



# The Disappearance of Politics, or Depoliticization the Czech Way<sup>1</sup>

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**ABSTRACT** The disappearance of politics is a phenomenon that (not only) the Czech Republic must deal with at present. This article examines this phenomenon in depth and places it in a long-term perspective. The argumentation is based primarily on the polysemous term depoliticization. Part of the text is devoted to one specific form of depoliticization the Czech way – the expertization of politics. In this respect, the emergence and the mode of functioning of the ANO 2011 Movement can be regarded as an illustrative example of the current trends in the Czech Republic.

**KEYWORDS** Depoliticization, Czech Republic, politicization, democracy, expertise

A crisis of politics is clearly manifesting in the world today, including modern democratic systems. However, the term *crisis* may be misleading in many respects, and so it is much more useful to focus on the transformations that European democracies have gone through in the last few decades. These transformations have various causes as well as accompanying trends, amongst them, for example, the unarguable and general decline in election participation (even though, when different types of elections are compared, it can be seen that this applies less to big national elections such as presidential or parliamentary elections which are often considered to be first-tier elections). Perhaps even more importantly than this decline, there has been a trend toward a low level of political participation. Additionally, amongst these trends is the increasingly negative image of politicians held by the general public and the worsening perception of political institutions (such parliaments, governments, etc.) (Schweisguth 2002). While in the late 19th and early 20th century, politics (the entry of various groups and classes into politics) was seen as a rather liberating solution (concerning especially the establishment of modern parliamentarianism based on, amongst other things, universal suffrage), today politics is regarded as binding and limiting. This perspective brings to the foreground the seemingly paradoxical fact that these phenomena can be “compensated for” by new (“unconventional”) modes of political expression and participation. These new modes may be forms of new (or new-again) politics, but in this article, the focus is on “the crisis of politics” and the subsequent disappearance of it. The disappearance of politics is used here as synonymous with *depoliticization*.

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Depoliticization covers a very broad area, and, within the scope of this article, it is not possible to analyze it in any other way than by selecting an exemplifying element. Therefore, at least one of the various potential approaches and one side of the issue are presented here. This article has been written as part of a research project that was presented in 2014 (Polášek, Perottino and Novotný 2014), a project that was devoted to expertise levels and capacities in Czech political parties (and in which depoliticization was not the main focus). This article, then, focuses on depoliticization, using it as one possible way of gaining insight into the larger topic of expertise levels and capacities. The article describes depoliticization as a multifaceted and polysemous phenomenon, and it outlines depoliticization both in general terms and in terms of the Czech context, primarily on the basis of the ANO 2011 “model”. This party (as represented by its leader, and the organization as a whole) employs and complements the current depoliticization development, and it shapes the process in a way that perhaps best captures and highlights depoliticization by focusing on the issue of experts and on the expertization of politics.

### An attempted definition of terms

Before examining these issues in more depth, it is necessary to clarify the de facto basic term, *politics*, and also the process that is seemingly the opposite of the disappearance of politics, that is the process of *politicization*. Politics is hard to define in a few words. Traditionally, *politikos* (the general framework) has been differentiated from *politeia* (the macro-level, mainly the structure and the functioning of society) and *politikè* (the execution of power). Today, however, the Anglo-Saxon distinction between *polity*, *politics*, and *policy* would, most likely, be generally applicable. Essentially, these distinctions depend primarily on the point of view, on whether politics is considered from the macro standpoint and philosophically, or from the meso or even micro standpoint, sociologically or from a political science perspective. This article draws on a working version that follows the traditional differentiation, but with the qualification that the dividing lines are not very relevant here. At the same time, it is necessary to note that the specific manifestations of the various “levels” can change in relation to time and space, for instance when the issue of the legitimacy of a particular form of authority is considered. For the discussion here, what is important is, of course, politics that is current and local (or European). Politicization is defined according to the suggestion of Jacques Lagroye, that is, as a process of requalification of various social activities. This requalification is a result of the practical agreement amongst social actors who, for different reasons, agree on crossing the boundaries or on the differentiation of the space for the activities (Lagroye 2011). In other words, these actors have agreed that certain social objects, which had not been perceived as political, will now be perceived in this way. *Depoliticization* can then be understood as the opposite of politicization, keeping in mind that these are two different processes, even if often linked together, similarly to ideologization/de-ideologization, technicization, change of the decision-making arena, etc. In the Czech context, the issue of politicization and depoliticization has been rather overlooked<sup>2</sup>,

