The Making of the Bulgarian Middle Class: Citizens Against the People in the 2013 Protests

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Statement

I hereby state that the thesis contains no material accepted for any other degrees in any other institutions. The thesis contains no material previously written and/or published by another person, except where appropriate acknowledgment is made in the form of bibliographical reference.

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Budapest, 31st March 2019

Abstract

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This thesis provides an empirically-driven theory of the formation of the 'middle class' in a peripheral country: Bulgaria between 2002-2013. Based on low wages and low taxes, the country's political economy mitigates against the emergence of a 'broad middle' habitually associated with the developed welfare states of the West. 80% of the working population ekes out less than 500 EUR monthly, making Bulgaria the poorest EU-member state. After three decades of neoliberal reforms, the country's class structure resembles that of a Third world country: a tiny opulent minority sits atop a vast ocean of poverty. The unpopularity of this mode of economic development prompted the liberal ideologues of the Transition to create a social base for the liberal reforms in the early 2000s, a project that culminated with the 2013 anti-corruption protests. Therefore, I analyze the insurgent "middle class" as a political, rather than economic formation.

More specifically, I explore the formation of the Bulgarian middle class from the vantage point of the 2013 summer protests. That year saw feverish protest mobilizations in two phases in winter and summer. Even though these protests occupy determinate temporal frames, their significance reverberates to this day because commentators continue to make sense of current events through the prism of the "long 2013."

Time and again pundits and participants stated that the summer protests portended the birth of the middle class. I follow these discussions in the public sphere and tease out the vectors of inclusion into the self-identified middle class.

The first part of the thesis focuses on class formation and class consciousness where class is understood in materialist yet non-economistic terms. I offer a way of thinking about the problem of the 'middle class' that breaks with the double objectivism of structural and mechanical theories extrapolating its existence from the laws of capital in Orthodox Marxism, on the one hand, and from liberal stratification theories which rely on arbitrary income brackets to discern its existence, on the other. Because of the strong emphasis on class polarization, inherited from the *Manifesto*, the 'middle class' has traditionally posed a challenge Marxists have tended to overcome via a recourse to Weberian 'prosthetics'.

In contrast, I treat class as a political becoming, every class is always-already a "class against". Thus, a 'subjectivist' approach to social class is well suited to understand this formation. To this end, I fashion a theoretical apparatus out of Pierre Bourdieu's sociology and the Essex School's Discourse Theory to account for the discursive and polemical constitution of the middle class of the 2013 summer protests. This theoretical amalgam offers a polemical slant to theorizing class formation, resonating with some early remarks on the political nature of social class by Karl Marx.

I do so against the backdrop of the thorny path of the neoliberal reform in Bulgaria. I argue that the middle class is the crystallization of a long search on part of policy elites, civil society practitioners and democratization experts to find the "social base" for the neoliberal reform, perceived as increasingly beleaguered by populism, left and right.

One such challenge to the reform consensus came in the wake of the winter protest of 2013. It rebelled against austerity, poverty and the political establishment, yet it did so by poaching the liberal semantic field and appropriating the language of "civil society". The summer protests re-appropriated the appropriation and, in the process, subjectivized itself as "middle class" against the winter protests and the corrupt oligarchic elite.

The second part of the thesis traces the effects the 2013 class imaginaries exert on the formal and universalistic political equality under liberalism. The discourse of "the middle class" organized the protesters' normative visions about citizenship and national identity along increasingly inegalitarian, demophobic and elitist lines.

This dissertation thus follows an instance of 'class struggle' unfolding on the terrains of civil society, citizenship and nationhood. I show how the radicalization of imaginaries about class difference are projected onto the political field resulting in a tendency to question formal equality under liberalism.

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Introduction

Neoliberalism After Neoliberalism

This dissertation deals with the transformations of citizenship, civil society and class in Bulgaria nearly three decades after 1989. My main argument is that the initial hopes for a transition to a socially just liberal democracy have given way to more authoritarian imaginaries of an exclusionary and inegalitarian society. By "socially just" I mean the expectations of the dissolution of inequalities and social conflicts into a universal "middle class" that animated the early 1990s anti-communist opposition. Imaginaries about the "middle class" today, however, have become elitist, exclusionary, and explicitly minoritarian. Similarly, the ideas of civil society and national citizenship are being transformed discursively in de-universalizing and exclusionary ways. I focus on these ruptures from the vantage point of the mass protests in 2013 in Bulgaria which I take as an instance of the political 'maturation' of the Bulgarian middle class. Yet, these transformations are not limited to Bulgaria and the outlined problems have a much wider relevance.

Before venturing my methodological and theoretical approach to the transformations of class and national citizenship, I will outline the historical transformation of Bulgaria since 1989 in broad terms. This is followed by a brief reconstruction of the 2013 moment and a thesis method and structure outline.

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Fits and Starts of Neoliberalization After 1989

Much like in other CEE countries, the post-1989 Transition to liberal democracy in Bulgaria began with expectations that after a short, transitory period of painful economic reforms and restructuring, Bulgarians would be fast-tracked into a "middle class" status and would enjoy the prosperity of Western European countries. However, the Transition spectacularly failed these expectations. As it dragged on into becoming a permanent condition, the ambitious comparisons with Western Europe imperceptibly scaled down to comparisons with Central Europe. Bulgaria is a vastly unequal country and the coveted "middle class" status materialized only for a small number of people while the majorities plunged even further into penury. As a result of the decades of radical neoliberal experiments in Bulgaria, that are only now trying to make a shy inroad into the West, Bulgaria topped the EU rankings of poverty and inequality (Peshev 2015). In 2017 the income inequality between the poorest 20% and the richest 20% is now over 8 times, whereas the EU average is about 5 times (Eurostat 2019c). In contrast, in 2009 the ratio in Bulgaria used to be 5,9 times (ibid.).

