Power on, power off.

Access to electricity and Roma in Bulgaria

– from universal entitlement to insecure resource

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Abstract

This paper looks at the controversies, raised by the problematic access to electricity in Bulgarian Roma neighbourhoods, characterised with widespread illegal connections, debts formed of unpaid bills, amounting to millions of leva and electricity supply restrictions, affecting thousands Roma households. Drawing on an ethnographic study of Stolipinovo, Plovdiv – the Roma neighbourhood with longer history of problems on the issue – the paper argues that electricity supply in Bulgaria in the 1990' is transformed from a universally guaranteed social entitlement, granted by the socialist state to its subjects, to an insecure resource to which different social groups have different access, In the case of marginalised groups as Roma – the access is conditioned and dependant upon the mediation of influential political entrepreneurs. Crucial role in shaping the conditions of this new regime of insecurity has the state with its actions and refrain from actions

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Introduction

An almost legendary story about the times of the first experiments with electrical phenomena tells us that Italian scientific pioneer Luigi Galvani made a dead frog's leg move, an unexplainable miracle at that time, just by attaching a scalpel charged with electricity to the frog's open muscles. This story is a metaphor, I think, for one of electricity's most fascinating features on which I want to focus reader's attention with this paper. In a context, quite different from that of Galvani's experiment - mass consumer utilitarian use of electricity in XX and XXI centuries – electricity again works as an external force, coming from somewhere far away and mysteriously conditioning most intimate spheres of human existence, even – conditioning the use of bodies. This feature of electricity, I argue in this paper, makes it a fruitful site for an ethnographic exploration of the intersection between the abstract forces of the state, and the everyday life of the individual, the changing regimes of citizenship in the late modernity, defined through concrete practices of access and denial of access to a basic resource and the role ethnicity plays in that.

Particular setting for this topic is an urban Roma neighbourhood in Bulgaria, Stolipinovo. In the second part of the 1990's it become site of contest and redefinition of the way electricity is used and the place it has in the everyday lives of people. In an attempt at cutting loses amounting to millions of Euro, due to unpaid electricity bills and energy thefts by the residents of the neighbourhoods, the utilities companies operating there seek state assistance, raise the electricity meters on 8-meters- high posts or just cut off the power supply for days, months or even years. Roma living in

this neighbourhood in turn, answer with street demonstrations, leading sometimes to violent clashes with the police, voting for political parties, which promise postponement or even remission of their debts, waging antidiscrimination trials and writing petitions to the European Commission.

The problem with electricity and the Roma debts became an issue, widely discussed in the Bulgarian society, stirring the imagination of Roma and Bulgarians alike. Newspapers and TV covered the topic extensively, nationalist organisations started petitions against Roma electricity debts, urging the state to take action, political parties of ultra nationalist fashion discussed the problem in their political programmes and TV shows. Bulgarian public sphere dealt so much with the topic, that it could be argued that in the beginning of 2000s, controversies over electricity became attached to the durable stereotypes, with which the Roma are described in the Bulgarian society – there are not only dark, lazy, dirty, but now quite often after this – they are the ones, who "steal electricity and pay no bills".

How such an issue covered the trajectory from a local and private problem of collecting the revenues, of interest only to the utility companies concerned, to a one, on which any Bulgarian has a say nowadays? I argue that looking at the issue of electricity in the Roma neighbourhoods we can shade light on three interrelated topics: the transformation of the relations between state and its subjects in a period of postsocialist "transition", the changing regimes of citizenship in the late modern neoliberal condition and the role of ethnicity in determining citizenship and access to resources.

My hypothesis is that despite popular consensus and strong academic claims on the weakening of the national states in the process of globalisation, the case of electricity in Bulgaria suggests a complex redefinition of the role of the state, rather than its simple demise. As Aihwa Ong (1999) suggests about the South Asian states, in the neoliberal political regime components formerly tied to citizenship – rights, entitlements, as well as nation and territoriality – are becoming disarticulated from one another and rearticulated with governing strategies that promote an economic logic in defining, evaluating and protecting certain categories of subjects and not others. In the case of Roma in Bulgaria, I argue, electricity supply is transformed from a universal social entitlement, indiscriminately accessible to all citizens, into a resource, to which certain marginal groups have insecure access, dependable on power struggles and political bargaining. My aim in this paper will be to show the dynamics and particularities of this process, affecting the Roma in Bulgaria.

The relation between electricity and state is not necessarily visible or rather may seem dictated by technological necessity – electricity grids are big infrastructures which need state's presence of the state for their functioning. History of electricity in XX century shows us that this is a typical case of hiding politics behind technology. In fact, the utilitarian use of electricity starts as a highly decentralised private enterprise, a business directed at producing profit and serving private industrial consumers. (Nye, 2001) Only the sustained and active efforts of states bring it to the place where it is now – a centralised, "natural monopoly", covering the whole of the national-territories of the states in the first and second worlds.

Electricity and state became closely interrelated in XX century as states as different as

USA and USSR alike where seeing electricity as a decisive step in their modernisation programmes and a basic social service, which they provided to their subjects.

In the New Deal policies of Franklin Delano Roosevelt for instance, electrical modernisation was considered the basis for achieving social modernisation of the American society. In his famous speech at Tupelo, Mississippi, the first town in America to sign a contract with the governmental Tennessee Valley Authority for supply of cheap electricity, Roosevelt says: *"...the number of new refrigerators that have been put in, for example, means something beside just plain dollars and cents. It means a greater human happiness. The introduction of electric cook stoves is improving human life. They are things not especially new so far as invention is concerned, but more and more are they considered necessities in our American life in every part of the country."* [1] In another speech Roosevelt links the provision of basic urban services, as electricity, understood as "necessity", to the issues of citizenship - *"Power is really a secondary matter. What we are doing there is taking a watershed with about a three and a half million people in it, almost all of them rural, and we are trying to make a different type of citizen out of them from what they would be under their present conditions."*[2]

If electrification was interwoven with the state and citizenship in the USA, it was even more so in the state socialist modernisation. Socialist modernisation came with the promise of guaranteed social benefits, including provision for utility services such as heating, sewerage and electricity ("Socialism means soviet power plus electrification" as the famous definition of Lenin claim). They were guaranteed to all subjects, as far

[1] As cited in: Robert C. Tobey. Technology as freedom, 1996, University of California Press, p. 96,

as they participated in a productive way, contributing with their labour to the betterment of society. As Michael Mann suggests, fascism and communism were going furthest in providing social citizenship, as part of the tacit compensation for denying civil or political rights to their populations.[3]

Bulgarian Roma, as the other Roma of East Europe, traditionally objects of numerous practices of social exclusion, were promised participation in the social pact between the socialist state and its subject, as part of the assimilationist programme, pursued by the state towards them, which sought to erase their cultural differences through transforming them into industrial workers (Stewart 1997). As statistics on the public and utility services in the Roma neighbourhoods in Bulgaria show, access to electricity supply was established as a self-evident entitlement for the generation of Roma, who were in their mature years under socialism.

In the following chapters I will focus on the discourses of falling out of the modern way of life, through which I argue the Roma conceptualise the difficulties they face in getting access to electricity in the 1990's and which is a popular commentary on the state's retreat from provisioning services, constituted as basic and guaranteed in the past, which in the post-socialist period are redefined as unsecured and costly commodity.

In this context, electricity can be regarded as a space of indirect communication between the state and its subjects – it is not only electricity which is travelling through the wires from the state owned power plants to the houses of Roma and Bulgarians –

[2] Robert C. Tobey. Cit. Op., p. 97,

it is also the state power, which is involved in shaping such intimate spheres of the private life in the individual households such as lighting, cooking, heating, etc., which in turn affect the ways individuals organise their time and relations to one another. Notorious example in that respect are the regime of power cuts, during state socialism, which regularly left families in dark and disrupted the usual life course.

Thus, electricity supply provides a space for an anthropological study of the state in the way, suggested by authors such as Gupta and Sharma: (2006) studying the sphere of representations about the state and the domain of the everyday practices of state agencies and the interaction of people with them.

I argue that after 1989, state's role in Bulgaria is transformed in a complex way. It is tempting to claim that state's influence and ability to organise its subjects lives is undermined. This claim can find its evidence in the inability of state owned enterprises to direct attention and establish control over electricity consumption in marginalising spaces, as the urban Roma neighbourhoods; in the inability of the state to subsidise electricity production and the release of the prices to the international market levels in the late 1990's; and finally – in the process of privatisation of the electricity distribution network, taking place in the beginning of the 2000's. On the other hand it could be argued that the state remains an important player in the field of electricity production and consumption – creating the legislative and regulatory frame in which the market for electricity takes place; regulating the prices, etc.

Electricity supply in the Roma neighbourhoods should be studied in this context of

[3] Michael Mann, Ruling strategies and citizenship, Sociology 21, no. 3 (August 1987), 339 - 54

transformation of the relations between state and its subjects, in which electricity emerges into a resource of political bargaining. Periods of unrestricted consumption in the Roma neighbourhoods are followed by periods of continuous power cuts, which are resumed again after lobbying of political patrons trading their support to the Roma neighbourhoods' claims in return of Roma votes on elections. In this process Roma conceptualise the power cuts (which, as in the case of the Roma neighbourhood in Plovdiv, last since 2004) as denial of the modern life-style, to which normal citizens are entitled. Such an understanding is formed through the numerous constrains Roma face now in organising their households life – lightning on candles, waking up in the night to use the two hours of electricity supply for cooking, heating on wood, hand washing, lack of television and radio, etc.