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<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, see especially Martin Škabraha’s analysis in two chapters of his book *Kritika depolitizovaného rozumu: Úvahy (nejen) o nové normalizaci* [A Critique of the Depoliticized Mind: Thoughts on (Not Only) a New Normalization] (Bělohradský et al. 2010).

even though at first sight it may seem that the uniquely Czech Havel style of apolitical politics would fit under this topic very well. This article does not allow sufficient space (nor is it its objective) to continue this discussion, which only marginally touches on the issue of politicization and depoliticization, in that too often apolitical rhetoric has been (or was) mainly a way to criticize or delegitimize “the old, bad” politics or political game-playing.

To start with, let us briefly consider the question of how to understand the current situation in which it is more or less apparent that politics has been disappearing, somehow, for some reason, from the society (societies), as well as, in various respects, from segments of the society, in whose case this disappearance is rather unexpected, for instance from political parties. First, it should be clarified what politics and its disappearance is, and simultaneously, it seems necessary to relate this issue to the possibly, at least partly, opposite process of politicization. Politicization could be broadly and briefly defined as a socialization process that gives a certain political purpose to affairs, institutions, practices, etc. In political science, politicization is much better known and has been very well analyzed in its diversity (Lagroye 2011). Fundamentally, it is possible to draw on the premise that depoliticization is the total opposite of politicization, especially in that this process must be considered in the context of a given society. Nevertheless, in reality this premise cannot be the one to prefer, and mainly, these two complex issues cannot be seen as two sides of the same coin, nor is it possible to imagine a continuum from the politicized to the depoliticized (and then try to measure, for example, a depoliticization index). Finally, it must be noted here that these issues cannot be dealt with without being placed in the context of the given society and the given time, and that they are also social constructs.

As early as 1961, Jean and Monica Charlot pointed out that in Great Britain the term “depoliticization” was (at that time) almost unknown, and, depending on who was talking about it, it was mistaken either for “apathie” [“apathy”] (by the New Left), “chute de la température politique” [“a drop in political temperature”] (by the Left) or “la fin de la lutte des classes” [“the end of the class struggle”] (by the Conservatives) (Charlot and Charlot 1961). Since then, the term has become used much more often, of course, but its possible definitions and delineations (and the differences between what is and what is not political) have remained flexible, if there are any at all. Traditionally, claims of depoliticization or the disappearance of politics have been linked to, for example, the decline in election participation (especially in some EU countries, not the least in the Czech Republic), the decline of political parties and party membership, the worsening of the perception of politics and political actors, negative trends in the functioning (efficiency) of democratic systems, or for instance, the entry of new “non-political” actors into the political arena<sup>3</sup>.

A major paradox of the present time is mainly that depoliticization can threaten the environment that makes it possible, that is, modern democracy. This is because modern democracy presupposes active (or at least minimally politically aware) citizens. To a certain degree,

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<sup>3</sup> However, in this way, the given new “non-political” actors suddenly become part of the political arena and de facto political actors, even if they themselves deny this, and in spite of the fact that they may continue to use unorthodox approaches or methods, etc. “Technically” speaking, apolitical politics is still politics.

it may be observed that citizens have been disappearing, too, and more and more frequently, they are being replaced by clients or consumers of various services. After all, a citizen may, but does not have to, vote (with the exception of Belgium, for instance, where voters are required to participate in elections), and this right not to exercise one's right has been becoming a *de facto* mainstream phenomenon. In this respect, it then needs to be noted that the general context of liberal democracy rather encourages the disappearance of politics or that it prepares the ground for a certain type of depoliticization or some other form of politicization.

However, if a different point of view is applied, it can be seen that this is not really depoliticization or the disappearance of politics, but changes in politics. Put in another way, what is perceived more or less intuitively or maybe subjectively as "disappearance" (the disappearance of what should be there), is (or may be) "just" a change in politics, or a change in the forms of politics (a different form of politics that is perceived as depoliticization). In yet other words, we expect politics to be a certain way because that is how it has been (and perhaps should be), but we do not sufficiently take into account the fact that politics and politicization are somehow linked to a specific society. If this society changes, it can be expected that its politics will change as well. After all, what we see or analyze as the disappearance of politics is a whole range of various practices, rules, and ideas which must be contextualized.