Recent figures reveal that 80% of Bulgarian workers (or 2,5 million people) earn less than 1000 BGN (around 500 EUR) a month (Atanasov 2018a). 53% of all workers earn up to 460 BGN net which is close to the current minimum net wage of 400 BGN (ibid.). However, the minimum wage is not an adequate parameter to calibrate the actual costs of life and the ability of workers to meet them. In order to asses actual poverty levels, one

has to measure them compared to living wages, that is the wage needed to sustain a worker and their family. The largest trade union, KNSB, compiles an annual living wage calculation. In 2018 that figure was 2410 BGN for a family of four (KNSB 2019). This means that the minimum salary needs to increase at least by a factor of 3, to a net salary of 1205 BGN, in order to meet the average living costs of Bulgarian workers (if we assume that two members per household are permanently employed). Given the vast levels of material deprivation, this is a long way to go. For example, the journalist Ivaylo Atanasov argues that over 5 million people, or 70% of the population, live in households that get less than the minimum of living wage per person of 602 BGN per month. Of them 1.7 million live on less than 321 BGN a month, which is the official poverty line in the country. (The retired and the unemployed form the vast majority of these people) (Atanasov 2019).

People who declare taxable income between 560 BGN (the minimum salary since 2018) and 1000 BGN are 26% of the employed. Those who declare up to 5000 BGN average monthly income are only 1.3% of the employed. The 0.5% of those who earn above 8500 BGN per month contribute a whopping 14.4% of the state income through direct taxation. In contrast, the 80% who earn up to 1000 BGN contribute 40%. This reveals a great concentration of wealth in the hands of the 0.5% which is also reflected in Bulgaria's record-breaking surpassing of the 0.40 points GINI coefficient in 2017, the highest in the EU (Atanasov 2018a).

One-fifth of Bulgarians cannot afford to own a car, making Bulgaria the worst in that respect in the EU-28. The EU average is only 7% of such people. Nearly 80% of Bulgarians cannot meet unexpected costs such as medical bills or a breakdown of their vehicle. For the EU-28 this figure is twice as low – 42% (Atanasov 2018b). Bulgarians at risk of social exclusion and poverty are 40% by official assessments, again the highest percentage in the EU (Eurostat 2019b). The nearly 40% of Bulgarian citizens who cannot afford to keep their home warm in winter secure Bulgaria the ignoble first place in yet another EU-ranking (Eurostat 2019c).

In short, Bulgaria is a very poor country whose social safety net and welfare systems do little to alleviate poverty. This has drawn the attention even of the European Commission which recently criticized Bulgaria for having lowest transfers both in relative and absolute terms in the EU, leaving the poor almost just as poor *after* social transfers (European Commission 2017: 6). As trade unionist Vanya Grigorova put it, the Bulgarian welfare does not fight poverty but the poor (J. Tsoneva 2018).

Importantly, not only are income differentials, social inequalities, and poverty soaring, but there are severe class differences in terms of employment as well. We can observe this by looking into the structure of the labor market. We are used to think of post-socialist Eastern Europe in terms of the radical deindustrialization after the rapid privatization of the early 1990s. Large chemical and metalworks companies, as well as electronics and other high tech state companies have closed down. Gradually, though, after the initial

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downturn of the 1990s, there has been an upsurge in manufacturing (visible after 2002) and a new wave of industrialization (Kirov 2016). In fact, manufacturing is the largest employer with over 500,000 officially employed, which is 22% of all workers in Bulgaria, higher than the EU average (ibid.). However, most workers are employed in low value added and low-income sectors, which operate in very low tiers in the international value chain (Medarov and Tsoneva 2015; Kirov 2016). For instance, about 1/5 work in garment and clothing companies, subcontracted by global brands (Musiolek 2018). The booming services sector does not bring high-quality jobs either. The largest employers here are retail and private security subcontractors, the latter employing an estimated 200 to 300 thousand workers. It is difficult to show how many because the sector operates largely in the gray economy. Private security companies are notorious for breaching the Labor Act (KNSB 2017).

The fact that Bulgarian workers' salaries have low purchasing power means that production is oriented towards exports. Bulgaria maintains its international competitiveness as a cheap labor destination. For example, in 2017 exports were about 66% of GDP, the figure was about 40% in 1980. The average figure in the EU for 2017 was 46 % (World Bank 2018, Eurostat 2018a, 2018b).

Such an economic structure exerts constant downward pressure on wages, making it inimical to the formation of broad and affluent middle classes. In other words, high poverty levels are also embedded in the DNA of the Bulgarian economy, whose main

economic competitive advantage is maintained by low taxes and low wages, as exemplified by the garment subcontracting sector. However, we can observe similar trends in the mining sector, in retail, but also in new sectors such as IT and customer support. Similar is the situation in the agricultural sector, which is currently the most heavily concentrated in the EU with 5% of agri-companies working or owning 90% of the land (Za Zemiata 2017; Agro Plovdiv 2016; Beleva et al. 2016). They specialize in capital-intensive production of cash crops for export to be processed elsewhere. It enjoys high economic growth, but it is simultaneously situated in regions with the worst unemployment rates. The Bulgarian agricultural sector is highly dependent on EU subsidies (from the Common Agricultural Policy of the EU). In fact, the importance of external EU funding for the economy is so large, not only in the agricultural sector, that there is a whole ministry administering the funds. This bleak picture is the result of decades of relentless neoliberal reforms in the country.

Appel and Orenstein follow the uneven pace of the (neo)liberal reforms throughout the ex-Socialist block (2018). They identify three phases of the reform: the early 1990s Washington consensus, driven by International organizations such as the World Bank and the IMF. The second phase was the European integration effort which saw the EU take "over the mantle of the IMF and World Bank in advancing the neoliberal project in Central and Eastern Europe" to finish it off (2018: 87). However, whereas pressures for liberalization in these first two periods of liberalization emanated from the international context, the third phase, around EU accession, was not mandated by the EU or the IMF.

In actual fact, these organizations were even against some of the reforms because of their radicalism and uncertain outcomes. The reforms in question were pension privatization and the radical neoliberal taxation regime which saw the introduction of flat tax in most post-socialist states. The driving forces for the taxation reform were a host of US-funded neoliberal think tanks. Despite the local motors behind this "avant-garde" neoliberalism (characterized so by Appel and Orenstein), the countries still obeyed the logic of "competitive signaling" which animated the earlier phases of the reforms. Competitive signaling refers to the reforming country signaling to foreign investors that they offer market and business-friendly environments. This was driven by the need for FDI of the newly democratized states in the East, and explains the longevity of the painful neoliberal reforms, defying the expectations even of their most ardent advocates (ibid.). In this thesis, I focus on "domestic" rather than the international sources of the reforms, and the political battles raging around them. I will show how these battles resulted in the crystallization of a 'middle class' consciousness in 2013.