The predominant opinion among Bulgarians puts the accent on the other side of the story – despite the debts to the electricity companies, amounting to millions of leva (in Plovdiv – 15 mill. Leva or 7, 5 mill. Euro), Roma continue to consume electricity, i. e. evade the new rules, which majority see as imposed on society – continue to take advantage of a guaranteed entitlement, whereas such guarantee is denied to the majority for the state. Thus, through the issue of electricity Bulgarians conceptualise Roma as the privileged marginals. In the critique of gypsies not paying, Bulgarians express their deep scepticism towards the morality of the new post-socialist order – apparently there is no single moral order in front of which all are equal, the cynical and deviant are the ones which achieve success. Intolerance to gypsies suggests problems related specifically to the market. This is a critique of the retreat of the state from providing social services, expressed in the understanding that the new order is in fact immoral, privileging the criminals, the disorderly, and those capable of taking

advantage of the new arrangements by forcefully violating the laws.

The following chapter is discussing different approaches to theorising social citizenship and its transformation with the weakening of the European welfare state, anthropological approaches to the study of the state and marginal places and, as a last point – description of the relationship between the Roma and East European state socialist regimes. Chapter 2 consists of two parts: the first presents the transformation of electricity industry in Bulgaria from a state owned to deregulated and privatised; the second part positions the access to electricity among the social entitlements, which the socialist state offered to Roma. Chapter 3 presents and analyses the ethnographic material gathered in the Stolipinovo neighbourhood.

1. How to think electricity and Roma? Theoretical approaches to social citizenship, the state and its margins

There is something which connects two topics like electricity and citizenship, which at a first glance seem like located in different semantic fields – they are both in a way related to modernity and civilisation. Franklin Delano Roosevelt and V. I. Lenin as cited in the previous chapter are not alone in binding electricity and citizenship together. Authors such as Robert Tobey (1996) and David Nye (2001) demonstrate the ways in which the introduction of electricity brought profound changes in every aspect of life in the American society in the end of XIX century and the first half of XX century. Electricity caused a revolution in the production processes and the organisation in industry, to make possible not less significant revolution later in the private space of the family, during the New Deal era, when domestic use of electricity and electric appliances such as stoves, washing machines, radio and television become a mass phenomenon. Since its emergence as a technological and social force electricity was a symbol and promise of modernity, the modern life-style, the modern man and the future.

British sociologist T. H. Marshall also talks about promise of a certain life style, considered "civilised", as a main characteristic defining social citizenship. "*Social rights"*, he says in his much cited definition, "*make possible the attainment of a "modicum" of economic welfare and security or the right to share to the full in the*

social heritage and to live life as a civilised being, according to the standards, prevailing in society." (Marshall 1950). Citizenship and civilisation are though of as closely related in the writings of the more recent authors from the Marshallian tradition, discussing the weakening of the British welfare state in the 1980s. Desmond King talks about it in terms of dismantling what has become established as "*essential conditions of a civilised existence"*. (King, 1987). Similarly, Alan Walker states on the same topic that Britain is rapidly losing its claim to be a *civilised society.* (quoted in Green, 1990 : 8). Is it possible to imagine the civilised society of late XX century without electricity? Modernity and electricity are so tightly connected in the popular imagination in XX century that could be used as metonymy for each other. As did Paul Wolfowitz, the former World Bank director, when speaking at a Energy and Mineral Business Council meeting at Park Hyatt Hotel, Melbourne, Australia on November 17, 2006, to illustrate his presentation on the current state of development in the different parts of the globe, he used a satellite photo of the Earth, looked at night, in which were easily visible the well lit areas of the developed countries and the black spots of the developing ones.[4] Electricity has turned into such an integral part of what in the developed world constitutes civilised life style that in ordinary situations becomes invisible, is taken for granted. This makes situations of disruption of the normal functioning of electricity a privileged site for the study of how social citizenship, understood as the commitment of states in guaranteeing such a modicum of civilisation, works and is experienced on an everyday level.

The literature on citizenship was booming in the last twenty years, after the

4 http://econ.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/EXTDEC/EXTRESEARCH/EXTPROGRAMS/EXTTRADERESEARCH/0,,contentMDK:21135222~menuPK:162691~pagePK:210083~pi

rediscovery of the work of T. H. Marshall. Study of citizenship today constitutes a frame of interrelated, but in the same time distinctive perspectives about civil society, class struggle, changes in the welfare state, transnationalism, migration, identity, belonging, gender relations, national ideologies, community, etc. It is therefore needed to specify the scope of the current project as an ethnographic research of electricity and Roma minority in Bulgaria's access to electricity, aiming at a study of citizenship not in a normative sense, but as practices, which take place on everyday level, a study of the interplay between the individual, the nation state, institutions and issues of inequalities of access.

In his classical work "Citizenship and social class" (1950), British sociologist T. H. Marshall widened the scope of citizenship, arguing that a membership in a certain community is not exclusively and solely a political matter. The development of citizenship, according to him, was a result of a dynamic created by the tension between abstract granting of rights and the institutionalisation necessary for the enjoyment of those rights in practice. This development consisted historically of three consecutive generations of rights, each connected with the preceding. He distinguished between civil, political and social rights. The third set – Marshall's original contribution to the theory of citizenship – the social rights – make possible the attainment of a "modicum" of economic welfare and security, without which the political and civic participation of the individual is impossible. The purpose of social rights is to guarantee a fundamental equality of status – a minimum of "citizenshipness", under which individuals can not reproduce themselves as equal members of a polity.

The linear progressive model of development of citizenship rights, which Marshall

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based mainly on the historical case of the British industrial conflict, was criticised from many sides as too narrow and one-sided. In his overview of different political regimes and their relations to citizenship, Michael Mann for instance questioned Marshall's idea of necessary complementarity of the three sets of rights (Mann 1986). His study demonstrated that, on the contrary, in totalitarian regimes as fascism and socialism, social citizenship rights in fact served to constrain or even substitute for civil citizenship rights, largely denied to the state's subjects. A similar thought toward the effect of welfare provisions on the civic participation expresses Jurgen Habermas. He argues that rights of individual freedom and social security could stimulate not greater civic participation, but on the contrary – a privatist retreat from citizenship and clientelisation of the citizen's role. (Habermas, 1994, 31)

Bryan Turner also developed the idea of different types of citizenship. Crucial factors in their historical development are first, if the citizenship has been developed from above – by the state, or from bellow – by revolutionary or protest movements, such as the labour movement in Britain, in the first case a passive tradition of citizenship would develop, in the later – an active one; second – if the citizenship is active and public or passive and private. The intersection of these two variables brings four variations of citizenship, each corresponding to a particular type of democratic polity. As Turner claims there could be drawn a predictive model of citizenship development, stating that in societies in which the political space is limited, we could expect that the citizenship will be passive and private. (Turner 1990)

There is a wide variety of critique, which for brevity can be subsumed under the term “postmodernist”, These literature, apart of its radical critique of assumptions,

underlying the modern concept of citizenship as universal membership (modernity, progress, rationality, etc.), is also critical to some of the basic points behind Marshall's idea of social rights as stemming from attempts to solve the inherent tensions between class inequality, generated by the functioning of the market, and the promises of equal status of the normative citizenship. This literature points out at the fact that key logics of inequality cannot unproblematically be explained with the dynamics of capitalist social relations only, because exploitation and oppression are not simply two side of an economic coin. Exploitation and oppression are closely intertwined but not necessarily causally related: the complex patterns of disadvantage and discrimination in modern social life draw on multiple socio-cultural connections between different regimes of power. The historic structuring of inequalities and exclusions positions social groups differently in their relation to colonial, racist, patriarchal, homophobic and capitalist processes. Peoples who are exploited will be causally implicated in the oppression of others in particular contexts, and vice-versa. Feminist and post-colonial debates from the 80s and early 1990s bear witness to the seriousness, but also to the productivity, of this problem (c.f., Amos & Parmar, 1984; Brittan & Maynard, 1984; Mohanty, 1992; Said, 1994). Cultural and political divisions in Ireland, former-Yugoslavia, Rwanda and the inner-city ghettoes of the over-industrialised economies are fuelled by logics of accumulation and the poverties to which these give rise. Yet, such logics are themselves rooted in different cultural, political and traditional subjections of racialised, gendered, stratified and embodied social groups (Hooks, 1993; Bhabha, 1994; Oliver, 1990).

Defending a neoliberal perspective on citizenship, Peter Saunders stands even more radically against Marshall's model of the necessary complementarity of social rights for

the full practice of civil and political rights (Saunders, 1993). According to him the emergence of widespread "privatised" consumption replacing the welfare provisions of the state enhances rather than diminishes citizenship. He joins Malcolm Harrison in the claim that *"privatised forms of social provision amount to an alternative form of modern citizenship."* (Harrison, 1991 : 212). His argument is grounded on two assumptions: the mode of market consumption in XIX century (characterised by stark inequalities, which make the institutions of social citizenship necessary) is very different from the late capitalist mode of the second half of XX century, in which a great mass of people in the developed industrial world have high real household incomes, allowing them to buy the items, which had to be guaranteed with out of the market mechanisms before. For this wide strata, Saunders claims, the transition from social to private consumption is not a loss, but an opportunity as it opens opportunity for greater quality of the services and exercise of choices, crucial for the development of independent citizens. According to him, what in XIX century was a general social problem in the end of XX century is a problem of a marginalised minority unable to participate in market transactions. Therefore, it is a specific and a *targetable* problem, which is better addressed with specific policies than with a universal and undifferentiating state institution such as social citizenship. The second feature of the modern market model is that it does not imply a full withdrawal of the state, but only a change in the form of its intervention in the everyday life. State, according to Saunders, has sufficient budgets to intervene and provide income support, targeting specifically only the needy parts of the population. In that way, it is possible to extend the benefits of market choice to all citizens by selectively boosting the purchasing power of the lower income strata, while in the same time moving away from the hampering effects of direct state provision.