Second, it must be kept in mind that this is a long-term and multifaceted process, and therefore it is complex, and it is a process within which politics or the political (*la politique/le politique*) gradually grows less and less pronounced. Long-term means that the causes of the current situation must be looked for several decades in the past (long-term is a social condition – a prerequisite), but this does not mean that there are not also more recent depoliticization trends, such as the growing importance of expertise in politics, which will be discussed at length below.

### The multifaceted process of depoliticization

Depoliticization, or the disappearance of politics, is a multifaceted and complex process which can be viewed in various ways, including as a certain form of politicization that replaces the original, "normal" form. In this regard, critics of the new situation (which has developed in the context of liberal democracies) must be mentioned. For instance, Pierre Bourdieu, at the time he was actively involved in the public sphere (that is, mainly in the 1990s), called on his fellow citizens to fight against the politics of depoliticization. As he pointed out, liberal democracy strengthens its position through the politics of depoliticization, especially in the sense that it *a priori* deprives all possible alternatives of any legitimacy. However, this view is unable to exactly pinpoint those who are "guilty" of the process which gradually spreads and penetrates everywhere (even though it is possible to name at least symbolically responsible institutions such as the World Bank and other institutions that have the legitimacy to say what is and what is not possible). As will become clear later on, the mass media play a certain role here (most likely unconsciously so).

Depoliticization does not necessarily mean something bad or illegitimate. For instance, the depoliticization of public administration, which is often connected to promoting professionalization and objectivity, would be most likely perceived and presented as a "positive"

form of the disappearance of politics. (Lack of such objectivity has been one of the basic problems of the Czech state administration in the last several decades, which has, amongst other things, been to the advantage of the so-called party state.) Nevertheless, depoliticization can be seen in different dimensions and contexts. It may be encouraged by the atomization of local politics, as large contentious issues disappear and, essentially, everything is dealt with pragmatically, in accordance with the slogan “the repair of sidewalks in neither leftist nor rightist” (disregarding the fact that, for example, setting up the criteria for the selection of the company that will build, repair or clean the sidewalk certainly is political). This approach then enables the creation of a priori politically nonsensical coalitions at the local level. As mentioned above, the expanding role of civic society, in the sense of the various roles of non-profit organizations, also belongs here, and is regarded as a positive development even though it harbours significant polemic potential. The activities of charities may be seen as highly positive, but it is worth considering that, imperceptibly, the role of the state and the original purpose of the welfare state, or the social state, have been disappearing. This is also a form of depoliticization, especially because there is no discussion about these principal issues, while the situation is fundamentally changing as highly political issues (and activities) gradually move into the non-political sphere (even though in itself, the move is political and belongs into the politics of depoliticization).

The role of the mass media (which have been depoliticized rather than unpoliticized) appears to be essential in this context. This issue deserves deeper analysis, including a comparison with the way modern media generally work (so that the picture would not be distorted by the impression generated by some significant, specifically Czech features, for instance, the almost complete absence of in-depth analytical commentaries). Nevertheless, it could be argued that the current trend toward dramatizing everything and, especially, toward personalizing problems instead of actually discussing the problems in depth and trying to generalize that which can be broadly applied, has also contributed to the disappearance of politics<sup>4</sup>. Clearly, this trend does not exist only at the level of the media, and in part, it reflects the modern style that is usually applied in political life today. These observations are supported by many phenomena.

In this respect, the use of social media serves as a good example, whether as a mode of communication for politicians (personally or through ghost authors’ contributions on Facebook or Twitter) or as a tool in news reports. In the media, the effort to personalize the news and to give various events a specific or even personal aspect is not the only illustrative “contribution” to the process of depoliticization. However, it is not possible to deal with the issue normatively (good versus evil) here, either. A definitely positive contribution of the media to the functioning of democratic systems has been their effort to uncover various problematic phenomena, for instance corruption. Moreover, the media find “more interesting” those parties (or movements) that appear to be potential competitors of the established political parties, that is, parties that are too well known or too stable for anything dramatic to

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<sup>4</sup> In 1963, J. and M. Charlot observed that TV (and probably in part also the radio) leads to less excited political speeches and to better awareness (Charlot and Charlot 1961). Today this observation would hardly be presentable.

happen in them. At the same time, there are also phenomena that do not lead towards depoliticization, but, on the contrary, affect the interconnectedness of politics and the media sphere (which were criticized, for a variety of reasons, by the above-mentioned Pierre Bourdieu). This interconnectedness has diverse forms, ranging from friendly relations to the journalists' reluctance to release certain kinds of news for fear that it might result in the withdrawal of the politicians' favour and so practically make it impossible for the journalists to do their work.