During the early stages of the transition, popular support for the anti-communist reformists reached two peak moments: the 1990 "million-strong" march when the Union of Democratic Forces (UDF) lost the first free elections they considered rigged in favor of the ex-communists of the Bulgarian Socialist Party (BSP). And then in January of 1997, with the BSP in office, when the implosion of the economy and the banking sector triggered hyperinflation that forced thousands of people to the streets of Sofia. These

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protests culminated in a siege on parliament (even a small fire) after which new elections were called that the UDF won on a mandate of relentless reforms.

So, unlike other CEE countries, in Bulgaria the neoliberal reform began in earnest after the 1997 economic and hyperinflation crisis which put an end to years of haggling between the main political parties whether to embark on a shock therapy or on a more gradual market reform (Kalinova and Baeva 2006, (Anguelova-Lavergne 2010: 102). The 1997 crisis created the conditions for a consensus on shock therapy. The government tasked with implementing it comprised the anti-communist opposition of the Union of Democratic Forces (UDF).

Commenting on the political crisis that had gripped the country, the political scientist Ivan Krastev writes in 1997 on the pages of *Capital*, a flagman of the liberal press, that "In Bulgaria there is a majority backing radical change. Society is ready to support either radical privatization or radical nationalization. But it won't support anything that is not radical" (Krastev 1997). In the same article he warns of the danger of achieving a "democracy without capitalism" and urges the Right to close ranks and tap on the energy of the protests in order to push for the liberal reforms. (A decade later he would call the phenomenon of democracy without capitalism "democratic illiberalism", see (Krastev 2007).

The UDF did just that, had a full term in office but it could not outlast the radical reform process. In other words, the shock therapy, which came to be known as the "unpopular reforms", was so unpalatable that the ruling party could not survive the reform and its socially destructive effects. By this I mean the rapid privatization and liquidation of state-owned enterprises which plunged millions in unemployment and poverty, the intensification of the criminal redistribution of public property, the break-down of the state redistributive systems and the tanking of even the most elementary functions of the state to ensure and maintain order. In short, instead of joining the ranks of the First world, Bulgaria integrated with the Third (see Vassilev 2003 for an extensive list of the "third-wolrdization' effects of the reforms).

Reform Fatigue Sets In

After just one term (1997-2001) the UDF was swept out of office by what political scientists christened a "populist wave" (Lavergne 2010: 487). In 2001, the ex-czar of Bulgaria, exiled by the Communists and hosted by Franco's regime, returned from Spain and ran for Prime minister on the then-innovative technocratic formula of "beyond left and right", "morality in politics" promising he will fix the country "in 800 days". This platform was successful and landed him victory in the elections. This election stunned the liberal elites because the ex-czar had registered his party a mere 40 days before the ballot. Yet, despite the liberal experts' misgivings about the ex-czar, he was not an enemy of the neoliberal reforms but deepened them by opening up the so-called "natural monopolies" of the economy for privatization: energy providers, transport, telecommunications, etc.

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But soon even the royal charisma could not maintain the reform consensus and the following elections the czar's party could not repeat its results. It formed government as a junior partner in a coalition with the Bulgarian Socialist Party (the BSP) and a small liberal party.

Despite being spearheaded by the Socialists, this government went down in history for having introduced the most radical taxation reform in Europe at that time: 10% flat income and corporate tax, and the abolition of tax deduction on minimum income. They introduced market competition in public schools via delegated budgets after crushing the largest teachers' strike in the history of modern Bulgaria. The ex-czar's party got wiped out by the following elections.

In 2005 yet another "populist" contender appeared on the political horizon. This was the far-right party of ATAKA which ran on a reactionary mixture of open antisemitism, anti-Turkish racism, anticommunism but also exploited the nostalgia for "the strong hand of the state" during Socialism (Marinos 2015). Ataka's shocking result of 10% sparked yet another round of round-tables on the "populist menace" and the dangers it presented to the liberalization of the country (Popivanov 2006).

With the original anti-communist Right in tatters, political scientists and reform experts embarked on a lengthy process of reconstruction of the Right, including via gradual

appeasement with the so-called "populists". For example, commenting on the shocking rise of Ataka, Ivan Krastev wrote that "traditional political loyalties are dead. There is no left and right, no conservatives and socialists anymore but just "us" and "them". The conspiracy theory about the elites is the only credible political doctrine today and it is omnipotent because it is correct" (quoted in Lavergne 2010: 491).

By 2008-9 the ex-czar's secretary of the Interior ministry Boyko Borissov had formed his own party GERB (standing for Citizens for European Development of Bulgaria), in a bid to revive the two-party model that the sudden apparition of the ex-czar had destroyed in 2001. He was assisted by the Conservative Christian Social Union of Bavaria (Andreev 2016), and the liberal think tanks in Bulgaria (Anguelova-Lavergne 2010).

As an Interior secretary during the ex-czar's government, Borissov enjoyed huge popularity based on a charismatic "strong man" image. This is understandable given the near breakdown of public safety and the spectacular display of criminal syndicate violence, including frequent street executions, which accompanied the wild first years of the Transition. Borissov's party won the 2009 elections and radicalized the technocratic model of politics introduced by the ex-czar, appointing ministers people with impressive business and civic sector biographies, rather than party members. With a brief exception of 2013-2014 when the BSP ruled for a little over a year, GERB has been the ruling party of the last decade. Despite surrounding himself with *langue du bois* technocrats and experts, Borissov peddles neoliberal ideology in his inimitable and highly idiosyncratic

way, i.e. by warning people not to expect society to pay for their medical treatment if they indulge themselves with pork salo (a popular treat in the country). His statements elicit laughter and help domesticate the unpopular neoliberal reforms but his decade-long time in office is also punctuated by frequent crises. In fact, all his three terms ended prematurely and even though GERB wins every election, it does so by smaller and smaller margins and thus has to rely on the support of other parties. GERB's 2014-2017 term was propped by several liberal and far-right parties, while in its current term, it rules exclusively helped by a coalition of far-right parties.

