in its rhetoric and topics that were emphasised. Nevertheless, the core values stayed intact. Intense demands for a change of the political system were the main focus of the 2013 programme, with the party striving to introduce direct elections on both national and local level, revocation of politicians through a referendum, personal material and criminal responsibility of politicians, and even

promoting the change towards the semi-presidential or presidential system (Úsvit přímé demokracie Programme 2013). The public campaign then focused on these topics as well, with mottos primarily addressing direct democracy, law, and order matters, as well as anti-corruption appeals.

SPD's programme repeated, almost verbatim, the original promises of the Dawn, stating that freedom and democracy are endangered and calling for a radical change of the political system, but significantly downplayed the importance and space given to this issue, as other topics were put in the forefront. Similarly, to other parties in this study, the first manifesto addressed the state of the government and administration in the country, mainly focusing on passing the Public Service Law, but practically dropped this topic from the following manifesto. Interestingly, the same applies for the billboard and internet campaign. Instead of law and order, the party focused on security ("*No to Islam, no to terrorism*"), sharp rhetoric and welfare ("*Money to the decent, not to parasites*"). The 2013 programme was actively targeted towards small entrepreneurs and the business-minded electorate, addressing at length business incentives, like changing VAT rules, improving conditions for business-owners, reducing the number of bureaucracy entrepreneurs have to face or support for business incubator start-up projects, and the campaign was generally positive ("*Bravely towards change*").

However, in 2017, SPD sharply shifted towards welfare issues, developing these policies in detail, promising to improve the situation of families with children, increase pensions, develop healthcare for families, introduce loans for new parents or increase wages for teachers. A significant change was also made regarding EU politics and opinions about EU integration. Where in 2013 the Dawn only stated, that the party "*refuses the dictate of Brussels*" (Úsvit přímé demokracie Programme 2013), 2017 sharpened the rhetoric, claiming that "*our country is subordinated to the dictate of the EU (...) the EU determines which laws will be in place in our country, and our laws are subordinate to EU law*" (SPD Programme, 2017) and even supported leaving the EU in its billboards. SPD objected to the creation of European multicultural super-state and demanded full sovereignty concerning immigration politics, inner and outer security, as well as tax and currency sovereignty. Other topics, like education expansion or market regulation politics that were emphasised in 2013, were even more prominent in 2017 and the rhetoric intensified overall ("*There is no time, change!*"). However, the topic of culture, which was prioritised in 2013 was practically omitted from the SPD programme in 2017, the ideas of systematically supporting Czech music, art and movie production being overshadowed by increased interest in law-and-order enforcement, especially favouring stricter and stricter actions against domestic crime and increasing the importance of internal security.

What most prominently confirms, that these two projects of Tomio Okamura can be considered and analysed as one – although evolving – political subject, is the fact, that the top 10 programmatic values, published on the website of the Dawn in 2013 and of the Freedom and Direct democracy in 2015, are identical in all ten accounts.¹³ Overall, the party kept all its core topics of the short programme but significantly changed which topics and

to which extent were addressed in the long-form manifesto. Whereas – similarly to ANO or OĽaNO – the 2013 programme addressed the state of democracy, government efficiency and appealed to businesspeople and entrepreneurs, the 2017 manifesto reacted to the shifting political situation. It addressed more welfare, education, and healthcare-related topics, actively shifting towards a negative approach of the EU integration and the security of the country, especially regarding the immigration crisis.

Freedom and Solidarity: law and order in the first place

Slovakia's Freedom and Solidarity, led by entrepreneur and businessman Richard Sulík, first entered parliament in 2010. The party was more defined in its ideological standpoints and their targeted electorate than ANO or Public Affairs, for example. It predominantly targeted the liberal, euro-sceptic voters, from the largest Slovak cities. With its support mostly coming from the Bratislava region, SaS did not become the “party for everyone” in the same way other entrepreneurial parties aim to (VysledkyVolieb 2020).

In the 2010 programme, SaS put the utmost priority on topics related to law and order,¹⁴ emphasising the independence of the justice and propositions of the judiciary system reforms, outlining in detail what changes needed to be made in order to have a better functioning, quicker and more reliable judicial system. Then the campaign mainly focused on quite vague, but positive promises of change – the party chose slogans like “*The young will achieve it*” or “*For the next generations!*”. In the 2012 programme, the topic of law and justice stayed at the top of the party's priorities, as the party proclaimed that justice might be affected, or even controlled, by several political and interest groups (SaS Programme 2012), also keeping this message at the forefront of the 2016 programme. Interestingly, in 2016 the party chose to come out with a massive billboard campaign providing a plethora of different slogans and mottos, more specific than in the previous years, addressing corruption, taxes, unemployment, political immunity or civil liberties.

One of the most prominent issues addressed by the SaS, especially in 2010 and 2012 was the limitation of welfare, but in 2016 welfare was left on the side-lines; the billboard campaign then too addressed predominantly economic and tax-related issues. Another topic that significantly dropped in its significance in 2016 compared to the previous two electoral programmes was government and administrative efficiency. This is noteworthy especially if we consider that SaS was a part of the government after the 2010 elections, disposing of four seats in the Iveta Radičová government led by Slovak Democratic and Christian Union – Democratic Party. In a similar manner to other entrepreneurial parties in this study, in their first electoral manifesto, SaS wanted to streamline the public administration and increase its efficiency, communicating through billboards their reliability and truthfulness (“*I'm not pretty, but I speak the truth*” stated Sulík on one of his billboards).

In 2012 this part of the SaS programme was significantly more developed; as the party targeted the city electorate, they stated in their programme that they want to make “life

easier” for entrepreneurs, businessmen and self-employed business-licence owners. However, in 2016 these promises were reduced to more general statements. Large amounts of former goals were omitted from this programme altogether or minimised. The 2012 and 2016 programmes were oriented more towards economic goals and development of technology and infrastructure. Furthermore, the party completely changed its stance on one of the issues presented in the manifesto. In contrast, the 2010 programme advocated restrictive and cautious politics regarding expenses in the education system since 2012 and especially in 2016 the party was leaning more towards the expansion of the funding presenting more well-rounded vision and strategic goals for improving the education system.