Amongst the factors that contribute to making politics dishonest, and so delegitimize it, are, of course, politicians themselves, for instance their use of "exemplary" nonverbal communication, their corrupt behaviour, etc. These factors then also make depoliticization seem logical and effective.

Another example of the complex process that plays a part in the disappearance of politics may be "civic society", its development (in the 1990s) or renewal (at present) as well as its role. First, some civic societies focus on issues that could be perceived as purely state or local administration issues, from charity to public awareness activities. The state, which has been delegitimized today, and its various activities are then supposed to be replaced by civic participation, while politics disappears and "privatization" of these activities is de facto taking place (privatization in the sense that public decision-making and responsibility are being lost). This process is accompanied and legitimized by a discourse about how the state needs to economize and behave like "any ordinary family", a perspective that fundamentally contradicts views on the role of the state that were perceived as legitimate after the Second World War, and that disregards the fact that the state cannot be compared to a family or a company. Discussing civic society is in itself a political act, but the outcome of the discussion and the functioning of civic society may be seen as the disappearance of politics. Further, it seems that civic groups contribute to the withering of politics by the way they operate, as their members or employees do not promote politics or talk politically amongst themselves – quite the contrary. Various ways of avoiding politics emerge, in which public debate (not necessarily political, but including the political type) disappears (Eliasoph 2010), even though civic society continues to be presented as the apex of democracy (via democratic participation, the formation of citizenry, opening space for democratic discussion, etc.).

### **Possible interpretations of current depoliticization the Czech way**

The beginnings of the disappearance of politics in the Central European space, especially in the Czech Republic, can probably be traced back to the transition to democracy, thus, for Czechs to the post-November 1989 period (though maybe a more thorough investigation would trace the disappearance of politics the Czech way back to the communist "normalization" after 1968 and the emergence of the so-called cottage subculture<sup>5</sup>). In other words,

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<sup>5</sup> However, the scope of this article does not include any analysis of the situation before 1989 as the core issue here is the current situation. Nevertheless, the current situation did not originate on an empty field that November. In this respect, inspiring analyses and observations have been written, for instance, by Michal Klíma (2015) and Miloš Havelka (2010).

firstly, depoliticization has been characterized primarily by the disappearance (which does not have to last forever) of any alternatives to today's model of society, a model that can be described variously, but fundamentally, as being largely built on a liberal view of society and mainly of the economy. The absence of alternatives that would be seen as legitimate or possible has led to the emptying of politics: everything has already been established, only small and non-political details can be changed. Thus, in a certain sense, we Czechs are still fully in post-communism.

Nevertheless, the same phenomenon of disappearance can be observed, for instance, in France as well, where it has nothing to do with post-communism (unless Francis Fukuyama's view of the end of history is taken into consideration), but rather, is connected to the turnover of power in 1981 when, for the first time since 1958, the Left entered the government, based on the very ambitious presidential election program of François Mitterrand (known as the "110 Propositions of Candidate Mitterrand" [Perottino 2005]). The objective was to very significantly and in many respects transform French society. Nevertheless, a substantial number of the promises were soon forgotten, and it may be observed that, within a few years, or in the first half of the 1980s, steps had already been taken towards the disappearance of politics the French way. The last echoes of the original, quite clearly defined politics were disappearing after the nationalization/privatization issue had been dealt with. The first wave of nationalization by the leftist government was followed by an even broader wave of privatization by the rightist government in 1986, and after that, the situation calmed down completely. No further nationalization of part of the economy was planned, and liberal principles and rules of the game became generally accepted. This happened even before the collapse of the Eastern Bloc, and so it was not directly connected to post-communism. Even though, of course, the collapse of communism made this political shift all the more inevitable in the new situation after 1989 with the elimination of any alternative (or as Fukuyama said, "the end of history"). The situation is similar in other Western European countries as well (perhaps an even more fitting example would be the so-called Second Italian Republic and the Berlusconi era). In any case, in this respect, it can be noted that a sizable electoral participation rate is not by itself evidence of weak depoliticization (or a measure of successful politicization): for instance, the personalization of politics can partially substitute for the missing politicization. In fact, personalization is an important aspect of the expertization of politics.