Preoccupation with moral choices lies at the core of another critique of the social rights and the welfare state, coming from the right, as exemplified by work of Lawrence M. Mead (Mead, 1986). He maintains that guaranteed social entitlements have the effect of deepening the social exclusions of those groups of society, which they are designed to overcome. In his view, social protection builds up kind of a shield, which is internalised by welfare recipients as a barrier against the conditions, affecting the lives of the other individuals in society. In that way social citizenship through the welfare system as it is in the 1980s for Mead rather than creating the necessary opportunities for them to become full citizens in the sense of morally equal agents, closes them in a "state of exemption", incompatible with full social citizenship.

Regarding the changes in welfare provisions from a broader perspective of the changing way the "neoliberal" states work, Aihwa Ong brings together two concepts, explored separately by others – neoliberalism and exception – and argues that components formerly tied to citizenship – rights, entitlements, as well nation and territoriality – are becoming disarticulated from one another and rearticulated with governing strategies that promote an economic logic in defining, evaluating and protecting certain categories of subjects and not others (Ong, 1999). According to Ong, the states operating through the neoliberal exception give value to calculative practices and to self-governing subjects as preferred citizens. Meanwhile, other segments of the population are excepted from neoliberal criteria and thus rendered excludable as citizens and subjects. Variations in individual capacities or in performance of market skills intensify existing social and moral inequalities while blurring political distinction between national and foreign populations. Citizens, who are deemed too complacent or lacking in neoliberal potential, may be treated as less-

worthy subjects. Low-skill citizens and migrants become exceptions to neoliberal mechanisms and are constructed as excludable populations in transit, shuttled in and out of zones of growth. The neoliberal exception in that way is conceptualised by Ong as tied to a moralised system of distributive justice that is detachable from legal citizenship status.

Ong is influenced by the tradition of British governmentality school and its theory of neoliberalism as an art of governing whose logic is the condition of individual active freedom. From that perspective neoliberalism is a technology that grounds the imperatives of modern government upon the self-activating capacities of free human beings, citizens, subjects. The neoliberal logic requires populations to be free, self-managing and self-enterprising individuals in different spheres of everyday life – health, education, bureaucracy, the professions, etc. This assumption has important consequences for the way the relations between the state and its citizens are constructed. The neoliberal subject is not a citizen with claims on the state, but a self-enterprising citizen-subject, who is obliged to become an entrepreneur of himself or herself. Thus, neoliberal technology reorganises connections among the governing, the self-governed and political spaces, optimising conditions for responding technically and ethically to globalised uncertainty and threat. (Barry, Osborne and Rose, 1996)

A research which attempts to address citizenship in a non-normative way, but on the level of the actual state policies and the people's responses to them necessitates a different approach towards the state then the one discussed in terms states, as actors, producing policy and legislation. There is a need to deconstruct the idea of entity and homogeneity for analytical purposes in order to grasp the *relationship with the state*,

i.e. the everyday interactions and practices, and the conceptualizations and discourses of states by the people. Trouillot (2001) argues for a research strategy which goes beyond *"governmental or national institutions to focuses on the multiple sites in which states processes and practices are recognizable through their effects"* (2001:126). Hence, the state according to him appears to be an open field with multiple boundaries and no institutional fixity.

Hansen and Stepputat (2001) argue that there is a need of studying stateness as historical and contingent construction, i.e. of "denaturalizing" the state. According to them the ethnographic approach is best equipped to bring into view the gap between discourses of state power (such as discourses of territorial integrity, rights, entitlements, citizenship) and social states such as exclusion, marginalization, resistance and separatism. Moreover, they argue that the ethnographic exploration of the state raises the question of the limits of government: where does the state begin and end? What is the specificity of the state as opposed to other forms of authority and governance that exist alongside?

Gupta and Sharma (2006) further propose to study the state as a *"multilayered, contradictory, translocal ensemble of institutions, practices, and people in a globalised context"* (2006:6). This could be done through examining how the micro-politics of state works, how state authority and government operate in people's daily lives, and how the state comes to be imagined, encountered, and re-imagined by the population. The authors find that the anthropological approach to the state brings to the foreground the importance of cultural processes though which "the state" is instantiated and experienced, which further enable us to see that *"the illusion of*

cohesion and unitariness created by states as always contested and fragile, and is the result of hegemonic processes that should not be taken for granted" (2006:11). They invite researchers to focus on two aspects, which are mutually constitutive and interdependent – mundane bureaucratic procedures (i.e. how is the state enacted on everyday level) and the discourses and representations of the state in public culture (i.e. how is the state imagined).

Another anthropological approach, which challenges traditional conceptualisations of the state is that of the authors, gathered in Das and Pool, 2004. They are inspired by the same reverse of interest from the norm to the exception, which also moves Aihwa Ong and could be traced through Giorgio Agamben's work on *homo sacer* (1998) to the ideas of Michel Foucault on governmentality (1979). Das and Pool aim at turning up-side down the conventional vision about the state as institutions, which embody the order, and propose as much more methodologically fruitful the study of the opposite - cases where the state is weak and hardly struggles to impose is understanding of order. Central for this approach is the concept of *margins* – which are understood as sites of practice, where law and order state practices are "colonised" by other forms of regulation, that emanate from the pressing needs of populations to secure political and economic survival. Das and Pool propose three definitions of such margins: peripheries, where natural containers are formed for people considered insufficiently socialised into the law; margins, in respect to the characteristic for the states operation production of written documents and the practices of "legibility" and "illegibility", connected with them; and marginality, understood as a space of interaction between bodies, law and discipline.

The study of the margins of the states also provides a site for an observation of the complex way local ideas of justice, which are born in the margins and the official law of the state interplay. According to Das and Pool, these two are posed in an unequal relationship, but certainly are not binary oppositions. Rather, law on one hand is seen as practices, taking place on everyday level, and the interplay between the individual, the nation state, institutions and issues of inequalities of access as a sign of distant and overwhelming power, but on the other, it is seen as something to which local desires for justice can be addressed.

The original idea for this research also came from exploration of the way state becomes involved in the everyday life of people. Katherine Verdery's "What was socialism and what comes next" (1996) provides an insightful description of the way Romanian state appropriated uses of time by ordinary Romanians in a process, which Verdery calls "etatisation of time". In it state seeks to expropriate its subjects of control over their time through policies, (which may otherwise have different main goals – as for instance, saving hard currency for economies of fuel to repay the country's foreign debts), such as a programme of shortages for instance – shortages of fuel, of goods, restrictions of electricity supply. In that way Romanian state was effectively forcing more activities onto individuals, within the same time, without increasing their technical capacities, making certain purposes of time or personal projects impossible to realise.

A comparison can be drawn between Verdery's account of the etatisation of time in Romania through policies of shortages and similar process with Roma in Bulgaria, in which state conditions uses of time and bodies, unintended outcomes of the policy of

withdrawal from provision for entitlements such as cheap electricity supply. How do the general issues of citizenship and state relate to the particular case of the East European (more specifically - Bulgarian) Roma / Gypsies?

Roma / Gypsies and their relations with the majority populations in the societies of Eastern Europe are quite puzzling for the social sciences and practitioners. Ethnic minority, nation in construction, transeuropean minority, underclass, a "vulnerable group" (UNDP) – these are just some of the diverse conceptualisations, employed by different authors and institutions. Academic and intellectual confusion is probably at least in part facilitated by the dominant images held by majority populations across the region and in Europe in general, which tend to construe gypsies as a group, defined less in a reference to ethnic and cultural particularity and more as the most marginal social category. (Stewart 1997, Gay y Blasco, 1999). For the purposes of this study I will look on the Roma as a group, defined as oppositional to the non-Gypsies (Stewart, 1997)

In a critique of the static concept of Roma as *underclass* (Szelenyi and Emight, 2000), Stewart proposes the use of the term *social exclusion* as a reference to the situation of deprivation in which Roma find themselves in east European societies. Social exclusion has the virtue of making clear the dynamic character of discrimination as an ongoing process rather than an ever fixed state. It also focuses attention on the primary political struggles that determine who is defined as "in" and "out" of the political communities of Eastern Europe, rather than on some deviant behaviour and criminality, invariably inherent to the Roma, which some uses of *underclass* allow. Stewart further specifies the character of the social exclusion of Roma in Eastern

Europe, questioning how appropriate it is to conceptualise it, using as a model the American civil rights paradigm. Unlike the case of Afro-Americans in US, Roma were never subjects to a specific discriminatory attitude grounded and fixed in a written racist legislation. The discrimination practices exercised against them had much more informal character and generally (though there are exceptions), were lacking *official* legal support from the state. State interventions towards gypsies in Eastern Europe were often of a different character – aimed at achieving assimilation of Roma through stimulating changes in the social conditions, characteristic of the "gypsy life style". Most consistent and effective in that direction where the policies pursued by the communist regimes towards Roma. Michael Stewart provides an account of the patterns of communist state's assimilationist programmes towards Roma, which despite the local variances across the states shared one common characteristic – the essence of the programmes was the transformation of the unruly and anti-social gypsies into industrial proletariat and integration into the mainstream society through the universally elevating power of wage labour. As is well known, productive labour was ideologically constituted as the base of the citizenship in socialist societies of East Europe and the work place at the fabric was often the entry point into a system of various entitlements, such as social an health protection, housing, access to cheap utilities as electricity, etc. [5]

What the transformation of social citizenship in Bulgaria, as demonstrated by the case of electricity supply, mean for the way Roma relate to the state and the majority, through what practices their status in Bulgarian society is being redefined (in the direction of marginalisation and social exclusion) and what counter claims they raise in

[5] A comparison could be drawn here between the effort of the socialist state to elevate their Roma populations through labour and social entitlements into the mainstream of society, to transform them into "normal" members of the society, and the preoccupation of the social democratic state

that process? The following chapter aims at answering those questions.

in the west with the elevation of the working classes into full participation in the societies public life as active citizens.