Altogether, SaS programmes across the analysed period were very consistent in some respects and very inconsistent in others. Compared to ANO or OLaNO, SaS predominantly kept the same issues atop of their priorities, focusing on law and order, welfare expenses limitations, free-market economy and investments in technology and infrastructure, predominantly targeting the same electorate. However, we can see some significant changes being made to the programme after the unsuccessful elections in 2012; changing its stance on education funding, and shifted the programme more toward economic goals.

OLaNO: increasing flexibility

Formed by Igor Matovič in 2011, OLaNO entered the political arena in 2012.¹⁵ Right from the start, the party claimed to build on Christian values, prioritising social issues and criticising SaS, their former partner, for the lack thereof. Where the SaS programme remained predominantly consistent and interlinked throughout the three elections (at least regarding the broad outlines of most prominent topics), the campaign propositions of OLaNO differed dramatically between 2012 and 2016.

The 2012 manifesto of OLaNO was quite brief, with declarative goals and concise statements regarding the party’s aims. Leading off with a conservative preamble, OLaNO focused on equality and human rights, environmental protection as well as corruption, emphasising state finances and taxes. Furthermore, the party wanted to protect traditional values, families, culture, and natural heritage (OLaNO Programme 2010: 1), while criticising clientelism, the amount of debt and the decreasing level of justice and civil liberties. Their campaign however focused mostly on nationalistic slogans and call to vote action, rather than on specific programmatic topics. In 2016, the tone of the programme, as well as the campaign, was significantly adjusted. In their new, more elaborate and polished programme, that grew from 22 to 145 pages, the party emphasised the ideas of a welfare state – the need to deal with the poor condition of healthcare, high unemployment, underfinanced education, or expensive housing. This shift was then reflected by the main billboard motto “*For people to actually have a life, not only survive*”.

In the initial manifesto from 2012, the party argued for a systematic change regarding the improvement of the social and pension system as well as the solution of the “Roma problem”

(OLaNO Programme 2010:10). Together with equality, the party also strongly wanted to increase the availability and accessibility of education, especially for citizens from less privileged areas and to improve the educational opportunities for the older adult population. The topic of corruption, excessive bureaucracy and overly complicated administration was prominent in the programme, too, similarly to ANO, Public Affairs and SaS. Similarly, to others in their first elections, in 2012 OLaNO aimed to improve the public service and the accountability of politicians, as well as increasing the enforceability of law and justice, enhance the police and to combat grey economics. This portion of the programme was translated into the 2016 programme with the enforceability of law becoming a significant issue for the party; slow courts of justice and inefficient police force were deemed as priorities to tackle.

Compared to SaS, OLaNO emphasised the importance of military and security in their 2016 programme, reacting (similarly to ANO) to world events by increasing the space dedicated to military power in their 2017 campaign. The party also uniquely dedicated a sizable portion of the programme to the environment, aiming to improve the climate and protect Slovak nature. Significant changes were made to how the party addressed educational expenses in the country. OLaNO also stressed the need for increased teachers' wages, financial support to practical schools and reform of the accreditation system. However, as the programme grew and lengthened for the next elections, the topic of education expansion became one of the most prominent issues of 2016, as the party now provided concrete goals. Welfare also gained importance. Where in 2012, the party preferred issues like corruption and bureaucracy, human rights and justice effectiveness and proposed welfare limitations, in 2016, education and welfare were the utmost discussed topics in the programme and the party aired more on the side of expansion (OLaNO Programme 2012:8).¹⁶ Again, in 2016, the party came with details, encompassing ideas that outlined different strategies and policies the party wanted to implement across the board regarding welfare. Healthcare and health insurance reform was suggested, following up with many propositions for family and social policy improvements, all encompassed under the claim that the state should not encumber its citizens but provide a helpful hand (OLaNO Programme 2016:88).

Similarly to ANO, Igor Matovič's party showed great flexibility with its programme, adjusting their most discussed policies quickly in anticipation of what will resonate with the electorate, judging the evolving needs of the voters well. The party kept a part of its core ideas intact to display a certain consistency in views, focusing on democratic improvements and human rights but was able to completely change their approach to other topics, e.g., the size of the education system budget. After their initial breakthrough, OLaNO backed away from some topics in order to favour others, focusing on welfare primarily, reacting to the current situation with more emphasis on the military or replacing environmental concerns and criticism of corruption and government efficiency with issues that were at the forefront of their minds for their targeted electorate, like improvement of the infrastructure or investments into the culture. Interestingly, where SaS provided their electorate with

a plethora of different election billboards and posters, OLaNO's communication was more streamlined – the 2012 elections offered a bunch of messages and visuals. However, since 2016 the party focused on a couple of critical slogans or mottos that were featured on all billboards.

Boris Kollár – We Are Family: welfare for traditional families

Boris Kollár's "We Are Family movement", established in 2015, is one of the prime examples of a party that is difficult to define from an ideological perspective; a feature that is often found in entrepreneurial parties in various degrees. The party does not explicitly define itself as a left- or right-wing, claiming its goal is to protect Slovak families and the traditional way of life (Aktuality.sk 2017). In this sense, the party almost resembles a single-issue-party, yet the motivations for this are more of a marketing move than a deeply rooted aspiration to represent a specific electorate.¹⁷

The values that Kollár set for his Movement were strongly reflected in the 2016 programme, as the party combined conservative topics with the overall focus on the welfare state. As its name would suggest, in the manifesto, the party aimed to improve the financial situation for families and especially young couples which were seen as pivotal to tackle the demographic crisis.¹⁸ According to Kollár, changes were especially needed in the healthcare system, which needed to re-focus on patients, rather than on revenue. "We Are Family" stated that the family must be protected from "*the dangers from outside (the Islamic invasion of Europe) and from within*" (Sme Rodina 2016: 11). Contrastingly, the campaign focused primarily on Kollár's reliability and personal values, rather than on specific programmatic promises. "*I think with my Heart*" or "*What we promise, we abide by*" were some of the most prominent Sme Rodina slogans. The party then sharply pointed out its non-politician character with mottos like "*I am not like them: I think with my heart*" or "*I am not a politician; you can have faith in me*".