However, it could certainly be observed that politics (politicization) returned to France in the form of the national identity debate (especially since the second half of the last decade). Simultaneously, it must be taken into consideration that this issue has now essentially fizzled out, even though it of course remains in the hands of the National Front and its ongoing transformations (Perottino 2011). Moreover, this issue is largely directed against an outside threat (Us vs. Them), and so it has somewhat shifted (in the same way that the question of relations with Germany shifted in the period from 1870 to the mid-twentieth century). It would be a different story if, when such an issue began to be discussed, a variety of social alternatives emerged.

The last point to be made in connection with these general considerations is that in parallel with the multidimensional disappearance of politics, the principle of *political responsibility* has also been losing its meaning. More precisely, it has become merely a formal

acknowledgement of political responsibility which has in reality been turned into irresponsibility. As a clear piece of evidence of this, the case of Czech Prime Minister Petr Nečas can serve here, particularly his “explanation” of why he signed (countersigned) the President’s amnesty of 1 January 2013 – as he saw it, his countersigning was a matter of law, not politics. By doing this, he in effect denied the principle of political responsibility.

### **An illustrative type of depoliticization: the expertization of politics**

To return to the main scientific issue under examination here, that is, to political parties – it is obvious that certain changes which could be called the disappearance of politics have been happening in this area as well, even though in this area the situation is not quite black and white or clear-cut, either. The disappearance of politics in this case has been a kind of constant whose influence has been felt in the Czech Republic since, for instance, the establishment of Občanské forum [Civic Forum], when the motto “Parties are for party members, the Forum is for everyone” emerged. However, it must be kept in mind that, firstly, while the criticism of political parties is certainly valid, the role of parties within democratic systems cannot be denied, and so far, they have not been replaced by anything else for the long-term. Political parties are said to be in crisis, but it is necessary to note that they have been in this supposed crisis for several decades, if not from the very beginning of their existence. Inevitably, in the Czech (Moravian and Silesian) space, we have certainly been influenced by how ANO 2011 works – it is a party which refuses to consider itself a party (though the group has not defined its preferred term “movement” in any way, nor has it clarified how, in its view, the essence of a movement differs from that of a party). Nevertheless, ANO 2011 is, to a certain extent, seen as a non-party by the electorate.

Thus, ANO generally presents itself as a party/movement<sup>6</sup> which is not political and which offers non-political solutions. To put it more exactly, this party amplifies the already existing trend of a kind of expertization of politics<sup>7</sup>. By “expertization” is meant here the disappearance of politics and its replacement by an expert approach in which decision-making is predicated on producing expert analysis that supplants the former type of political decision-making. Experts are apparently expected to look at each issue in an objective – non-ideological or non-political – manner which leads to apparently objective decision-making. In other words, it is as if for every question there is always a clear, unbiased, technical or scientific solution that will, of course, be more effective than the former, non-transparent, subjective, politicized, and therefore illegitimate decision-making process. From this it follows that there are legitimate and objective experts (of an unnamed party-movement) that can be distinguished from the illegitimate, subjective or political experts of all the other parties. It

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<sup>6</sup> Although the developments in recent months have led to Andrej Babiš himself acknowledging that the ANO 2011 Movement is a party (he even told the *Financial Times* “I am a party”), and so it is pointless or irrelevant to search for any difference, especially in the case of this group.

<sup>7</sup> It must be noted that political parties have tried to form expert (specialized) background (specialized party committees) for a long time. However, here we are talking about a major shift in the logic of these backgrounds.



must be pointed out that this approach has been taken into absurd lengths, as when the leader of a party-movement flies to Croatia for the weekend and returns as an expert on cash registers. This kind of expertization affects politics in subtle ways. First, it relieves politicians of responsibility for their decisions: from this perspective, there is only one correct and legitimate solution or decision (all others are political/politicized and so illegitimate and a priori ineffective). Second, it is the experts themselves, or often, self-appointed experts, who are key in this respect. Third, however, everyone knows that on their own, all the best expert solutions are nothing but answers given to concrete, specific, or political questions (in other words, the hidden political level is located in the phase of problem definition and in assigning the task to experts).