2. Context of the problem with electricity

On February 18, 2002, at around 7 p.m. a group of around 300-400 Roma gathered in the centre of Stolipinovo to protest against the lack of electricity. The protest was observed by police officers in charge of the neighbourhood. At around 8:15 p.m. officials from the municipal Public Order Service (POS are a special police forces), arrived in the neighbourhood equipped with truncheons and shields. They made an attempt to disperse the protesting Roma during which several women and children were hurt - according to several witnesses they were hit with truncheons by POS officials. In the full darkness hurt children start screaming and this way intervention of the Public Order Service caused panic among the protesters. Some of them started throwing stones at the guards and injured one of them. Shortly afterwards, the policemen and the Public Order Service left the neighbourhood, because their intervention caused panic instead to secure the protests. At that point some of the protesters headed towards a food store, broke its windows and took food products. Some of the protesters also threw stones at a passing trolley-bus and broke a second food store. At around 21 p.m. the protesters dispersed. Police officers blocked the way of cars and public transport into the neighbourhood. On the following day the police searched Romani houses and arrested ten Roma in the houses of whom they found food products from the broken stores.[6]

[6] The story is told on the site of Human Rights Project, a Romany human rights NGO and is based on the accounts of eye-witnesses, who told it to the foundation's representatives.

This is the summary of the events during one of the riots, which took place in Stolipinovo neighbourhood in Plovdiv, believed to be the biggest Roma neighbourhood in Bulgaria with its 40 000 inhabitants. The Roma riots bursted out in response to the cut off of electricity supply to the neighbourhood by the local utility company, the state owned Elektrorazpredelenie (Electricity distribution) – Plovdiv. It was an episode in a conflict, which started much earlier, since 1997, when the utility company announced that the residents of the neighbourhood owe millions of leva of unpaid electricity bills and threatened with cut off. As the debts were not repaid the electricity company of Plovdiv has started to regularly shut down electricity in the neighbourhood, even during harsh weather conditions. By the end of January 2002 about 40% of the households in Stolipinovo had no electricity. The conflict is not resolved even today, ten years later, when the private owned utility EVN, successor of the state Elektrorazpredelenie – Plovdiv estimated the debts accumulated from the unpaid bills of the neighbourhood's residents to 15 million leva (roughly 7, 5 million Euro). Now after years of illegal consumption and unpaid bills, protests and rioting and political bargaining there is some sort of “order of exception” established – which hardly can be grounded on a ordinary procedure and is based only on an unofficial decision by the company management. For more than four years the utility company had enforced regime of supply restrictions. It provides a minimum of electricity supply during the night hours between 9 p. m. and 6 a. m.

What is happening in Plovdiv in turn is just one of the many instances of the growing problems with the regular payment of electricity bills by Roma in Bulgaria. At a certain moment in the years after 1997, problems with the payment of electricity bills are

registered in Sofia, Vidin, Lom, Montana, Plovdiv, Pernik, Kyustendil, Dupnica, Samokov, etc. To understand the formation of the problem, it is necessary to look closer at the way electricity consumption was organised in Bulgaria and the ways it transformed after the fall communism.

The electricity network. Organisational changes during the 1990s and the changing role of the state.

Since 1930's many governments in Europe were regarding electricity as a strategic enterprise, one a number of fundamental industries and aspects of life were dependant on for their smooth operation. Therefore, electricity generation, transmission and supply is very early put under state control and their very organisation is tailored, according to the imagination of the nation-state. Typical model of development becomes the integrated power grid, connecting big generation plants in remote areas and the end-consumers into one centralised, nation-wide network, which made the electricity industry a "natural" monopoly. Whatever the importance of purely technical reasoning in the creation of the integrated electricity network (supposed economies of scale), probably most important was the underlying principle of secure, 24-hours, uninterrupted supply to all the customers, connected to the network. This principle was a matter of political choice and not a technological necessity, and was putting more importance on the secure supply, instead of the efficient and most rational use of resources. Thus, since its early years, electricity industry was very much shaped by state reasoning and state imagination on the way its subjects lives should be organised. An analysis of the new energy law of Republic of Bulgaria, which regulates the "*social relations" (sic!)* in the production, transmission and consumption of electric energy in Bulgaria, provides further insight on the way the state shapes electricity. In a chapter,

entitled “Obligations towards the society”, it is specified that the energy companies exist not just as economic subjects for themselves, but are charged with certain obligations towards society, a higher governor of which is state’s minister of the economy and energy, namely to *“perform their activities in society's interest and in the interest of the individual consumers....providing secure supply, uninterruptedness and the quality of the electric and thermal energy”*. The distribution of electric energy is a defined as a *“universally offered service”* and *“the production, import, export, transit transmission, distribution and trade with electric and thermal energy...are realised with guarantee for the protection of life and health of the citizens, the property, the environment, the interests of the customers and the national interests”*. (Energy law, 2006) .

Although in a quite moderate way, without commitment to specific rights, except the secure, continuous supply, leaving the definition of the consumer's and national interest a matter of *ad hod* definition of the “governor” of society's interests – the minister, this law establishes access to electricity as a form of *universally offered service*.

During the period of state socialism in Bulgaria electricity production and consumption was a state owned industry which meant the electricity industry was functioning among as a vehicle for provisioning the state's social policy. In terms of administrative organisation, electricity distribution companies in Bulgaria since 1948 were constituted as departments of the Ministry of Energetics and Water Economy. The end-consumers prices were heavily subsidised, which transformed electricity consumption into basically a free service. As with many services under communism

however, its quality could not be secured, especially during the 1980's, when pressure for hard currency was pushing socialist governments to sell Soviet fuel on market prices to the West countries, diverting considerable quantities, needed for the generation of electricity in the country, which resulted in a regime of chronic power shortages, continuing for years. (Babechev, 2006)

The status quo altered little in the first years of post-socialist "transition". Compared to other post-socialist transitioning countries, energy sector restructuring in Bulgaria has been much slower as a consequence of political instability and weak commitment to reforms in the early transition period of 1990-97. During that time, many of the energy strategies prepared by the executive branch did not reach parliament because governments lost power.[7]

In terms of administration, energy industry was transformed into a separate body – the giant state holding *"National Electricity Company"*, which however was still subordinated to the ministry of energetics.

From 1998 on there was a tendency towards liberalisation and privatisation, a consequence mainly of the influences, coming on one hand from the negotiations of the country with the European Union, itself undertaking continuous consistent initiatives, aimed at deregulation of the electricity industries of its member states since 1999. On the other hand suggestions for liberalisation of the electricity sector aimed at achieving greater energy efficiency were coming from two of the strategic donors of the country in the transition period – the World Bank and the International Monetary

[7] Andonova, Liliana B. 2002.The challenges and opportunities for reforming Bulgaria's energy sector. Available at http://www.encyclopedia.com/doc/1G1-94843300.html

Fund[8].

In the case of Bulgaria, deregulation of electricity sector and privatisation of distribution and production companies was seen as a means for efficient reorganisation and modernisation of an technologically outdated, highly polluting and energy inefficient industry[9], through the introduction of fresh money from private investors as well as a solution, providing greater incentives for minimisation of losses and achieving energy efficiency.

As a first step in the direction of commercialisation and deregulation in the energy sector, in 2000 the National Electrical Company was transformed from a company, integrating production, transmission and distribution into a decentralised (still state-owned) company, consisting of 15 independent economic units.[10] In 2004 the privatisation of 8 distribution departments marks a further step in the liberalisation of the energy market. They are divided between three foreign investors as follows: Northwest and West Bulgaria are taken by the state-owned Czech electricity holding CEZ, South Bulgaria – by the Austrian EVN and North Central and North East Bulgaria – by the German private concern E.oN. Bulgarian state retained considerable minority shares of up to 30 % in all of the new LtDs.