After losing the elections in 2001 to the ex-czar, the UDF rapidly declined, led by a process of successive splits, "amputating" parts of the party body. At the time of writing, the once large 1990s anti-communist opposition (UDF) has almost disappeared and has become too small for its imposing headquarters in the center of Sofia. Today the building is housing whatever is left from the UDF and two new far-right parties which got enough votes in the 2017 parliamentary elections to be eligible for a place in the state-owned party HQ. This last bit of information is not a mere fun-fact but a highly symptomatic development. One could be excused to conclude that, in hindsight, the radical liberalization and privatization politics pursued by the UDF created the conditions for the rise of the radical Right which is displacing it now. The encroachment by the far-right on the spaces of the first democratic and anti-communist opposition also symbolizes the crumbling liberal consensus the UDF once embodied.

I need to make a caveat: the far-right parties in Bulgaria typically style themselves as anti-establishment and anti-liberal but they are so only in the political sense of the word. For example, in 2018 these parties, together with the BSP and a host of US-funded evangelical NGOs, killed the ratification of the Istanbul Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence, alleging it paves the way to "gender ideology", gay marriage and introduces a phantasmatic "third sex" in school curriculum. So, while they embody a strong challenge to the political liberalism of human rights, affirmative action, equality, tolerance and acceptance of difference, they are in no way anti-liberal in the economic plane. Far from it. Once in office, these parties implement the same set of policies associated with centrist neoliberalism such as cuts in welfare payments, labor codex liberalization, privatization, tax breaks for investors, and so on. Revealingly, in 2018, when far-right politicians in government provoked protests over their incendiary rhetoric against people with disabilities, practically all big business' representatives gathered in their defense. As Ivan Krastev observed back in 2007, "Even though populist leaders blame neoliberal policies for the suffering of the people, they do not seem eager to change those policies. The economic approach of the populist governments in Poland or Slovakia (for the moment, at least) does not differ substantially from the policies of their liberal predecessors." (Krastev 2007: 62).

In that sense, the far-right does not exist. At least not as a distinct political phenomenon. It is a way to reinvent and shore up the neoliberal reform minus the civilizing aspects of political liberalism, sometimes referred to as "progressive neoliberalism" (J. Brenner and

Fraser 2017). It is no coincidence that far-right parties' electoral gravity increased after the 2008 global financial meltdown. They came to rescue neoliberalism after it suffered the most decisive blow to its legitimacy in recent years. Ivan Krastev refers to the crisis of the consensus as "the strange death of the neoliberal consensus". Drawing on this, we can say that while the consensus has died, neoliberalism soldiers on, trapped in a "strange non-death", as Colin Crouch (2011) put it, thanks to the omnipotence of big multinational corporations (see also Jipson and Jitheesh 2019). But it is my contention that the far-right is also to thank for that.

In practically all CEE countries the neoliberal reforms stalled around 2008-9 with the outbreak of the financial crisis (Appel and Orenstein 2018: 153). Many countries reversed the flat tax, for example. Others took an authoritarian path, like Hungary and Poland under FIDESZ and PiS, respectively. Appel and Orenstein quote the "economic freedom" index to illustrate the "backslide" of the reforms (ibid.). "Liberty" think tanks such as The Heritage Foundation similarly registered the slow-down of the liberalization in the ex-socialist countries (2018: 154). The EBRD downgraded several Central European countries for nationalizing pensions, increasing transport subsidies and for capping utilities prices. Bulgaria was downgraded for delaying the liberalization of the energy sector, while Estonia was punished for making public transport in the capital free (2018: 154).

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In my opinion, political scientists and rankings announce too hastily authoritarian populism's break with neoliberalism. Only months after Appel and Orenstein's book came out, the Hungarian parliament passed the infamous "slave law" which mandated over 400 overtime hours per year with legally delayed compensation (Broder 2018 and Gagyi and Gerocs 2019). Hungary's brutal workfare policy was also passed after the crisis and it is a textbook Clintonite reform of welfare along neoliberal lines. Wherever these governments get to pass more "welfarist" reforms, it is often after pressure from below, as happened in Bulgaria after the winter protests of 2013 when the government put an informal cap on electricity prices, resulting in the country downgrade I mentioned above. Also, governments are aware of the "reform fatigue" on part of the population, captured by measurements of the "socialist nostalgia" and value surveys. For example, the Pew Research Center registered mass disenchantment with the reforms with 62% of Bulgarians responding that they lived worse after 1989 than before (Appel and Orenstein 2018: 151).

The far-right salvages the consensus for neoliberalism through a strong affective frame by tapping on the explosive social anger at neoliberalism and canalizing it against its victims – minorities, foreigners, women (as opposed to beneficiaries, which would have been the case had the Left been strong enough to tap on that anger). Discursive figures such as "the parasitic Roma" or "the lazy refugee" mobilize consensus for anti-labor and pro-capitalist politics which in the end hurt the majorities too. If centrist neoliberalism articulated a positive image of minorities, pluralism and difference together with the pro-business politics of deregulation, privatization, austerity and budget cuts, the so-called far right

mirrors that by mobilizing negative image of marginalized demographics in pushing for the same pro-business policies. And what it shares with "classical" neoliberalism is a strong moral charge for entrepreneurial activation of society and against "social parasitism".

However, despite the fact that the far-right populists subscribe to neoliberal politics (especially in the economic sphere), the liberals feel real threat to their hegemony and try to appease the populists. For example, Ivan Krastev recently chastised liberals for having neglected the power of nationalism to stir the majorities and urged them to adopt less anti-nationalistic stance (Krastev 2018). Other liberals make direct overtures to the far-right populists. For example, speaking on behalf of "the political logic", the liberal expert and political scientist Daniel Smilov wrote in 2014 that a coalition between GERB, the liberal Reform Bloc and the far-right populists from the National Front for the Salvation of Bulgaria is "the clearest option from an ideological point of view and from the point of view of the political logic" (Spasov 2014).

We can understand the rise of "authoritarian populism" as a more nation-centered way of coping with the crisis of 2008-9, of shoring up and stabilizing neoliberalism by putting it in a "national" framework. In short, far from the "end of an era" as the liberal press intoned in the aftermath of the Trump election, the ascendance of the far-right signals the way neoliberalism reinvents itself and hopes to gain democratic legitimacy by discarding the

more palatable aspects (human rights, gender parity, etc.) associated with the declining hegemony of the centrist parties.