Finally, to make the picture of expertization of politics a bit more complicated, it is a process that is largely detectable – but partly, it is also “compensated for” by a rather different trend, the politicization of expertise (Polášek, Novotný and Perottino 2014). Thus, the expertization of politics is not in itself a new phenomenon, but the disappearance of politics has given it a new dimension. Primarily as a consequence of the general criticism of party membership and politicization, all parties today try to find a new solution, and expertization appears to be a very positive phenomenon in many respects, or a phenomenon that is generally positively perceived. To some degree, experts have taken on the original role of the ideologists, in respect to the practicality, functionality and efficiency of the proposed solutions. However, these solutions can be just another form of politicization (the selection of the expert or the decision taken may be based on the original ideological or programmatic framework; the expert and the expertise are political but presented as purely scientific).

In the case of newer parties, especially since they prefer a different model of party membership and inner organizational structure (whether because they are more like the new cadre party, according to Ruud Koole [1994, 1996] – or have a business dimension, perhaps also a business plan, according to Hopkin and Paolucci [1999]), technical proficiency and scientific expertise are now more strongly expected of members or proclaimed by the leadership. With regard to these parties, it is particularly interesting to examine the process of “creating” their expert capacities, whether the experts are drawn from the sphere (sometimes very small) of the original company core or whether they are new recruits (who have not yet entered into the arena) or new-old experts (coming from other groups, perhaps from a civic society, or moving on from another party’s environment which had turned out to be insufficiently supportive or promising in terms of their own career development, for instance). This phenomenon is evident in the case of *Věci veřejné* [Public Affairs], but it is much more visible and stronger in the case of the ANO Movement (it is no longer even necessary to specify, in the case of “Andrej Babiš”). This type of party organization bets on external specialists, dusting off and modifying the old slogan “parties are for party members/party experts are for party members”.

Nevertheless, here it is helpful to differentiate between the expert capacity (or the experts) that these parties lean on and through whom they legitimize their discourse on the one hand, and the expert rhetoric and the (apparent) expert behaviour of the leaders on the other hand – whether it be the role of expertise in Radek John’s fight against corruption (his expert legitimacy “transferred” from his original profession as an investigative journalist)

or the case of Andrej Babiš (his expert legitimacy based on his status as a successful mega-businessman who promises the application of better and more economical measures and rules in state management – even though he has now admitted that the state really cannot be managed like a firm, and that by entering politics, he, too, has become a politician).

However, to a significant degree, the original party organization models (mainly the mass party) have been moved to the background in the last few years or decades, and, in contrast, all party subjects try to present themselves as more open and ready to act precisely by adopting the “modern” model of an (objective and non-political) expert.

In this respect, several key issues or questions must be mentioned. First, it has become clear that the ANO 2011 Movement is not perceived by the various actors as a “typical” political party (let us set aside playing with words like “movement” or “party” – from the perspective of political science or the law, the difference is minimal if it exists at all, and also, let us be aware that this kind of perception is part of the project itself). This is a result mainly of the reasons how and why the party was established (for instance, it needs to be examined whether ANO 2011 corresponds to the ideal type of the *business firm party* – Hopkin and Paolucci 1999), and by the internal party situation (especially by “who” a member is, what the role of the members is, the role of the leader, etc.), but also finally the content of this new movement’s programme (in relation to this, it needs to be taken into consideration that especially the media image of what is or is not normal or legitimate plays a fundamental role, especially in a society that has been rather significantly influenced by the disappearance of politics – to put it differently, the role of the media in this case but also in general must not be overlooked).