The official goals of energy efficiency through commercialisation and deregulation, set in agreements with World Bank and IMF, where conflicting with the unofficial

8 Memorandum between the Bulgarian government and the IMF, published on 21.12.2001

9 Throughout the 1990s and the beginning of 2000's Bulgaria kept one of the highest positions in energy consumption per 1000 $ of the GDP in Europe. Source: Energy strategy of Republic of Bulgaria, passed in Bulgarian Parliament on 17. 07. 2002 and published in State newspaper on 23.07.2002, part 1 - Introduction

10 Energy strategy of Republic of Bulgaria, passed in Bulgarian Parliament on 17. 07. 2002 and

considerations for continuing the practice of using electricity system as a form of social policy, a practice, none of the governments during "transition" (socialist as well right-wing) restrained from.[11]

After the privatisation, the relations between the state commission and the private utility companies had been quite problematic. In 2006 two major conflicts erupted, the first due to the incapacity of E.on to maintain a secure and quality 24 h supply of electricity in the region of Varna; the second was caused by the findings for practices of overcharging the bills of the customers, committed by all three companies. Those two issues, widely covered by the national media, turned quickly into a scandal, igniting customers' protests in Varna and Plovdiv, organised by the nationalist VMRO party, which accused E.on of practising *"energy colonialism"*[12]. Later, the State Commission issued a "punitive decree" which ordered payment of a fine by the three companies for low quality of service and incorrectly measured bills. In an attempt to defend themselves the utility companies explained that they work under strong pressure from the energy regulator. They accused the state of being responsible for the failures in the supply, because of leaving the whole infrastructure without maintenance for a period of 20 years and letting it reach unrepairable condition. They also claimed the state is hampering their efforts, aimed at modernisation of the network, by repeatedly declining their proposals for a raise of the price of electricity, as foreseen in their investment plans. On its part, the state commission responded that the increase in the tariffs will be approved when actual investment for modernisation is done.[13]

In the meanwhile the utility companies directed most efforts and resources towards

published in State newspaper on 23.07.2002, part 1 - Introduction

[11] Energy strategy....

[12] VMRO: E.oN think of Bulgaria as a colony. www.dnes.bg from 02.12.2006

minimisation of energy loses, big portion of which are believed to be a result of electricity theft. The measures which they undertake include performing surprising electricity meter checks and hardened to prevent corruption of the personnel, performing the electricity meter measurements. EVN also announced the establishment of "energy police" from January 2008, which will monitor, detect and prevent illegal connections to the power grid. The police will also take action when citizens refuse to pay electricity bills[14].

Conflicting trends between deregulation and characterise the contradictory development of the state involvement in the provision of electricity in Bulgaria. State outsourced modernisation of the network and the collection of bills to the private owners in an attempt to raise the overall efficiency of the system. In the same time it retained considerable power over determining the prices of the services and had proven reluctant to support raises. State influences decisions in the sector officially and publicly through its regulatory body, the State Commission for Energy and Water Regulation, and through informal means, as the direct bargaining between political actors and the utilities management. The utility companies seek to expand their businesses in Bulgaria in new fields as electricity production and other utility services. As they are commissioned through public biddings, the results of which are controlled by political players in the government, the utility companies are quite careful and usually concede with governmental propositions.

[13] Velinova, Sia. The private against the state monopoly. Capital, N 28, 2006
[14] EVN press release, available at http://www.evn-ep.bg/bg/presse/news_detail.asp?newsdetail=7196

Roma and access to electricity

The period after 1989 brought marginalisation and social exclusion for a large number of East European Roma. Primary reason for those negative developments were the structural changes in east European economies, in which many low-skilled and low efficient jobs, providing employment for many Roma[15] just disappeared. The loss of status and social exclusion were also manifested through the quickly deteriorating living conditions in the Roma neighbourhoods, the disruption and almost complete disappearance of many public services as electricity supply, garbage collection, collapse of the sewage system, etc.[16]

It is necessarily to briefly return to the period of socialism, as the standards of living in the Roma neighbourhoods were to a great extent shaped in that period with the intentional interventionist programmes of the communist regimes aimed at profoundly transforming the Roma life-style.

Büchsenschütz (2000) argues that the policy of Bulgarian communist party towards ethnic minorities was had one basic logic - through overcoming the social differences, the ethnic and cultural differences also lose their significance. Therefore the Communist party actively engaged in efforts to change the conditions of life in the Roma neighbourhoods. There are several state decrees preserved, which give some impression of the policy of Bulgarian communist party towards Roma. As in other east European countries immediately after the World War II there was a short period of

[15] The Regional report on the Human Development of Roma in East and Central Europe by UNDP shows that most Settled Roma in Bulgaria were predominantly employed as wage workers in the heavy industry and manufacturing. See http://www.roma.undp.sk/datasets_contents.php?parent_id=10003&id=10003

[16] Ina Zoon. On the margins. Roma and Public services in Romania, Bulgaria and Macedonia. 2001, Open Society Institue

encouragement of ethnic self-determination. However, around 1958 a major change in the minority policy took place, which in the case of Roma, was expressed in a decree of the Council of Ministers, entitled "For a solution of the question with the gypsy population in Bulgaria". Its main idea was that Roma should take part in the "big jump ahead", in the ambitious programme for modernisation of Bulgarian national economy. Their current life style did not fit into this modernisation picture, as they "fall behind the common development of the country, are not engaged with permanent wage labour, do not stay in one place, but lead a vagabond way of life, are engaged with begging, fortune-telling, stealing and other breaches of the public order. In many instances they become spreaders of diseases and bearer of greatest backwardness." (as cited in Büchsenschütz (2000 : 21)

Local party committees and municipality leadership received instructions to take care for the improvement of the hygiene conditions in the Roma neighbourhoods and to secure work places for the Roma in the agriculture and the industry. In the same time housing space should be provided for the Roma and to implement this directive are provisioned special credits for municipalities and certain families.

Second decision of the secretariat of the Bulgarian communist party, concerning the Roma under the name "*Bulgarian gypsies and their active involvement in the building of a developed socialist society"* is published in 1978. This document underlies again the party's will to modernise Roma through their involvement in "socially-useful" ("obshtestvenopolezen") labour, to raise their educational level and to strengthen their self-confidence and communist conscience. The document again raises the issue of the housing conditions of Roma settlements. (Büchsenschütz, 2000 :

23)

It should be noted that the image of the communist state, taking care of all the aspects in the everyday life of the Roma is probably exaggerated. To great extent it is the case with electricity supply, which achieves very high percent of coverage of the Roma neighbourhoods more or less in the same time, when the decisive steps in the electrification of the country are taken – the end of the 1950 and throughout the 1960's. But the provision of other public and utility services after the initial period of intense urbanisation gradually loses pace. Roma families grow up and consequentially the state-built houses become too small for all the family members, therefore new, often illegal premises are build for each married son's family. As Büchsenschütz (2000 : 23) mentions, the authorities soon stop to feel responsible for those settlements, the sewage and the supply of fresh water got deteriorated, the garbage is transported irregularly, the construction of new roads ceases. The party recognises these negative conditions and issues a new document, a resolution named "For a further improvement of the work among Bulgarian gypsies, for their more active involvement in the building of a developed socialist society" published 1978, which envisages the complete demolition of the Roma neighbourhoods in the next 10 – 12 years.[17]

To present a thicker description of the cultural logic, underlying the communist assimilation programme towards the Roma, I will refer to Michael Stewart (1997), assuming that despite differences in details, communist policies towards the gypsies in Eastern Europe were driven by the similar ideas, therefore his description of

[17] Minority Policy in Bulgaria. The Policy of the Bulgarian Communist Party towards Jews, Roma, Pomaks and Turks 1944-1989. Ulrich Büchsenschütz. IMIR, Sofia, 2000

Hungarian context can be applied to Bulgaria as well.

The communist assimilation programme was based on the basic understanding that that the core of Gypsies' distinctiveness involves not some sort of a distinctive ethnic culture, but a distinctive social position – for years Roma were excluded from productive social relations with the rest of society and consequentially they developed a life style, bearing the characteristics of the lumpen proletariat life style, described by Marx – involving crimes like scavenging, begging, hustling, dealing and general laziness.(Stewart, 1997 : 12).

Therefore, an answer to solution to the Roma segregation from the rest of society would be inclusion through the socialist wage labour. In accord with Marxist understandings of the value of labour, the party theoreticians believed that wage work will have the power to transform positively Gypsies' "wanton" way of life. Through work Gypsies would regain the self-respect they had lost with the elimination of their old craft occupations and discover for the first time the rewards of consistent effort as part of a social group or collective. Their ***'level of civilization' would*** thus be transformed.

This ideology regarded productive work as the constitutive element of membership in the socialist society – labour was the building block on which socialist concept of citizenship was laid. As Stewart points out, in Hungary the nation was though as composed of 'working people', so the definition of citizenship was not based on some abstract notion of the human nature or of individual liberties, but on the participation in the process of social reproduction. (Stewart, 1997 : 99)

In accordance with this image of membership in society, the inclusion programme of the communist party, designed for the gypsies was mainly of transforming them from unruly, asocial and useless (because unproductive) social elements, into productive industrial proletariat, enjoying full social status. This programme of transformation consisted of three main elements – a) disciplining gypsies through wage labour; b) exposing them to the civilising effects of decent housing and c) raising their education level. According to Stewart there was an almost mechanical logic that if (Gypsy) x (socialist wage-labour + housing + education) = (Hungarian worker) + (Gypsy folklore) (Stewart, 1997 : 16)

Along with labour, in Hungary as well as in Bulgaria, its was the "revolution" in the housing conditions which the communist regime regarded as the transformative material power, able to change the mentality of the gypsies. Of all the infrastructural improvements, which took place in the Roma neighbourhoods, as said, access to electricity was the most universally available, which was established almost as the norm. Different statistical sources show that practically all urban Roma neighbourhoods in Bulgaria have infrastructures and legal access to electricity supply. Since practically no new installations have been constructed after 1989, those numbers should represent more or less correctly the numbers in the socialist period.