Interestingly, many of these points from 2016 were copied verbatim into the 2020 programme. The latter manifesto kept the original proclamations regarding the traditional view of the family and the state's role. However, it proposed more specific ways the party wanted to provide better care for families, elderly population, and children, as well as disabled or chronically ill citizens. The welfare focus was also noticeable in the billboard campaign, with mottos like "*We will never disappoint families with children. Although not as prominent in public campaigns, law and order topics were another essential priority for the party, especially regarding corruption and obstruction of justice. The programme took a stance against oligarchs and financial groups*" (Sme Rodina 2016), linking them to the desperate situation of families, causing corruption and financial problems for the Slovak Republic. Although not a part of the top priorities stated on the party's website in 2016 (Hnutie Smerodina.sk 2016), a large portion of the programme was also dedicated to the topic of environmental protection; oligarchic influence according to Kollár damaged the environment situation in Slovakia.

Nevertheless, many of the party's original aims were not reiterated in the 2020 programme, as the party was even more focused on welfare goals in this campaign. Overall, similarly to OĽaNO, the manifesto became more elaborate and sophisticated in the following elections, and were professionally created to illustrate the party's goals. The 2020 programme brought many goals aiming to improve the everyday life of Slovakia's citizens – free transportation for students, healthcare improvements, bigger pensions and maternity leave, state-sponsored flats for persons in need, state-based car rental service or allowance for children designated to school-toys purchase were all part of the party's web presentation and campaign (Hnutie Smerodina.sk 2020). Other, non-welfare, goals – although still mentioned in the manifesto – were omitted from the public campaign. The party continued to criticise oligarchs, the previous government, and specific political elites, but even more increased the focus on traditional-family values and social benefits which they wanted to propose to aid families, the poor and socially disadvantaged.

Compared to ANO, the Public Affairs or OĽaNO, the programme of Boris Kollár's movement was from the start more distinctive and targeted to a concrete electorate. It was not, however, defined along an easy-to-determine ideological left-to-right line – the message was not of a well-rooted conservative party, but instead took policies across the ideological spectrum to create a new product represented by the political entrepreneur in the forefront of the party. As Kollár's party ran for the first time in 2016, the analysis looked briefly into the 2020 manifesto as well, and it is apparent that Sme Rodina falls somewhere between really flexible political parties as is ANO or OĽaNO and parties that strive for more cohesion and consistency in their messages, as the Palikot's Movement or .Modern. The party emphasises consistently their primary message – in this case, the protection of families - but behind this overarching theme, they manoeuvre in specific policies and shift what protecting families means to reflect the desire of their presumed electorate.

Palikot's Movement: liberal promises not delivered

Palikot's Movement was established just before the parliamentary elections in 2011 in which the party became the third-largest force in the Polish Sejm. This was quite surprising as the Polish party system, dominated by four major parties, was considered by the media as well as the public as “concreted-up” with limited or no opportunity for new political parties to pass the electoral threshold (Stanley – Czesnik 2014: 2–3; Kosowska-Gąstoł – Sobolewska-Myślik 2017: 140).

In the 2011 elections, Palikot's Movement ran with a programme that firmly focused on modernising the public administration and fighting corruption, taking a bold stance against traditional morality. To attract a young, liberal electorate, Palikot created his central message around the defiance to traditional family values – against being told who one can marry and have children with or who or what is considered “Polish”. The party promoted a secular state, with modernised administration, without corruption and equal rights for

men and women. The campaign then mostly focussed on positive, nondescript promises, like “*We have a recipe for Poland*” or “*Finally a good choice*”.

As the 2014 local elections brought disappointment to Palikot and his movement, the party tried to rebrand itself and implemented changes to the leadership before the next nationwide election. Nevertheless, the 2015 programme did not resonate well with the electorate. Although the newly rebranded Your Movement tried to provide a more comprehensive manifesto, the public campaign, and the shorter campaign documents did not reflect the effort. In these documents, the party tried to incorporate welfare notions, like free preschool education or healthy lunches for students. Nevertheless, its predominant focus still lay in the secularisation of the state, improving the quality of democracy or decriminalisation of soft drugs. Repeating these aims without much change was not perceived well by voters, as the movement failed to follow through on their promises with all the support they received in the previous elections.

In the 2011 manifesto, the party predominantly focused on administrative and governmental efficiency and criticised the previous government in their billboard campaign. Palikot wanted to fight bureaucracy, reform the relationship between public administration and the citizens, and improve the quality of democracy. Sharp criticism was also directed towards the previous political elites, especially the Law and Justice party. In 2015, the party elaborated on these ideas, advocating for implementing online voting for example, or suggesting that the size of the parliament should be based on the electoral participation of the citizens to improve electoral turnout, and arguing for reducing the immunity of legislators. The party kept quite similar emphasis as well as rhetoric when addressing the state of the party system (calling it ill and undemocratic) and the overall state of democracy.

In both electoral years, topics like same sex marriages, legal abortion, euthanasia, or in vitro fertilisation were essential priorities. In 2011 the programme was quite short and provided little detail on other policies that the party wanted to introduce, providing only brief nuggets on economic or agricultural issues. However, this was improved in 2015; the programme presented on the party’s website lagged in visual presentation and delivery. Although it addressed a more extensive range of areas and proposed political stances across the board, the final document lagged when it came to presentation and did not catch the electorate’s attention.