Any observer paying close attention has certainly noticed how ANO 2011 leans on a very diverse mix of experts and specialists and how strongly the leaders of ANO 2011 have distanced themselves from politicians. In spite of the high complexity of this phenomenon (not to mention electoral support), it needs to be pointed out that the success of ANO 2011 represents at least a symbolic climax of the transition from political solutions (ranging from ideologically based decision-making to accepting and foregrounding responsibility) to the expert, “apolitical” approach (ranging from technocracies to the ambiguously defined term “expert” itself, including unclear measurement of the expert value of the any given, often self-appointed, specialist or group of specialists). Here the double “direction” of politics and expertise applies particularly strongly, as politics becomes more and more like expertise and expertise becomes more and more like politics. Further, it should be pointed out that the new emphasis on expertise (not just as it is viewed by ANO 2011) is a consequence of the logic of “cultural struggle” and the effort to gain hegemony (in Gramsci’s terms). The expert is often the one who knows the (only possible) truth. Nevertheless, it has already become obvious that the expert from this or that party does not always provide the same interpretation or analysis as the expert from a different party, and that in the end, it is the politician who needs to make the decision and (at least formally) carry the responsibility for it.

If it is possible to draw on the classical preference for expert analyses or for legitimizing experts according to a party (or, in other words, political) formula (a party “generates” an expert analysis or “selects” the “correct” one, while keeping the selection criteria, which is where political decisions are *de facto* being relocated, secret – and therefore, in their own

way, the selection criteria are political), with the arrival of parties such as Věci veřejné and ANO 2011, what is being preferred is any well-known expert. This expert is placed into the foreground not so much due to possessing some expert value measured by some objective method, but because of his or her strong media image as an expert, which brings a significant shift in the whole concept of expertise.

A party without a clear programme (or more precisely, with a very “pragmatic” or open programme) must lean on experts because it has “skipped” the phase of programmatic work. It still needs to be examined where such pragmatism, whose purpose is, for the moment, focused on elections, may lead. Or more precisely, it still needs to be examined to what degree the legitimizing of such expertise is beneficial for the working of the state apparatus, and what kind of responsibility may be applied or drawn from all this. In the case of ANO 2011 (and in this respect, similarly to Úsvit přímé demokracie [Dawn of Direct Democracy], or, in the previous election period, Věci veřejné), this “practical” (“non-ideological” or “non-political”) approach is very strongly linked to a populist rejection of everything political or party-related, even a rejection of the classical, established rules and working procedures of the parliament (mainly the discussion principle). This is achieved by pointing out that hours are spent by talking in situations where a few words would suffice (preferably a few words presented by an expert who has the appropriate “objective” – or “non-political” – solution already worked out). So far, it is not clear how much the ANO 2011 movement will become transformed into a typical party-like group (or, to put this in scientific terms, to what degree this party will become institutionalized), nor how the other parties will resist the suppression of their own essence (and the essence of parliamentary democracy itself).

However, this suppression cannot be seen unambiguously either. It is true that, on the one hand, depoliticization is (at least partially) obvious, but, on the other hand, this can also be seen in exactly the opposite way, that politics is now simply less clearly visible. Politics is not disappearing, but shifting its position. It can now be observed as a politics of expertization, a politics of what seems like expertization, or, finally, simply as a politics of covering up – because this politics appears to have no alternative forms, it is basically similar to the politics that was denounced by Pierre Bourdieu.

## Conclusion

To conclude, from a general point of view, it needs to be highlighted that more than the disappearance of politics as such, it is important to focus on the general lack of conceptualization in politics, politics which is increasingly becoming consumed by the ephemeral moment (that is, the present). However, in its own way, politics will always have an influence in some form (even through it is, perhaps paradoxically, disappearing). The current obsession with the present in politics brings into the foreground the fact that politics has become marked by the absence of memory, or has lost the ability to remind us of what is not immediately topical (or urgent), turning instead to the celebration of sometimes more and sometimes less properly thought out pragmatism. It would certainly not be correct to see, for example, ANO 2011 as the first or the only sign of depoliticization or of the expertization of Czech politics. As has been argued here, depoliticization is a polysemous and multi-dimensional process, and in

this respect the ANO 2011 experiment is simply relatively easier to grasp or a more visible object of analysis, as well as an embodiment of depoliticization. Placing these issues in context makes it possible to understand some of the unique features which may be linked to post-communism, for instance. Nevertheless, more general aspects can also be identified here, as the Czech Republic is part of the European space or the global world. At any rate, this is not the end of history, and the space for various forms of politicization definitely remains open.

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