The regional report on Roma of UNDP (UNDP, 2001) for instance informs that the following percent of Roma in Bulgaria have:

Type of service	In the cities	In the villages
Water-conduit inside of the house	57 %	38 %
Toilet in the house	29 %	7 %
Toilet in the yard	76 %	83 %
Sewerage	66 %	20 %
Bathroom in the house	31 %	6 %
Legal connection to electricity	88 %	80 %

Other surveys register even 93 % of houses with legal electricity connection (this number shows the houses with legal electrical installations, it does not tell how many of these houses actually have access to electricity.) Thus, the difficulties in provision of electricity supply in the Roma neighbourhoods in Bulgaria during the 1990s were not a case of a resource of the civilisation, which Roma never had access to – for the vast majority of them it was a normal feature of everyday life to which they were accustomed and were taking for granted as were all Bulgarian citizens. Its disappearance and the difficult and insecure access to it was a new condition for them, which provoked a rich array of commentaries and conceptualisations. The following chapter will present the findings of an ethnographic study in Stolinovo, which tried to capture some of them. The field work was performed in the second half of April 2007,

although I also use material from previous field works in Stolipinovo, which took place in 2000, 2004 and 2006. Main methodology for collecting information was conducting semi-structured interviews.

3. Electricity in Stolipinovo – from social entitlement to insecure resource

"We were abandoned by everybody" - the retreating state (1989 - 1999)

Gupta and Sharma (2006) suggest that anthropologists look closely at the everyday practices through which people and the state interact and through which people actually experience the state. People's accounts about the beginning of the crisis with electricity in Stolipinovo gave an opportunity to try this anthropological technique. Surprisingly for an outsider, people form Stolipinovo indicated the fact that they were abandoned by state and the society as the main reason for them stopping paying their bills, along with the more easily explainable reference to the lack of jobs and money. I would like to explore a bit further the way the motive of the abandonment had developed.

First a short clarification – I speak of the personnel of the utility companies as representative of the state, because as I mentioned earlier, during the socialist period electricity supply companies were units, administratively part of the Ministry of Energetics. More important perhaps is that they were considered as state representatives by the informants.

Starting point for many f the informants' narratives were their memories of the times under socialism before 1989. They were often returning to this period to help themselves conceptualise their current situation. Socialism was remembered with the stark contrast it provided with today – what was most in need today - *"security and order"* - in socialism seem to be in abundance. When speaking about how it was it the

electricity supply back then they would underlie two elements – most people had secure jobs and the electricity bills costed *stotinki (pennies)*[18]. Most male Roma from the neighbourhood were working at the many factories in the city as unskilled workers, and by the peculiar socialist logic were receiving secure and good, sometimes even quite high salaries. A mail informant in his 60s now, had worked in a canning factory where he received a salary of about 500 leva, while in the same period the electricity bills were of 1, 5 – 2, 5 leva. He concluded: *"No body had any debts at this time, because people had salaries and had no cares."*.

People's memories of socialism also provided rich repertoire of stories, illustrating the order, which was missing today. Back then the institutions were working well and regularly. The bill collectors ("*incasatorite*) from the utility companies were coming every month, walk through all the houses in the neighbourhood, check the electricity meters and receive the needed money from the people immediately. The same informant was recounting a story in which the proper functioning of public institutions outside the family matched the clear and ordered patriarchal relations inside the household: *"Before I was going to work and my daughters in law were staying at home. A collector comes, says "Four leva". My daughters in law would take out money, pay. I come from work, they tell me – "Dad, I paid the electricity.". I say "Good, you have done a good thing". It was like this before."*

[18] An average salary at that time would be around 250 leva, the informants claimed that the electricity bills they were receiving at that time were in the range of some *stotinki (1 lev = 100 stotinki) to some leva.*

The false collectors

Immediately after 1989 the things looked as if hey were not changed. Collectors were coming in the neighbourhood, walk the houses, check the meters and take the money. There was one slight difference though, which according to the informant's narratives, was taking place more and more often. The collectors were the same individuals as from before 1989 and they were often showing the same disrespect towards the utility companies' procedures of accountability – they were receiving the sums from the people, but were not giving back invoices. It didn't raise suspicion because that was the normal practice during socialism too. But it turned out that while collectors were presenting themselves as agents, representing institutions, they were in fact working for themselves – and instead of bringing the money to the utility companies, were taking them away. According to several informants, this was how the big debts silently accumulated. That was the story of Shoshi, a young Romani woman from the neighbourhood, who was working as a collector before and after 1989. She was collecting bills which were always around the moderate sums of 10 – 20 leva. Later, it turned out that Shoshi was not delivering the money to the utility company, but was spending them for herself.

When telling the story, informants do not really picture Shoshi as the bad and guilty person. She was just taking the opportunity, and really responsible for this crime was the utility company, which let the things happen for too long, without interfering and let really huge debts accumulate.

Other informants were telling the story somewhat differently. According to them everybody knew that the collectors are corrupted and that money never goes to pay the bills. But as the actual prices were soaring and the bills were becoming bigger and

bigger, many collectors started to offer to write down lower numbers for the measures of the electricity meters in return of sums, ten times of the actual sum owed by the customer to the utility company. *"That fake collectors started to come and people were paying them 10 – 15 leva instead of 100 leva. We are guilty, but the state is also guilty. (**for letting this happen – S. K.**)"*

This practice is taking place even now, after the privatisation of the utilities and it is not any more restricted to the Roma neighbourhoods. The daily newspaper "Sega" reports about an employee of EVN, arrested in an action, specially organised by the local police, in which he was arrested receiving a bribe of 100 leva (Unfortunately the bank notes were marked) from a customer of the company for registering lower numbers of the electricity meter.[19]

According to the informants' narratives, later collectors stopped coming to Stolipinovo altogether. By this time the utility company had changed its practices of communication with the customers and instead of sending collectors every month, was sending via mail paper bills, carrying the name of the company, the name of the customer, the consumed amount of electricity and the sum of money to be paid. However, the new bills were not reaching Stolipinovo. It corresponded with anther process of transformation of the neighbourhood into a marginal space – the post officers stopped entering the neighbourhood and receiving a mail turned into a luxury, which only those living in the margins of the neighbourhood, facing the parts, where Bulgarians resided, were granted. A middle aged woman remembered about those times: *"The neighbourhood turned into a ghetto. How they can send the bills, when we*

[19] *"Collector of EVN arrested for asking for a bribe". Sega daily, 05.05.2007,*

don't have mailboxes any more?! If somebody wants to send us a letter, he has to tell the mail man to leave it at Danche's café.."

People interpreted this as the retreat of the state from securing the collection of its own money. "*The truth is we were abandoned by the state – they just stopped searching for the money."* The monthly visits of the collectors were functioning as reminders and markers and with their disappearance people lost the sense of consumption of a resource, the quantity of it they have consumed and accordingly – how much their owe at a certain moment. "*People are not guilty – it's simply that the state did not really took care to collect these money. Collectors were not coming, bills were not sent and people got accustomed to live with impunity. And now suddenly there are debts accumulated, which are too huge to be paid by the people here with their modest incomes."*

The assertion that they are left by everybody was repeated again and again throughout the conversations with the informants and perhaps was one of the principal aspects of how they conceptualised the change in their lives and their position in Bulgarian society after the end of socialism in 1989. First the privatisation of a practice, serving as a routine form of interaction with the state institutions before, than its full dissaperence and the impossibility of communication with the state on an everyday level of proximity, was for the informants of Stolipinovo the concrete way to experience the deepening marginalisation of their neighbourhood. It was now being constituted as a space, which the state institutions could not or did not bothered to penetrate. At that moment people from the neighbourhood and the state companies became engaged in a silent and indirect form of communication – the Roma were

informed about the fact they owe money to the utility when they discovered that their electricity is cut off. Than they had to go to the utility company's central building and be informed about the whole amount they owe – 5000, 6000 or 8000 leva.

The disappearance of the collectors was interpreted by the Roma of Stolipinovo also as a sign of the general disruption of the ways life was organised during socialism and the marginal position, Roma found themselves into at the end of the turbulent transformation into new ways of organisation. *"The collectors disappeared because everything became so messed up in this democracy. The things just do not happen any more."*

"In which century we live?!" - what it means to live without electricity

After the first years of the transition in which the payment of electricity in Roma neighbourhoods became nobody's problem and Roma residents consumed without restriction, around 1999 – 2000 utility companies "returned" and actively tried to reclaim the control over consumption, resorting to new techniques of governance, all of which had one element in common – be it cutting off electricity supply to whole neighbourhoods, lifting the electricity meters on high posts or employing devices for remote measurement of the electricity meters - all were aiming at avoiding the direct contact with the dangerous and unruly marginals from the neighbourhoods. I will return to the new techniques of the companies and Roma's responses to them in the next chapter. In this chapter I would like to explore in more detail more the everyday aspects of living without electricity, as those were the constructing element of the Roma's conceptualisations about their marginalising status i regards to the rest of the society.