This is not the first-time neoliberalism suffered a legitimacy crisis and tried to recover by adding a component in its "chain of equivalence", potent enough to procure it some popular legitimacy. Around the turn of the millennium, Europeanization gave the reform such an impetus (Appel and Orenstein 2018: Chapter 2). After the dotcom bubble of 2001, this element became the politics of anti-corruption. It supplied the cold economic calculus of neoliberalism with an unbeatable moral frame. As Ivan Krastev explains, "the anti-corruption policies package promoted by the World Bank and IMF are basically the re-designed policies of the Washington consensus" (Krastev 2004: 35). Corruption generates such a strong and widespread repugnance that no political actor in their right mind can say they are "for corruption" lest they risk committing a political suicide. Even the Left accepted the narrative and tried to articulate a left-wing anti-corruption politics (Ragaru 2010). According to Ivan Krastev (2004), there are two distinct approaches to corruption: the "free-market" anti-corruption, and the "democratic" anti-corruption; right-conservative (demanding roll-back of the state) and left-democratic (demanding more state regulation), respectively. Whoever wins the battle for definition the origins of corruption, will therefore determine also the solution: either less state or more state. In Bulgaria the "less state" anti-corruption frame is the prevailing policy alternative today. This was the result of the energetic efforts of the liberal experts in the early 2000s (Lavergne 2010). But this was not always so. During the 1997 economic and political

paroxysm, Krastev himself realized that the politics of anti-corruption can be detrimental to the neoliberal consensus in the country, because the disgruntled majorities spare no politician the accusation, thereby creating an unmanageable explosion of "mistrust" in the political process which can easily derail the reforms (Krastev 1998).

So, because of frequent attacks (either from below or by counter-elites) or due to market blows, the neoliberal reforms proceed in fits and starts. Political scientists are apprehensive observers of the faltering consensus. They have long abandoned the triumphalist "end of history" rhetoric and this is visible from the turn to studies of the "authoritarian transition" (Hale 2016), "democratic breakdowns" (Mainwaring and Bizzarro 2019), backslide (N. Bermeo 2016), "illiberal consolidation" (Dawson and Hanley 2016; Rupnik 2016), with the disease spreading even to mature democracies in the West (Foa and Mounk 2016). The central focus there is the challenge to the liberal consensus (even its death, i.e. Krastev 2007) brought about by "populism" and nationalism (Krastev 2016a), sometimes referred to as "national-populism"[1].

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[1]   Some scholars find it hard to draw the line between "the people" and "the nation" (Mudde 2004). The semantic jam is a problem only for academics. In the Bulgarian language at least, the word "the people" or "narod" conveys a strong sense of plural anonymity and collective subjectivity. For example, expressions such as "narodna muzika" (folk music) or "narodni prikazki" (folk tales) signify the shared, common pool of aesthetic and epistemic resources which are by definition author-less. It makes no sense in Bulgarian to assert that so-and-so is the author of a folk song or of a folk culinary recipe. In contrast, the concept of the "the nation" serves to integrate the antagonistic classes of bourgeoisie and proletariat and thus permits a modicum of bourgeois individuality and property regime. There are no known producers from the narod, only in bourgeois production.

Of course, these scholars perceive authoritarian populism as the antithesis of the liberal consensus and in the main, tend to gloss over the shared pro-business policy concerns of liberal and "populist" parties. Nevertheless, I take seriously their concern for the crumbling liberal consensus because it produces *real effects* in the political field. For example, it led to the expert-led creation of GERB as a center-right force to replace the crumbled UDF, after its resounding defeat at the hands of the ex-czar.[2] The concern also led to the efforts at creating the "popular base" for the reforms in the early 2000s. This popular base of the endangered reform consensus is **the middle class, which this dissertation focuses on.** In that sense I disagree with criticisms levied at these scholars and practitioners of liberal democracy which treat the perceived threat of populism as an exaggeration. For example, Veronika Stoyanova (2018) endeavors to show the potential for democratic renewal of the new populist movements. But the liberal experts themselves are aware of this potential (i.e. Krastev 2007). Also, Krastev and Smilov differentiate between "soft" and "hard" populism precisely with this end in mind: how to integrate the populist threat into liberal democracy and thus neutralize it while renewing liberal democracy (2008: 9). This strategy culminated with Ivan Krastev's controversial injunction to liberals, on the pages of the *NYT*, to normalize the populists (Krastev 2017), followed by a similar article about the need to moderate their anti-nationalism (Krastev

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2 A few years later Krastev reassesses the fear of the czar, arguing it had been exaggerated while the czar's rule has in fact contributed to the consolidation of Bulgaria's democracy (2007: 60)

2018). To the liberal experts, the danger of populism is not to democracy, as Stoyanova thinks, *but to liberalism.*

To reiterate, at the time of writing, the first democratic anti-communist opposition is weakened beyond repair. After its stellar moments of popular legitimacy in 1990 and 1997, a moment for renewal opened again with the summer protests of 2013. Remnants from the UDF (spread between several splinter parties) seized the protests to renew themselves and formed a coalition called the Reform Bloc (RB). The RB claimed privileged relation to the protest, but it was not the only one. Two other small liberal parties (DEOS and Da, Bulgaria) founded with the same aim, namely to give the elemental protest energy a political frame. After a near-term as a junior coalition partner of GERB, the RB fell apart and later regrouped with Da, Bulgaria and a few other smaller liberal parties into a coalition called "Democratic Bulgaria". In recent polls, they are forecast to barely jump over the 4% threshold for Parliament. It signals indeed the irreversible decline of the 1990s liberal-democratic consensus, once embodied by the UDF.

In the pages to follow, I will show how this last, 2013-attempt to salvage the consensus via the mobilization of classical Transition themes, such as "civil society", sped up the unraveling of the liberal-democratic nexus of the 1990s and the discarding of the element of "democracy". The liberal civil society became openly demophobic in the post-2013 period.