Especially in 2011, the Movement criticised difficult conditions for new political parties due to the electoral system; the party wanted to reform the Senate as well as change the electoral rules. In 2015 the focus shifted slightly towards increasing the reliability, effectiveness, and fairness of the justice system; however, the criticism of the current system remained the same. Furthermore, the party softened and rephrased their stances against traditional values and Polish morality in 2015 (Palikot’s Movement 2011: 15 steps). These notions were kept in the programme but moved towards the end of the document. Yet, in the briefer version of the programme, which outlined the essential values of the party and was more accessible to the electorate than the lengthy manifesto, these claims were kept

prominent (Palikot's Movement Programme Comic 2015); therefore, providing a somewhat inconsistent feel to the party's aims. Furthermore, in 2015 Your Movement almost did not run an independent public campaign; the party was instead represented by billboards of the coalition *Twoj Ruch* participated in, called *The United Left*, which focused predominantly on a welfare campaign.

In summary, Palikot's Movement did try to rephrase the programme to suit the electorate's needs and wishes. However, these changes were done more in a reactive, than proactive way, as a consequence of electoral failures on the regional level and the party did not actively seek new topics or issues to. The party aimed more to reiterate their current positions and views in a way to appease their critics, rather than sway potential voters. Together with little legislative success in the first electoral term, and predominantly similar goals and promises in the second electoral campaign, the electorate had no trust in the party to deliver on their promises, as they did not succeed to do so after their initial breakthrough.

.Modern: prosperous, free and secular state

Shortly before the 2015 elections, a new political platform called Association *Nowoczesna.pl* (*Modern.pl*) was established by the economist Ryszard Petru, who declared it was a think tank, rather than a traditional political party and emphasised that disappointment with the ruling elite was the party's *raison d'être* (Kosowska-Gąstoł – Sobolewska-Myślik 2017; Bajor 2015). *.Modern* ran with the overarching promise of building modernised society and state, delivering a more attainable version of promises made earlier by Palikot's Movement.

All this was well reflected by the party's first electoral campaign, which occurred mostly online. The party's leader Ryszard Petru was "the message", marketing himself as a symbol of modernity, however, this was not clearly defined by the programme nor the campaign. Petru made efforts to make the party recognisable before and during the political campaign, in a similar fashion, for example to OLaNO's Igor Matovič in 2012. While the first online campaign focused predominantly on civil liberties, the manifesto was more economically focused; addressing taxes and aiming to reduce retirement privileges for certain groups and advocating the curtailment of current privileges for trade unions.

The 2015 programme opened with criticism of the current political elites, promising a quick change towards a more modern, efficient, and wealthy country. *.Modern* claimed that Poland's political leaders are distant from their voters, do not advocate for their needs and do not reflect the country's current issues; this was then actively communicated by the party's internet campaign, which criticised the government of Law and Justice party (PiS) heavily. Primarily revolving around the critique of bureaucracy, the current legal process, as well as the state efficiency, the topic of government and administrative efficiency was noticeable across the 2015 programme. Comparably to Palikot's Movement or SaS, the notions of a secular and religiously neutral state, personal freedom, modernity, development as well as politicians' accountability were refined in the next programme, but not changed

significantly. .Modern provided a more refined look into what they perceive as “modern state” after their initial breakthrough but stayed consistent with the previous electoral manifesto regarding supported policy changes and represented values.

Both in 2015 and 2019 the .Modern programme was quite liberally focused. In their first electoral contest, the party wanted to fulfil “individual dreams of its citizens” and provide them with a modern and well-governed, functioning country, offering more opportunities for entrepreneurs and businesses. The 2019 programme then built on these promises and did not differ from the original message significantly. Nevertheless, .Modern provided their electorate with a more concrete idea of what “modern” means to the party; personal and economic liberties, efficient legislature, private-possession protection, secularisation, accountability in welfare, equality of opportunities as well as positioning Poland in the heart of Europe – all these were seen as necessary by Petru and his party. As the 2019 programme was elongated and particularised, the party dedicated more space in it to outline what the party stands for regarding freedoms and human rights; however, some claims were repeated without much change or reflection of the changing needs of the electorate.¹⁹ The party’s billboards and internet banners again focused predominantly on the critique of PiS (“*PiS took millions and now everything will be more expensive*”).

Economic goals were also a significant part of both programmes, as the party wanted to make the economy “*strong and healthy*” (.Modern Programme 2015: 14). As .Modern perceived the tax system as unclear, overcomplicated, and intransparent, Petru claimed a comprehensive reform based on strategic thinking and vision is crucial. Standing for economic freedom and free market in both election programmes, the party inclined towards spending limitations, especially in 2019 as they wanted to strengthen the economy in the long run. Positive views on culture and expanding education were also prominent in the programme, as the party wanted to develop the education of languages and technologies in 2015 but focused slightly more on welfare in general in 2019, putting forward a couple of billboards addressing welfare topics, like “*pension without taxation*” or “*voluntary social insurance for the entrepreneur*”. Additionally, .Modern wanted to increase the birth rate in Poland and therefore focused on young families, promising social benefits and extended vacation time. Claiming that “*higher income, lower taxation*” is needed (.Modern Programme, 2019: 40), the party also wanted to increase the minimum wage and help young adults to find their first occupation.

Compared to parties like Sme Rodina, Palikot’s Movement, ANO or Public Affairs, the programme of .Modern was quite balanced topic-wise, although the campaign itself focused predominantly on criticising the Civic Platform party, as this was. .Modern’s *raison d’être* (Bajor 2015: 33). In 2015 the party emphasised social system and healthcare as well as the need for a modern and efficient state, with the 2019 manifesto slightly increasing the importance of overall welfare, but not changing the priorities dramatically. The party did adjust some of its approaches, emphasising the respect towards state, history and tradition, stating that .Modern wants to build bridges, not walls, among the Polish citizens. The leader

was the main enticement in the first election, his success in the next four years was crucial; and with the party not being able to present significant results in what they promised to their electorate, and not offering a radically different approach in the next election, the voters were less inclined to give the party another chance to improve on their results.