Many stories of the informants were summerasing the history of Roma in the second part of XX as a time when they achieved a lot in becoming as civilised and as advanced as Bulgarians. Obviously, the socialist attempt to socialise Roma through a programme of social achievements was at least partly succesfull in making the Roma inernalise the idea of social inclusion through change in the life style. In stories as the following one, told me by an elderly male informant, the talk about the material achievements in everyday life of Roma and talk about the changing politicial regimes in the country, were easely intermixed: *"I remember that in 1954 we moved to the neighbourhood and my father bought a radio. At those times many people were signing up for a connection to electricity, because of the radio. And we were very happy then, we were saying each other: "We are throwing away the candles; we start a new life now!"*

....And then SDS[20] came ***(in 1997 – S. K.)*** *and it promised new life and so much more. And what happened?! They sold the factories and there is no more work any more, and we have no money to pay our debts, you can not watch a football match – they brought us back into the old days – with the candles and with the gas. Now everybody is trying to survive as they can. In which century we live, to use candles to light? We fought for the fall of socialism, so that we too become human. We did not fight so that we now sink."*

as seen in the informants narrative, cutting off the electricity was experienced as deprivation, which is degrading and humiliating people to the point of bringing them back into a primitive and backword times. Informant's stories were abundant with

[20] *The government of the Union of Democratic Forces (SDS) lead by Ivan Kostov was the first*

imagery, connected with the idea of modern times, the 21th century, and Europe, which were interchangeable symbols of a decent status. Time and again they were asking rhetorically: „*In which century we live?! " „My child writes his homework on a candle light – is that possible? In which century we live; "I can't turn on an iron to press the clothes – i don't know in which century we live any more. The child of the neighbour was ill – the doctor came and said: "How am I supposed to make him the injection in such a dungeon?!"*

Uninterrupted electricity supply was thought of in the terms of the normalcy by the informants. It was self explanatory condition for a normal, modern state as Bulgaria. To stress this understanding of electricity as normal, informants were doing rhetorical comparisons between Bulgaria and states, supposedly in extraordinary situations such as war – even there the electricity was present. "*There is no other country in the world in which there is a restrictions regime for so many years – without being in a war, without anything. They have electricity even in Iraq. And here, were nothing like war is taking place, we have no electricity and we are under restrictions – we should be in the Guinness book of records!"*

Many of the informants' stories were explaining how the restricted supply of electricity was affecting their everyday routine and was making households activities difficult. A family of two brothers and their friends, whom I met during a walk in the Sokolite part, were having their lunch on the street. They told me they just come back from work as porters in the city, and are dirty, but have to wait for the shower till the electricity comes back in the night, so they can turn on the boiler and have hot water.

post-socialist government to undertake serious programme for privatisation after 1998.

For lunch they were having a salad and the wife of one of the brothers added that they come hungry from work, but she can not prepare cooked meal, as they had only electricity stove.

Before the regime of restricted supply, electricity was as a main resource for cooking, washing, lighting and heating. The regime was forcing the residents of the neighbourhood to search for alternative solutions for this basic needs – cooking on small gas hot-plates, instead of electric stoves, washing manually, instead of using a washing machine, warming up water for a shower with hand-made boilers, painted in black and put on the roofs of the houses to collect sun energy, lighting on candles, instead of light bulbs, and collecting wood around the neighbourhood, instead of using the electric radiators. All this alternative solutions were regarded as make-shift, not proper for civilised people in the beginning of XXI century. The use of or lack of access to such appliances, running on electricity in the views of the informants was definitive for the way one felt and understood his / her self – as a normal, modern person, or as an abject, falling out of the most self-evident standards of modern civilisation. A young man told me about his conversation with an employee of the utility company. My informant was complaining about the high bills that utility company is claiming he has to pay and the company employee mentioned this is normal, as he is having an electric boiler. The young Roma was outraged: "*He tells me you have a boiler! I tell him "Don't you have one?! Holy Lord – not to bath! We all live in XXI century after all!"*

The regime of restrictions was also bringing changes in the time management in the households, which affected women disproportionately stronger, due to the traditional

roles in the gendered labour divide. Nights become the time, in which many of the domestic chores are shifted – women run the washing machines, prepare food, give bath to the children and no body goes to bed before 12 – 1 a. m. "*You here the noises from all neighbouring apartments – you can not complain, you know its the only time, when families can take care for their domestic things."*

The supply regime affected especially seriously the food habits of the Stolipinovo residents. As refrigerators can not work properly and food can not be stored, it has to be prepared and eaten immediately. Informants were picturing evening in which the children would fall asleep hungry, exhausted of waiting for the food to get ready. Cooking often becomes economically disadvantageous and informants claim that they are forced to reduce the amount of food, prepared an consumed at home, in favour of food, bought from the shops and small kiosks inside the neighbourhood.

Supply regime affects not only the daily time management of people, but also changes the way people perceive time more generally, blurring the boundaries between working time and holiday time, when people would like to present themselves in a more festive way. *"The utility company makes difference neither for a death, nor for a wedding, nor for a feast. We do not know what a working day is and what a holiday is. We want that at least on Saturday and Sunday there are no restrictions so we can take a shower and wash our clothes and everything to be fine."*

The supply regime is interrupted rarely and almost always in relation to political activity of agents with certain interest in the residents of the neighbourhood, in their quality of a considerable voting mass. In the last two years, days with full supply of energy were the St. George's day and Kurban and Ramazan Bayram, due to the

lobbying of the local representatives in the municipal council and immediately before and during elections.

"I want everything to be Bulgarian in this neighbourhood!"

The discourse of the abandonment by everyone was directed towards the ideal time of the past. The attempts of the utility company to establish some form of control, over the consumption of electricity in the neighbourhood was expressed with different idiom – that of the ethnically based discrimination. The utilities were cheating and taking advantage from the people, because they were simple, uneducated and Roma.

After 2000 the utility companies returned with claims for debts of thousands of leva and the reason why that happened exactly in that year might be the changes in the structure of the state holding National Electricity Company. In 2000 it was vertically decentralised and the electricity distribution companies were structured as separate economic units, with their own budgets. Perhaps this fact had "hardened" the financial constrains on them and they respond with an attempt to minimise loses.

They employed a range of techniques to actually establish firmer control over the consumption of electricity in the Roma neighbourhoods. At that time apart from the changes in technology such as lifting the electricity meters on high posts, installing a new, digital electricity meter system, equipped with protection against manipulation, minimising the theft also involved new techniques of organisation, such as outsourcing the debts collection and the disconnection of households to private security companies, often formed of people from the Roma neighbourhoods. Local people conceptualised this technique as a clever way found b Bulgarians to keep their hands clean and to

leave the dirty work of punishing the non-paying to the Roma.

People from Stolipinovo were regarding the new polices of the utility companies, involving new devices to avoid theft as signs of a discriminative attitude. The technique of lifting the electricity meters especially was explained by the informants as a means to deceive the Roma and unjustly to make profit from them. It was widely believed taking out if the houses the electricity meters was away of overcharging their bills. This was also the popular explanation why the prices soared in the same year, when the posts were introduced. "Then t*he bills suddenly changed – until then we were paying bills of 5 to 621 leva, from the next month on, bills of the range of 70, 90, 100 leva started to come!"*. No one believed the sums claimed by the utility company could represent the energy really used by them. They were convinced the high bills could only be explained with overcharge and in support of their contentions were listing the modest set of appliances, owned by their families *„We have a fridge, a stove, a TV set, and the lamps – can it all cost 100 leva?!"*.

The utility company employees used special trucks, equipped with cranes to climb to the tops of the posts and measure the electricity meters. This practice serves company's need for checking the quantity of electricity, passing through and the company employees didn't feel obliged to report the readings of the meters to the Stolipinovo residents. This was making the Roma really angry, as they had the feeling they have no control over the process of measurement, and it was making room for conspiracy theories about the utility officers are routinely manipulating the readings, registering much higher numbers than the actually consumed. "Y*ou have no control*

[21] 1 lev = 0, 51 Euro

on how much you have consumed, what is your debt? The collectors used to come here before, measuring in front of us, in our houses. Now they raised the electricity meters on the posts and those people climb up there with cranes and only they know how much it reads. Or now with the new electronic electricity meters - he looks and he tells you "you have to pay so much." That's fine, but I want to look also. And if you have 30 leva he would write 90 leva."

The explanation of Roma informants for their overcharged bills was that serving political interests – left without electricity and with enormous debts the Roma become dependant from the political parties. When the next elections approach they can promise them to turn on the electricity and to remit the debts. The second explanation is that utility companies management is stealing electricity for its own sake and is explaining the missing quantities with the loses from theft in the Roma neighbourhoods, *In the utility company they read the bills of the Roma over the amount they have really used and the rest is for them. That is a deal! Doesn't matter it's a private company! "*

The discussion on the electricity prices was an expression for the ways Roma felt they were treated by the external institutions. These narratives were stronger than the one, employed for the first years after socialism – now people felt they are not only abandoned by the institutions, they are treated unfairly, because they are Roma. Informants were convinced that overcharging the bills is a discriminatory policy, which does not happen among Bulgarians. *"How is that possible - Bulgarians pay 25 – 30 leva a month and we have to pay 100? It is not realistic!"*

For some informants electricity bills were so clearly charged with discriminative attitude, that they used them as reliable and exact token for their mental measurements of the given amount of gypsiness (and the associated quantity of lower status) of them and the other residents of the neighbourhood. An informant, living on the margins of Stolipinovo neighbourhood, for example was telling me: *"They overcharge on our accounts. I am here among Bulgarians and even I pay 80 – 100 leva a month. If you go further into the neighbourhood they pay bills of 500 – 1000 leva."*

The informants were seeing signs of discrimination in many small details – some of them believed that the electricity meters were broken and did not measure correctly and systematically add extra 1000 kwts over the actually consumed electricity. *"These meters were put on other places, but got out of order and that is why they put them here."*

Thus, ethnic categories were employed to express differences in terms of status and the social entitlements and way of life, attached to it. In this discourse "Bulgarian" was a synonym of a status, the enjoyment of the full entitlements, associated with being a member of the political community, called Bulgaria. A group of informants, sitting in front of their panel blocks lacking windows in Stolpinovo's most poverty stricken part, Sokolite (The Falcons) would formulate their political demands towards the state like this: *"We want everything to be Bulgarian in this neighbourhood – don't we live in Bulgaria?! We want to have human rights about everything. As the other people have rights – are we humans or we are animals?!"*

When they spoke about "everything" - they meant material things as Bulgarian streets,

Bulgarian lights, Bulgarian dust bins, Bulgarian electricity – all these mundane things were receiving symbolic role and even ethic dimension in a constant process of comparison of statuses and negotiating social position.