Except for the 1997 economic collapse, Bulgaria hasn't been in the throngs of a major crisis. It weathered the 2008 global financial meltdown relatively well, with the construction sector taking the hardest blow but recovering shortly after. It sports one of the fastest growing GDP rates in the EU, but its population does not feel the effects of economic growth because of the skewed taxation regime, which redistributes wealth upwards, the downward pressure on wages in order to maintain international competitiveness, and the extreme forms of austerity, pursued by GERB. (While the EU mandates a cap on budget deficits of 3% of GDP, GERB brought it down to 1%). Even the European Commission, by all standards an indisputably neoliberal institution, chastised the country for the extreme inequality, proving that Bulgaria sports the largest level of poverty *after* social transfers (EC 2017).

Given these stagnant economic realities, we need to understand the formation of the new middle class not as an epiphenomenon of economic processes alone but against the backdrop of the *movement of the reform process.* In short, the crisis manifests itself less as a crisis of capital accumulation and more as an uncertainty in maintaining the *neoliberal reforms designed to secure the conditions for accumulation,* i.e. in the frequent eruptions of popular anger at the status quo. Most recently, a protest very similar (and prior) to that of the French Yellow vests challenged the much touted "stability" of the GERB administration and demanded caps on fuel prices. Another example, more relevant to the subject matter of this thesis: when the largest anti-austerity riots shook the country in the winter of 2013 and forced GERB to end its term prematurely, the famous political scientist

Ivan Krastev warned that the protests are "against the consensus". The liberal right denounced the protests as populist and perceived their eruption as a re-run of the crisis of the neoliberal consensus which led to the unraveling of the first anti-communist opposition back in 2001.

This dissertation follows the post-2013 attempts at the stabilization of the embattled consensus.

The 2013 Protests

The year of 2013 in Bulgaria fully merits the characterization of a *caesura,* a break beyond which there is no going back. Two major protest cycles – in winter and in summer – with daily mass mobilizations, snap elections, public self-immolations, occupations, breakneck political party formation that tried to tap on the explosive social energy, and an incessant discussion in the public sphere about the nature of the political paroxysm, split Bulgarian society along divisions, experienced by protagonists as insufferably hardening and traumatic. For example, informants often spoke of fall-outs they had had with relatives, colleagues and friends arising from endorsing (or failing to endorse) the protests. Polite and contained disagreements would morph into open hostilities within a day. Amicable relationships in the workplace turned sour, as in a university department which split in two camps over the question whether to issue a collective declaration in support of the protests. The general upheaval of 2013 produced tangible effects in a variety of fields: in the academic field many friendships fell apart amid explosion of creativity that spurred a

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dizzying number of academic articles and books dedicated to the protests (including this dissertation. And it is not the only one!) The political field also had its share of creative transformation which led to the registration of several new parties. New media outlets (both left and right-wing) came into being as a direct result of the protests. Others disappeared, for the same reason. At least one theater play and a TV series were written about the protests while the public discussion about the causes, protagonists, objectives and resolution of the crisis is still so feverish that it is next to impossible to map comprehensively. (This work tries its best to outline tentatively some of the talking-points. A thorough focus on all sides would fill at least another book of the same length.)

Initially, I embarked on this journey with the purpose of documenting the evolution of the discourse of civil society against the backdrop of the 2013 commotion in the country. The chief reason was the constant deployment of the term by protesters, to ends that I felt departed from its early 1990s usages. But I realized quickly that "civil society" dragged with itself other notions, i.e. in the passionate discussions as to what goes in the make-up of the "citizen" or the "birth of the new middle class". These problems actually do not exhaust the list: extensive ruminations about justice and democracy also occurred but I had to exercise some discrimination if this dissertation was to finish. So, I have narrowed down my focus to civil society, the model citizen and the new middle class.

Because of this undeniably eventful nature of 2013, I have called it "the long 2013" (Tsoneva 2017). It is long because much current public discussion has inherited discursive elements and interpretative frames developed during the 2013 upheaval.

Yet I am certain that the relevance of the Bulgarian turmoil is significantly larger than its rather marginal context. In the age of Orban, Trump, Brexit and the eclipse of the liberal "end of history" optimism, it seems again urgent to turn our attention to the mobilization of discourses such as "civil society" as part of the attempt to resuscitate the faltering consensus of the 1990s throughout the CEE region.

In the academic literature there has often been talk of "democratic illiberalism", namely the abuse of majoritarian and democratic parliamentary mechanisms to curb constitutionally secured liberties, particularly minority rights and/or market freedoms. The notion of illiberal democracy was used in the 1990s (Fareed 1997), but has gained more traction lately with the rise of new authoritarian and populist governments in East-Central Europe (Ágh 2016) (Greskovits 2015) (Krastev 2016a) (Sedelmeier 2014). The concerns with democratic illiberalism and anti-populism have been subjected to criticism from the left which tease out anti-democratic elements within the anti-populism discourses (Stavrakakis et al. 2018). This is the crux of the attacks on neoliberal post-politics of authors such as Chantal Mouffe and Ernesto Laclau. Can we describe the rise of authoritarian governmental practices the liberal political commentators depict as "illiberal democracy" with the opposite language, namely, liberal post-democracy? (Or liberal

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populism?, see (Medarov 2015b). Scholars have already documented how democracy crumbles under neoliberal pressures. Wendy Brown talks about the de-democratizing aspects of the articulation between neoconservative and neoliberal discourses (Brown 2006). Colin Crouch depicts the rise of post-democracy, meaning a situation where the democratic institutions (parliament, unions, political parties, etc.) are in place, but have been hollowed out of substance (2011). Janine Wedel talks about the unaccountable "shadow elite" undermining democracy (Wedel 2009). Gaspar Miklos Tamas even announced the arrival of post-fascism (Tamás 2000).

In other words, the post-democratic transformation does not pertain only to the ex-Socialist states in Eastern Europe but is a global transformation which I scrutinize from the local perspective of two protest waves. In other words, I follow the transformation of the meaning of "civil society" and other key concepts for liberal governmentality as refracted through the long 2013 in Bulgaria.