Kukiz'15: sticking to referendums and presidentialism

Similarly to Okamura's Dawn, Kukiz'15 was established by a former – although more successful – presidential candidate, charismatic Paweł Kukiz, who became known predominantly as a singer, actor and a TV host. The party²⁰ caused a sensation in 2015 when it became the third-largest political force in the Polish parliament, somewhat resembling the success of Palikot's Movement in the previous term, effectively replacing its position in the party system. Even more surprising was the fact that the party was only established four months prior by a known musician-turned-political-activist Kukiz, who was engaged in promoting the idea of change in the Polish electoral law by introducing the majority-based electoral formula and single-member districts (Kosowska-Gąstoł – Sobolewska-Myślik 2017: 146). The movement was formed from the beginning as a broad coalition that lacked organisational and programmatic coherence (Szczurbiak 2016) – compared to .Modern or Palikot's Movement, Kukiz'15 presented itself as quite traditional, standing for patriotism and revitalising the Polish nation. Characteristically, the party distinguished itself sharply against what they called the corrupted and unskilled “parasitical political class” (Kukiz'15 Programme 2015: 3), criticising the previous elites for turning their back on citizens and corruption (Bajor 2015). The 2015 manifesto claimed that the party does not want to introduce a programme, as those were perceived as a list of empty promises made by politicians, but a strategy; a list of necessary steps which would make a change in Poland possible, making the entire document relatively brief and concise, but programmatically incoherent and trying to place on an ideological spectrum (Napieralski 2017). The campaign of Kukiz'15 then revolved around billboards and banners with the message “*You can do it, Poland!*”. Furthermore, it was dominated by portraits of the candidates, without delivering specific programmatic promises for the country.

Interestingly, in 2019 the party introduced a more elaborate programme for the local elections, on which they based the priorities outlined on the website of Kukiz'15. But, the actual programme for the nationwide elections was a copy of the previously used 2015 manifesto, possibly because Kukiz – after several affairs and scandals that accompanied the previous term – decided to run under the umbrella of a loose coalition under a political subject called Koalicja Polska (Polish Coalition). However, for this analysis, we will consider the local-elections' programme and the main priorities presented on the party's website.

The 2015 programme predominantly focused on three topics: democracy and its improvement, financial goals, and security of citizens. The next manifesto prepared for the 2019 local elections, once again strongly emphasised the topic of referendums, civic

participation in government and improving the country's economic situation. The idea of implementing an obligatory referendum without thresholds and introducing features of direct democracy was the first issue of both manifestos, through which the party wanted to increase citizen's participation in politics and political decision-making. In 2015 Kukiz'15 addressed in light their proposal to introduce a new electoral system, shift towards the presidential system. However, in the following manifesto, this topic was largely omitted. Nevertheless, on the party's website, the proposal for introducing a presidential system and changing the electoral system to majoritarian was prominently positioned, together with the notion of disassembling the Senate.

The party predominantly focused on the critique of over-regulation and bureaucratisation in both their electoral manifestos, saying that transparency and government efficiency need to be improved and corruption and nepotism must be eliminated from public administration. Kukiz'15 also disapproved of privileges given to political parties and the way they are funded, striving to strengthen personal accountability of deputies and abolish politicians' immunity. Decentralisation was also perceived as an essential topic by both manifestos, but emphasised more in the first programme, whereas the 2019 local elections manifesto focused more detailed on issues of environmental protection and decentralising the educational system. Noticeably, the programme differed to Palikot's Movement or .Modern in one crucial aspect; Kukiz placed the issue of religion and secularisation of state in neither of their programmes and also stayed away from other controversial topics, like abortions or same-sex marriages. Interestingly, the observable shift to welfare issues in the second campaign of the party was also prominent in the case of Kukiz'15, although not in their local manifesto, but rather in the priorities that were presented on their webpage before the elections.

The 2015 manifesto then strongly emphasised the need for economic growth and reduction of debt of Polish people, curtailing of the financial and tax privileges of international companies active in Poland, revision of the tax system, as taxes needed to be "*simple, low and just*" (Kukiz'15 Programme 2015) as well as the 're-Polonisation' of banks (see Kosowska-Gąstoł – Sobolewska-Myślik 2017). These were then repeated among the priorities listed on the Kukiz'15 website in 2019. However, as the 2019 manifesto was prepared for local elections, it did not outline the economic goals of the party in such detail, and the party did not introduce new ideas compared to 2015. Finally, reliable military protection of the country with ambitious and realistic foreign politics was a crucial part of the programme in 2015 and was also prominently mentioned among the priorities listed on the party's website in 2019.

Altogether, the party's anti-establishment rhetoric was supported by young people, who created most of the party's electorate (Bajor 2015: 32). At the same time, this rhetoric was not able to sustain the party's long-term popularity. It may seem as curious that the party decided to re-publish their 2015 manifesto verbatim in the next elections, relying on their website and programme presented for local elections – and potentially the programme prepared by the Polish Coalition – to present their values and core ideas. Although there is

some noticeable development in the party's position (like introducing more well-rounded ideas for environmental protection, agricultural policies, educational system or welfare), the priorities of the party remained intact, and the party's leader Paweł Kukiz stuck to the three priorities, that gained him popularity in 2015: democracy, wealth and security (Kukiz.org 2020). Even the party's website nowadays reflects these on its opening page as they were depicted originally in 2015, showing, on one hand, integrity and cohesion throughout the programme, on the other hand, a lack of flexibility when it comes to incorporating new demands from the electorate and adjusting based on political development in the country.

4 / Linking programme flexibility to the success of entrepreneurial parties

For many years, the scholarly public was in the habit of discussing the programme positions of a political party on the left-to-right spectrum, in the context of traditional ideological values that the parties represented consistently throughout history. Political parties – the elite ones, the mass-oriented ones as well as the “catch-all” – were (almost) always focused on a specific electorate of the ideological spectrum. The majority of what we now consider to be “traditional parties” had a more-or-less developed ideology. They could have been linked to one of the classical party families, and were distinguishable – at least to a certain degree – as conservative, liberal, social democratic, communist, et cetera. Contrary to that, the new niche and entrepreneurial political parties that emerged in Europe in the last decade are often the centre of discussion among political scientists as they are not easy to categorise when it comes to their programmes and values. This often leads the political scientists labelling them only as “populist”, or under the “liberal” umbrella, avoiding the left-to-right axis if possible (see e.g. Döring – Manow 2019).