The feeling of being in or out of a membership in a certain community was finding expression in small everyday symbols. A middle aged male informant complained that because of the restrictions regime, which was ending after 21h, he couldn't watch the central news programme at 20. 00 h, the main one, which for many years was functioning as kind of a "social clock" for Bulgarians. *"Aren't we Bulgarian? Don't we have the right to watch the news on the national television at 20.00 h? Why they keep the electricity off till 9. 30 – 10 h? There are no newspapers either to understand what is going on in this country – so we can only try to understand something by asking each other."*

The feeling of exclusion from a full membership in the political community, in which they have been born, was probably most radically expressed by a middle-aged man, one of a group of more active people, who were gathering in one of the small mosques in the neighbourhood to discuss politics: *"Discrimination is too weak a word, what we have here is a war declared to this neighbourhood, this is a real terror. Aren't we born in this state, don't we have rights too?'*

The conviction that "we have rights too" was reflected in the way informants spoke about the cases of electricity theft. Most people were quite open about the fact that at certain moment they were connecting illegally to the network and stealing electricity from the utility company. In their understanding it was the only way to get access to a

basic necessity, which was otherwise inaccessible. *"There are human needs, which simply have to be met – to wash yourself, to feed the child, to worm up. If you put the crime and the human needs on a balance – which will be heavier?! These needs just force you to commit a crime. Do not we live in Bulgaria?"*

There were a number of protests against the regime of supply restrictions. The biggest ones in Stolipinovo took place in 1998, 2002 and 2006 and involved blockades of the main boulevard "Landos", bordering one side of the neighbourhood, breaking shops and clashes with the police, sent to enforce order. The informants explained the protests with the fact that they are denied rights, which they were granted as citizens of Bulgaria. They were referring to those riots as "stachka" - or strike in Bulgarian, a term, which probably was reflecting the wage worker background of many of the participants in the protest, but was also revealing for the way they were conceptualising their actions – in the phraseology of bargaining for rights. Yashar Asan, the organiser of the last protest from the spring of 2006, owner of the new market and one of the richest and most prominent businessmen in the neighbourhood, was determined that the utility company is intentionally prolonging the electricity supply restrictions in order to keep the mass of people in the neighbourhood in a dependant position. His vision for solution of the problem was simple: *"Organising strikes, strikes, strikes, till the end! Until the utility company finally realises the nature of the problem, because they fail to understand otherwise. I know that they are private company and work for profit, but this is not my problem. They should know how to manage their enterprise so it is profitable. But people here can not live without electricity either."*

The privatisation of the state utility company in Plovdiv, which have taken place in

2004 in the commentaries of the informants was conceptualised as a solution, the state had found to run away from its responsibilities of taking care for its citizens' basic necessities: "*This is the way the state is washing its hands – you go to the mayor or the municipality councillors and you ask them – "isn't that the reason why we have elected you"?! Why now we don't have electricity?! And they say: What should we do about it?" It now has a different chorbadja (owner) – the Austrian, go and speak with him." And this Austrian, the chorbadjia – how are we to find him? This is the way they sneak out."*

The state was using the private owners as a shield to protect from complains, but no one really believed that it has no power to take the definitive decisions – it just does not want to do so. The informants expressed the feeling that if the utilities were state owned, their relations with the state are somehow much barer and they can much easier seek responsibilities. In the case of private ownership the access to the factors, from which the welfare of the people depends, is much more difficult.

The role of the state is seen as the leading one also from the local representative to the municipality council. Ahmed Azimov, one of the three representatives, says:
The state should intervene and solve this problem, the way it let it form before. Without the participation of the state there will be no solution. We alone can not come to an agreement with the company – they do not take us seriously. We had negotiations before and they put us in a very awkward situation – they said we will turn on the electricity, if people pay at least part of their debts, and we made people pay, we promised them there will be electricity, they have paid, but EVN didn't turn on the electricity, now people no longer trust us.

A neo-liberal condition?

After being a universal entitlement, including even the Roma in the civilisation norms of the modernising Bulgarian society during socialism, through the postsocialist period electricity became a contested resource. In marginal spaces as Roma neighbourhoods, access to it was irregular, illegal, extraordinary, contested. It was highly differentiated in accordance with the individual's ability and power to ensure his access. For the most inhabitants of the neighbourhoods, electricity was gradually evolving into a resource, access to which was obtained through mediation – of Roma leaders, politicians, patrons or rich people.

The new regime of mediated or patronised access to electricity is paradoxically fostered by the policy, adopted by international donors, European bodies, national institutions and private companies to communicate with the Roma through the mediation of the so called "Roma leaders". A speech of Maud de Boer-Buquicchio, deputy general secretary of the Council of Europe in 2004 is indicative of the preoccupation with "Roma leadership" of the institutions', working with Roma: *"Roma leaders are needed who can negotiate confidently with local government authorities in order to obtain what their communities need. In order to achieve something, it is essential that the authorities have a valid interlocutor of the Roma population to identify priorities."22*

While it may look as a plausible suggestion for integrating the minorities into the

[22] Cited from: http://www.rferl.org/featuresarticle/2004/03/097e477c-f330-49d6-b229-edc6fb893226.html

process of decision-making, the tendency of public institutions communicating with the Roma groups as ethnic entities through the mediation of "Roma leaders" is undermining the principle, on which for good or bad, modern citizenship is based – of the equal status with identical rights and duties of all individuals, members of the given polity. Such an inclination of searching for the leaders creates categories of people, whose access to resources depend on the mediation of a third person. This is the case with electricity supply in Stolipinovo. In all crisis situations utility companies and local authorities were negotiating with a number of Roma leaders, mostly leaders of local Roma NGOs.

Interviews with informants suggest that this practice could be problematic. In Stolipinovo most people were very sceptical about the leaders, leading the negotiations with utility company EVN and their capacity to represent them. They used the term "leaders" with irony and suspicion - "our so called leaders". Leaders were defined as such only in reference of being appointed as such by some external force. Many informants perceived their role as mediators in the relations of the residents of the neighbourhood with institutions as lacking legitimate grounds and humiliating for the ordinary people, compared with their experience from before 1989, when everyone was communicating individually with institutions: *"I don't know where these leaders came from. Wherever we go (in wherever institution we go – S. K.) they ask us: "Where are your leaders?" why should I need leaders, don't I have a head on my shoulders, can't they speak directly with me? Before there were no such leaders, if there was a problem, you would go to the office concerned and there you had it solved. Now they want leaders."*

Electricity supply is mediated and attributed through political bargaining also on the

level of national politics. This tendency has begun back in 1998, when the mayor of Plovdiv Spas Gurnevski had given a famous speech, remembered and recited by informants even today. In it he argued that Roma should not pay electricity as they are unemployed in an attempt to please the Roma voters before the local elections of 1999. Probably his words had an effect as he continues to be one of the most popular Bulgarian politicians for the people in the neighbourhood, winning several thousand votes when he participated as independent candidate on the last elections in 2005:[23] *"We had a good mayor once though, Spas Gurnevski, he told people to use as much electricity as they want – he was not wouldn't care if someone is a Bulgarian, a Gypsy or a Turk – and he was helping a lot, mainly for the electricity."*

Thus, electricity turns into a resource, ascribed through the mediation of political figures, and not as a universal right. People cite the example of the involvement of the Plovdiv regional governor, *"who cared more for the Roma population"*. He would call the managing director of the utility company and the after that the electricity was back on. *"The regional governor is from the socialist party now and he doesn't care about the Roma and does not want to get involved."*

Culmination of the transformation of electricity into a matter of political bargaining were the parliamentary elections in 2005. The main strategy of the leader of the Turkish minority party Movement for Rights and Liberties Ahmed Dogan for securing the vote of the residents of the neighbourhood was to guarantee negotiations for an end of the supply restrictions and remission of the debts. The pledge was done in front of the residents, gathered on the main square of the neighbourhood and on the air of

[23] Source: Parliamentary elections 2005 on http://www.2005izbori.org/results/index.html

the most popular private television. On those elections MRL candidate became the first MRL representative in the parliament, elected from Plovdiv with the mass vote of people from Stolipinovo.

Conclusion

In this paper I argued that the case of the problems of Roma in Bulgaria to pay their electricity bills can be regarded as a sight for a research of the transformations of the way states engage in the life of their subjects in the late capitalism. While during state socialism electricity supply was a universal social entitlement, to which all Bulgarian citizens had guaranteed access to, in the years of transition it this has gradually has been transformed into a resource, distributed very differently for different groups in the society. According to me the case of electricity and Roma is an example for the development of condition of Neoliberal exception, defied by Aihwa Ong as mode of operation of the state in which they give value to calculative practices and to self-governing subjects as preferred citizens; meanwhile, other segments of the population are excepted from neoliberal criteria and thus rendered excludable as citizens and subjects. The process of transformation of electricity is experienced and conceptualised by the Roma in Stolipinovo as withdrawal of the state from the marginalising environment of their neighbourhood; as falling out from the civilisation standards of modernity and as a lower status, expressed in ethnic terms. I also intended to show the way access to common resource as electricity for socially excluded groups as Roma is attributed more and more not through the universal institutions of citizenship, but through the mediation of ethnopolitical entrepreneurs.

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