Theory and Method

I follow Pierre Bourdieu's insight that signification does not precede but follows from the struggles for signification. Inhering in the domain of struggle (not only in terms of basic methodological presuppositions but literally, in the waves of social protests that have swept Bulgaria since 2013), this dissertation will also draw heavily on the Essex School's Discourse Theory (Glynos and Howarth 2007; Howarth and Torfing 2005; Mouffe 2008; Mouffe, Wagner, and Mouffe 2013; Laclau 2007b; 2007a; Marchart 2008). This theory

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engages with the constitution of political subjects via what Laclau and Mouffe call "chains of equivalences". The political subject, whose formation I explore, is the protesters' "middle class." In the theory of Laclau, a "chain of equivalence" connotes the logic of subject formation of every protest, social movement and political identity, out of disparate elements enchained together by their enmity to a common foe. A (post)Lacanian theory of subjectification posits the subject as non-coincidental/not selfsame with itself to use a fashionable word, an "assemblage" or a "chain of equivalence" linking together heterogeneous elements into a common identity arising from the struggle against an enemy. Laclau's is a formal approach: the subject's identity is not a check-list of determinate, still less necessary, characteristics but *their very articulation* in an antagonistic relation to an Outside. There is no hidden "objectivity" to an identity, visible only to the researcher. This precludes any essentialist assuming of "necessary" traits and especially "objective" interests which guides most class analyses. However, the formalism of the approach cannot adequately explain what the social conditions of possibility are for certain articulations and not others. To transcend the lacuna of Laclau's formalism and to counter the idealistic biases of post-Lacanian Discourse Theory, I mobilize Pierre Bourdieu's sociology. I thus attempt to develop a sociology of, and inside the chain of equivalence. This seems like a perilous task inasmuch as Bourdieu's sociology is mostly interested in embodied and pre-reflexive dispositions rather than overt and explicit articulations of class consciousness. Yet his sociology is helpful in elucidating the conditions of possibility for the discursive constructions of class. The sociologist's role if to lodge herself inside the gaps of subjectivity and explore the practices and technologies that determine belonging to the chain; the determinations of its identity. In the summer of

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2013 taste, capital, class and racial "visions and divisions" played a crucial role in delimiting and enforcing the boundaries of belonging to the community of middle-class citizens and civil society. I detail the operationalization of the membership in that class with the help of the main tools of Bourdieu's sociology such as the theory of capitals, symbolic violence and delegation. The thesis hopes to achieve a fruitful "cross-pollination" between the sociology of Bourdieu and the theory of Laclau: a sociology of the chain of equivalence. In the process, I hope to unpack layer by layer the complex discursive overlays which produce, and pry open the chief signifiers that structure the narrativization of Bulgaria's Transition to democracy.

My work deals with ideas in a materialist sense. Ideas are not suspended above society as if hinging on some ephemeral metaphysical plane, but are weapons wielded in constant battles – material as well as symbolic – contemporary capitalist society is shot through. This thesis therefore is a version of the old tradition of "polemology" – war studies – confined here in the symbolic domain of the ordering and classifying the social world. As Bourdieu says, classification is a "forgotten dimension of class struggle" (Bourdieu 2000 [1984]: 483). The background of this battle, as I stated in the beginning of the introduction, is the fraught path of the liberal reforms in Bulgaria.

I draw on a range of articles and discussions by protesters and sympathetic commentators referred to as activist-intellectuals, as well as on interviews and conversations conducted with protest participants. Intellectuals' interventions were instrumental in lending the

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2013 summer protests – an otherwise "motley crew" of all sorts of individuals and groups, as any big protest is – a coherent image and subjectivity. The intellectual objectification of the dynamics and relations in the protest and the definitions given by the opinion-makers were much more important for the constitution of the identity of the protest than the "actual" or "objective" and diverse class positions of the participants, which, however, must be recognized as having supplied the commentators with the original impetus to venture their definitions. While the protest participants are more numerous and irreducible to the amount of public interventions spurted on their behalf by "men of letters," the identity of the movement depends strongly on (mediatized) discourses about its objectives and character. To this end, I focus on select examples of articles and interviews with experts and intellectuals who have been instrumental in fixing the boundaries and identity of the protest wave, the parameters of its objectives and thus of civil society and the middle class. Many of these intellectuals also happen to be members of the "liberal estate" – the 'intelligentsia' from the "shadow ministry of reforms" that tasked itself with guiding the country on its path back to Europe. The examples I use have been drawn from what can be loosely termed the liberal Bulgarian public sphere. By this I mean outlets that endorsed the protests and self-define as liberal (as the respected and influential *Dnevnik* and *Capital* papers) as well as so-called citizens' or civil society media founded in the wake of the protests (some explicitly as "protest media" such as *#Protest* and *Terminal 3*). I also consulted personal blogs of participants and supporters of the protests. As the proud ex-writer of the first explicitly anti-fascist blog in Bulgarian, I am familiar with the field of the liberal Bulgarian blogosphere and have let my intuition guide me. The choice of interventions presented here does not exhaust the public sphere, not even the liberal public

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sphere. It may seem arbitrary to draw examples from such vastly different outlets (blogs vs. established and professional media) but since I am after specific symbolic tendencies (such as the questioning of formal equality), I select examples which I deem most representative of said tendencies. Also, the focus proves just how common the discourses in question are, shared beyond professional and occupational situation.

I have focused on this small but influential social world and my goal is not to reconstruct the entirety of the debate with the government. I look at the structure of the expert discourse of the middle class and at the salient discourses that articulate and frame the identity of the new middle class. This has necessitated a scrutiny of the most prestigious and visible part of the public sphere, where the carriers of the biggest symbolic capital inhere. This selecting process might seem one-sided, but it has not been my goal to reconstruct the entire landscape of the class struggle. Thus, I have completely neglected the media of the beleaguered oligarch Peevski, whose appointment triggered the protests, even though they were extremely active in the discussion about the protests. The reason is that I am interested in mutations of liberal signifiers about the Transition and of the parameters of the identity of middle class, and not to follow the discussion between protesters and their detractors as an end in itself.

I also conducted interviews with participants, attended as many daily rallies of the summer protest as possible.