In the ever-changing environment of political campaigning, individual parties need to decide how they present themselves to the public; with what kind of messaging, and how they will get their agenda across. Even new, entrepreneurial political parties that claim to differ from traditional parties need to communicate their positions to the electorate. So how do they approach their manifestos, their campaigns and are these even relevant to their success? Trying to tackle these questions (at least partially), this study aimed to examine how Central European entrepreneurial parties approach their manifestos. I chose not only to look into their electoral breakthrough but also after their initial success, but to explore how changes the party's addressed topics could contribute to a party's repeated success. Assuming that as these entrepreneurial parties do not possess a stable and robust member (and voter) base, the electorate must be convinced to vote for the party time and time again during the electoral campaign through promises, goals and claims the party leaders make through the campaign documents, selling the party and its efforts as a marketed product.

Could we say that it is advantageous for a political party to set specific ideological and pragmatic values and adhere to them in the elections following their initial breakthrough, or

do entrepreneurial political subjects benefit from a more flexible approach? Of course, many different aspects will contribute to a party's repeated success – from funding, through leadership and organisation, to campaigns and PR. Political science research has addressed many of these aspects from different angles and on different research samples; most prominently focusing on the technical aspects in the form of a local organisation or the personal linkage of their leadership. For that reason, the presented text aimed to look at entrepreneurial parties from a different standpoint. I explored whether it is advantageous for an entrepreneurially based party to slowly develop a more consistent and ideologically defined programme, classifiable on the classic party-family spectrum, or at least to consistently represent a particular (new) topic or value, throughout the elections. Alternatively, does it bring a more stable success for a party to shift and change nimbly, based on the current political demand? This question, of course, is much broader and deeper, and future research should explore this more extensively, to answer, if voters prefer to identify with a set of values that a party represents, or if they are instead inclined to build a personal connection with the leaders and their promises.

Applying extensive qualitative content analysis of party programmes and manifestos, together with consideration of their campaign materials and websites, supported by quantitative analysis of the Manifesto Project (Volkens et al. 2020), the initial inquiry that was presented in the text above strives to, at its very least, improve the understanding of what drives entrepreneurial parties' success and what causes their failures in elections. First of all, it is discernible that party manifestos still are essential documents presented even by the new, entrepreneurial political parties (although sometimes under different names, being called “strategy” to differentiate the political movement from a party, a term linked to the “established political elite” which they perceive as corrupt or failing). They may be presented differently in some cases, employing comics or flashy graphics. Nevertheless, manifestos still collect policy positions, streamline the campaign, define and frame party's key campaign themes, and serve as campaign documents, as noted by Eder et al. (2017), and all political parties in this study did present a programmatic document for each election; and often reworked it after their initial breakthrough.

Conclusion

Based on nine cases concerning Central European political parties that had achieved considerable success in entering the political arena, gaining representation in nationwide elections to the primary parliamentary chamber in their respective countries, we can observe at least a partial support for the first hypothesis. Four entrepreneurial parties in this sample that we can perceive as quite successful, as they managed to re-enter parliament and even increase their gains, and showed significant flexibility in their political beliefs, adjusting their programmes from election to election to reflect the current political situation and concerns of the electorate.

Therefore, it seems that political parties that carefully consider their selling points and their target electorate before the second elections fare better than parties that cling to their original values. This may very well be the result of the fact that entrepreneurial political parties aim towards a more volatile electorate, that is convinced by populist promises or solutions to contemporary issues, rather than one loyal to a well-defined ideology they would support from election to election. “Knowing the audience” therefore seems to be the key to success – this is where entrepreneurial parties that can afford to deploy large focus groups and quality PR teams may have the upper hand over parties without such resources. In agreement with my initial assumption, entrepreneurial parties that tailor their political programme from election to election to reflect the utmost current frame-of-mind of the electorate to ensure electoral gain, seem to fare better after their initial breakthrough. It behoves political parties to invest funds to identify the most salient issues for the next elections, using a well-developed PR and media strategies, and to sell those to the electorate as a product; entrepreneurial parties do not need to catch everyone, they need to identify what their target group wants to hear it seems. It is more about “going with the flow” rather than building a set of values and sticking with it, as would be acceptable in the case of “traditional” parties or single-issue actors.

The analysis of visual materials, such as billboards, posters and banners showed that parties also mainly reflect some of the most crucial points from their manifestos on their visual materials. But for some – rather than communicating in a public campaign, something that would not be in line with their programme – choosing a catchy slogan was the way to go. Rather than communicating what they stand for, some political entrepreneurs, like Matovič, Sulík or Palikot, opted for energetic and positive catchphrases to dominate their public campaigns, communicating their values through programmes and personal appearances.

Although, more interestingly, it is prominent that there is a significant disparity between what the electoral parties decided to address in their initial breakthrough on billboards, through posters or on internet banners, and what they chose in the coming election. Welfare promises of social or economic improvements, pledges for positive change or criticism of former elites were consistently used to create slogans and mottos for visual campaign materials. However, in their second campaign the parties stepped away from topics revolving around democracy, improving the state of law and order or corruption, or promises of a brighter future and instead focused on current issues like security and immigration, economic goals and welfare and overall choosing less specific, but catchy phrases and slogans as they did not need to introduce themselves as much as attract the attention again. Additionally, in the Czech Republic, all political parties chose quite concrete aims to put on their billboards and posters. However, parties in Slovakia chose easy to remember mottos with less informative value and the campaign in Poland was strongly influenced by the fact that some parties chose to run in coalitions in their second elections, trying to improve their chances of succeeding - although not successfully.

On the other hand, political parties that did not manage to re-enter parliament after their initial success, or dramatically lost the electorates support, were those parties that had a more well-defined and ideologically consistent programme, often repeating the same programmatic values and prominently sticking to their core ideas. A very noticeable trend could be observed among all of the analysed parties, which is linked to their fundamental characteristic as entrepreneurial subjects; in their first electoral campaign, these subjects tended to address very similar issues – over-bureaucratisation, the ineffectiveness of the public administration, political corruption in the country, state of democracy and human rights and so on. What differs is, how these parties approach their second electoral campaign – overwhelmingly, the more successful parties in this sample leaned towards developing the welfare notions in their programme, adding new issues as needed by the current situation (e.g., addressing the topic of migration, security etc.), adjusting their PR depending on what the electorate resonated with the most. Rather than create an identity around its programme, these continuously successful entrepreneurial subjects strived to create an identity around its leader and the vibe the party presented, showing that the anti-corruption, democracy-improving and fighting-elite-parties programmes cannot successfully hold the electorate’s attention past the initial breakthrough. Developing a very flexible, yet a more citizen-focused programme addressing the day-to-day struggles and voters’ worries, without committing to a specific left or right position on the ideological spectrum in the long-term, however, seems to bring at least some benefit to the entrepreneurial party, that strives to survive past their first big win. As so many political entrepreneurs boldly claimed: we do not stand on the right, nor on the left – we march forward.

Notes /

- 1 Entrepreneurial parties often tend to call themselves “movements” to establish connection to “the people” and to portray themselves as growing out of the needs of “common citizens.” However, for the purpose of this article, both terms – party and movement – are treated as synonyms, as the legislatures of the countries mentioned generally do not set different rules for parties and movements. Therefore, this distinction is merely semantical, rather than factual.
- 2 Although there are different conceptualisations of what “Central Europe” means, for the purpose of this article I will adhere to the paradigm of Central Europe being countries of the Visegrad Four, i.e., the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Poland, and Hungary. However, other definitions of Central European region exist, which would also potentially include Austria or even Romania and Slovenia (see Naumann 1915; Masaryk 1920; Hodža 1997; Ágh 2019, Cabada 2020).
- 3 In its core, this conceptualisation is based on five crucial characteristics or traits that define an entrepreneurial party and differentiate it from other types of parties. Firstly, in these parties, we find the central role of the leader and his private initiative to launch the new political subject. Secondly, this founding father – the main initiator – uses the party as a personal vehicle to carry their personal business or political interests primarily. Thirdly, they wield a crucial formative influence over this political project, at least in the formative, initial stages. Fourthly, an

entrepreneurial party is not a “product” of a promoter or a sponsor organisation, nor a social movement - they are not rooted in terms of party origin. Lastly, such parties are not connected with the parliament, and they are not founded by a group of parliamentary representatives seceding from another party (see Hloušek – Kopeček 2017: 88).

- 4 I chose this as a break-off year since it follows the internal logic of “political earthquakes” as depicted by scholars researching the change in party systems in Central Europe (Haughton – Deegan-Krause 2015).
- 5 Curiously, in Hungary, we do not encounter any political parties that would be indeed started by a political entrepreneur after 2010; this could be due to the fact that business leaders as well as nationwide media are linked directly to Victor Orban’s party Fidesz. In the enumeration also are not considered two parties in Slovakia, that disputably were started by political entrepreneurs; Sief (Network), as this party ran in 2016 as part of a coalition, and the party of Marian Kotleba, Kotlebists – People’s Party Our Slovakia, as this party only succeeded in third nationwide election is contested; however, during this time it had the opportunity to root on the local level and therefore, would not fit in the same category as the other parties. On the other hand, Kukiz’15 is a part of this analysis, although it ran as a part of a coalition in 2019, as the political environment of Poland is a bit different from Slovakia. Political parties in Poland often run under an umbrella-coalition, but this is a common occurrence, that even the largest political subjects participate in. Therefore, political parties are mostly perceived as separate throughout the election campaign.
- 6 A complete table of topics identified during the content analysis of manifestos, as well as billboards, posters and other campaign documents can be found online at <https://bit.ly/37GRMY4>.
- 7 A version of this table with examples can be found at <https://bit.ly/37GRMY4>.
- 8 Although this method does not ensure that all billboards, posters, and banners were detected, this allowed the collection of a large enough sample for general trends to appear.
- 9 The sustainability of a political party on a national level—the capacity to sustain initial support to such an extent that it reassures re-election to the parliament—is inevitably a relative phenomenon, as many attributes can influence the lifespan as well as the ability to achieve electoral gains.
- 10 It could be argued, that for an entrepreneurial party, getting into the parliament and achieving representation is the goal and therefore it is not crucial if the project succeeds in the long-term. However, even for a political entrepreneur, gaining this representation repeatedly, ingraining in the system, merging with its structure and building on the position of power is surely beneficial, if repeated in the next electoral term. Although it may not be the primary goal of the entrepreneurial party to get into parliament “to stay” and the aims are certainly different to for example one-issue parties, that strive to represent their electoral in the long term, we can hardly assume that they would prefer not to be re-elected if possible or that they will not invest their resources and effort into campaigning after the initial breakthrough.
- 11 For example, the party became known for its billboard that exclaimed “highways, highways, highways” or promised that ANO politicians will “*buckle down and work*” and stating, “*We want a better Czechia*”.
- 12 However, a couple of former Public Affairs’ politicians ran on candidate lists of other parties; nevertheless, at large, they were not successful.
- 13 In 2017, prior to the elections, these ten values remained unchanged, with only two minor modifications – the point stating that SPD wants “*law and justice*” was extended with “*we want a state*”

that serves its citizens” and the last point, that stated that the party “does not want to be an EU province” was prolonged with “we want to develop and protect the sovereign Czech Republic”.

- 14 Especially the party addressed the Socially Excluded Communities – the Roma villages, as it stated that the citizens living in the socially excluded communities have “troubles respecting the law” as their knowledge of the law is “very selective” and proposed to establish statistical records of criminality based on socially excluded communities affiliation, but also wanted to fight the demonisation of the Roma community (SaS Programme 2010).
- 15 Although some of their top representatives already entered the parliament after the 2010 elections as independent candidates on the SaS list.
- 16 OL’ANO criticised the amount of people that were receiving unemployment benefits while not actively looking for work, wanted to limit the blanket pay-out of social benefits and strived to increase the motivation elements in the social system. Overall, the party wanted to provide help only when rules are being followed by the benefactors.
- 17 Interestingly, Kollár’s party stands for the “traditional family”, yet Kollár himself does not portray the utmost traditional values in his private life: in 2020 he was a father to eleven children which he had with ten different women.
- 18 Above all, the party wanted to establish tax vacation for working parents of three and more children during their education and abolish supplement payments for meds.
- 19 Both manifestos, as well as campaigns, placed a significant emphasis on the state of democracy and state ruling. In 2015 .Modern proposed changes to the electoral system in order to improve the bond and link between representatives and citizens and also introduce e-voting to increase electoral turnout and in 2019, advocating for limitation of president’s powers were added with a repeated wish to reduce the number of parliamentary deputies.
- 20 It needs to be mentioned that Kukiz’15 emphasises its non-partisan character (similarly to ANO or the Dawn), presenting itself as a movement, for the purposes of this article it is treated as a political party, as it ran in elections and acted as an active political subject in Poland’s party system.

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Summary /

Over the past decade, an unparalleled shift in party systems could be seen in most European countries, especially in post-communist countries in Central Europe, with a plethora of new political parties and movements coming to power. A significant portion of them has been established by political entrepreneurs, who promised the electorate to fight corruption and bureaucracy, challenge the self-interested political elites, and bring well-being to the whole country. Often refusing to define themselves as left or right, these political parties question the traditional programmatic division, not adhering to any discernible ideology. Although the research revolving around new political parties tends to focus primarily on their initial success, this article investigates the newcomer entrepreneurial parties re-election success in the Czech Republic, Poland, and Slovakia.

This article focuses on how the electoral manifestos contribute to the party's success or the failure when it comes to their re-election success. Specifically, it looks into whether a party that adheres to a particular set of values, repeatedly and consistently focusing on specific topics, and presenting ideological cohesiveness and integrity, fares better or worse than an entrepreneurial party that changes its programme flexibly based on the current preferences of the electorate, addressing the most critical or popular ideas, rather than consistently representing a particular standpoint. In order to maintain a representative sample, the paper looks into the entrepreneurial parties that managed to achieve a parliamentary breakthrough in Central Europe. The Visegrad Group allow for comparison when it comes to political history, general outlines of the political and party system and the history of their transition to democracy.

At first glance, entrepreneurial parties vary significantly in how they organise their programmes and how ideologically consistent they are; not only in comparison to their established counterparts but also with regard to each other. Political science research has been trying to explore the different angles of how this affects the success of a political party after its initial. However, research into the electoral programmes and manifestos and how they relate to the party success leaves room for examination of the electoral programme's influence over the party's success and its significance. Thus, it is argued that contrary to catch-all parties, it is not beneficial for an entrepreneurial party to try to encompass all the possible voters from the centre of the political spectrum. Instead, it behoves them to invest funds to identify the most salient issues for the next elections and, using well-developed PR and media strategies, sell those to the electorate in their programmes. It is assumed that traditional parties position themselves on the left-right continuum, and then follow this line with some level of consistency. Contrary to that, the paper presupposed, that entrepreneurial parties tailor their political programme from election to election to reflect the utmost current frame-of-mind of the electorate to ensure electoral gain, with little concern to how cohesive their programme is. Besides, it could be argued that nowadays, the electorate will not read – or even skim through – a lengthy document on policies and standpoints, preferring the social media, television, billboards and posters as

a source of information on candidates and competing parties. Therefore, the link between the party's manifesto and the electoral campaign conducted on billboards, posters and internet banners was analysed.

Through detailed qualitative analysis, it was examined how shifts in electoral manifestos and visual campaign materials, such as billboards, influence the repeated success of these parties after their initial breakthrough. With the support of additional quantitative data, the article confirmed the initial suspicion, that for an entrepreneurial party, correctly reflecting the mood of the target electorate and accordingly adjusting the programme and the campaign is crucial and takes precedent over developing a consistent, cohesive ideological framework. The analysis of visual materials, such as billboards, posters and banners showed that parties also mainly reflect some of the most crucial points from their manifestos on their visual materials. But for some – rather than communicating in a public campaign, something that would not be in line with their programme – choosing a catchy slogan was the way to go. Rather than communicating what they stand for, some political entrepreneurs, like Matovič, Sulík or Palikot, opted for energetic and positive catchphrases to dominate their public campaigns, communicating their values through programmes and personal appearances.

There is a significant disparity between what the electoral parties decided to address in their initial breakthrough on billboards, through posters or on internet banners, and what they chose in the coming election and in their second campaigning. When entering the electoral arena welfare promises of social or economic improvements, pledges for positive change or criticism of former elites were consistently used to create slogans and mottos for visual campaign materials. However, in their second campaign the parties stepped away from topics revolving around democracy, improving the state of law and order or corruption, or promises of a brighter future and instead focused on current issues like security and immigration, economic goals and welfare and overall choosing less specific, but catchy phrases and slogans as they did not need to introduce themselves as much as attract the attention again. Additionally, in the Czech Republic, all political parties chose quite concrete aims to put on their billboards and posters. However, parties in Slovakia chose easy to remember mottos with less informative value and the campaign in Poland was strongly influenced by the fact that some parties chose to run in coalitions in their second elections, trying to improve their chances of succeeding – although not successfully. On the other hand, political parties that did not manage to re-enter parliament after their initial success, or dramatically lost the electorates support, were those parties that had a more well-defined and ideologically consistent programme, often repeating the same programmatic values and prominently sticking to their core ideas.