Structure of the Dissertation

My work explores questions of political rather than "economic" conditions of class formation and the effects they exert on the political sphere. By "political" I refer to the discursive abstraction of formal equality towards the political field (of equal rights, citizenship, access to the public sphere, etc.), while at the same time the "legitimate" inequalities are delegated to the economic sphere, namely the domain of class exploitation (Wood 1995, 2017). My main argument is that the radicalization of imaginaries about class difference are projected also onto the political field resulting in a tendency to question formal equality. This process is not accounted for in an economistic sense, such as assuming that shifts within the political sphere simply reflect objective transformation of the economic structure of society. As explained in the beginning, I treat the formation of the middle class against the backdrop of the reform consensus and its abortive promises for mass prosperity. I stress the way in which imaginaries and discursive representations about class are constituted, without disregarding the social conditions enabling such constitution.

The **first** three chapters focus on class formation where class is understood in materialist yet non-economistic terms. The first chapter fashions a theoretical apparatus to account for the discursive and polemical constitution of the middle class with the 2013 summer protests. To this end, I reassess the Orthodox Marxist distinction between class-in-itself

and a class-for-itself and show the modulation from the former to the latter by dusting off neglected concepts of Pierre Bourdieu's: "class-for-others" (Bourdieu 1977) and "class-in-representation" (Bourdieu 1991). In the chapter I argue that the middle class, a long-standing "nuisance" in social theory, can best be understood as a *fundamental negativity* which unites disparate social groups in their antagonism to a common enemy. I am indebted here to Ernesto Laclau's theory of political identity/populism which I supplement with Pierre Bourdieu. Bourdieu's theory of class is also "negative": class is not only an objective given but emerges through the very practices of maintaining a distinction, an empty space (or a gap) between the different classes. *It is co-extensive with a gap*.

The second chapter details the workings of this negativity by recounting the winter protest of 2013 against which the summer protest first articulated an identity of "the revolution of the middle class". It shows that the winter protest staged a rebellion against "the [neoliberal] Consensus" (Krastev 2013) but it did so in the language of the very same consensus: civil society. In the end, it engineered a more universalistic understanding of the term, making it co-extensive with the category of "the people" (that has traditionally been opposed to civil society). I capture this discursive widening of civil society with my term *Volksgesellschaft*. The summer protest wrought back the liberal signifier of "civil society" from the winter protest but imbued it with a more restrictive meaning. The re-appropriation of the appropriation makes the stuff of the third chapter, but I take a long genealogical detour in the middle of chapter to demonstrate that the "middle class" of 2013 was the crystallization of a long search by liberal intellectuals of the "social base"

for the neoliberal reforms. I call the resulting narrowing of civil society *bürgerliche Gemeinschaft* to emphasize the intimate, community-like understanding thereof. *Bürgerliche Gemeinschaft* strained the entire transitological paradigm which indexed civil society to democracy as the *sine qua non* of "Europeanization". It did so by discarding the element of "democracy" from the liberal transitological chain of equivalences. Can a protest movement upend the semantic coordinate of concepts that are already in wide circulation? I believe it can. The sheer mobilization of a popular transition trope – such as "civil society" – and its repetition in the new polemical context disperses the established semantic layers and overwrites them with new ones. This is a gradual process, the conditions of which have been laid out by previous mobilizations of the terms in question.

The **second part** of the thesis traces the effects the new class imaginaries exert on the formal and universalistic political equality under liberalism. The discourse of "the middle class" organized the protesters' normative visions about citizenship and national belonging along increasingly inegalitarian, undemocratic and elitist lines. Chapter four mirrors Chapter one in that it is more of a "theory" chapter, focusing on citizenship. Citizenship has traditionally been conceived as the terrain of acceptable equality in liberal capitalist societies, in which inequalities, left unchecked in the "private" sphere, co-exist with the political equality of the public sphere (i.e. the principles of "one-person-one-vote" and equality before the law). I show that from a leveler, citizenship in neoliberalism gets transformed into the very terrain on which class struggle and inequality unfold. Its formal universalism gets subsumed under the partial particularity of class, and as a result,

citizenship gets imbued with "class substances". In line with this, Chapter five looks closely at the discourse against the pro-government protests in 2013 (also known as counter-protests). Commenting on them, the summer protesters equated citizenship rights with civic competences and thus excluded symbolically the vast majority of the population from citizenship. In other words, in the pursuit of the stabilization of the liberal consensus, the protester discourses become openly demophobic, foregrounding what in the literature is often referred to as the de-democratization effects of neoliberalism (see Brown 2006, 2015). The protest elaboration on the alleged cultural deficits of the nation and the critique of the "post-communist mentality" on part of the summer protests (taken as the symptom of everything that went wrong with the Transition) drove a wedge in citizenship splitting it into "vulgar, material" and "idealistic". Chapter five captures the conflict over the legitimate parameters of citizenship in which formal citizens are rendered uncitizens with my concept of the "anti-citizen". While I look only at the 2013 symbolic expulsion from citizenship of citizens who are perceived to be lacking in knowledge, such policies are becoming somewhat of a mainstream now. For example, a border town in southern Bulgaria declared in 2019 that it will dispense child benefits only to "educated parents" which elegantly excludes claimants from the Roma minority. The link between the censored racism based on ethnicity or race and the new, and more acceptable racism of intelligence is boldly made much more explicit than Bourdieu (Bourdieu 1993) could have anticipated.

The sixth chapter traces the effects of the middle-class discourses on the nation, another shorthand for political equality under capitalism ("a community of similar individuals", as per Rosanvallon (2013) or the "horizontal comradeship", according to Anderson (2016 [1983]). It details the emergence of "a nation of masters", the overturning of the master-slave dialectic in which History was on the side of the slave. The construal of this protest imaginary of the nation is premised on a paradoxical resuscitation of a historical revisionist turn during late Socialism when the role of the bourgeoisie in the 19th century national-liberation struggle was positively re-valorized after years of vilification by Marxist historians. The chapter shows the contours of an emergent liberal, enlightened and cosmopolitan nationalism as a way to domesticate the national-populist threat and integrate with into the consensus. It deepens the investigation into the "middle class" self-representation by showing the ways it intervenes in, and re-writes the past, and remodels the nation after the figure of the master.

The two parts mirror each other in the way they move from "negativity" (the summer against the winter and counter-protests) to "positivity" in which the protesters articulate also positive features of their identity.

The purpose of the second part of the dissertation is to show that ultimately the inequalities from the private sphere cannot be checked and "infect" and subvert the political equality of the public sphere.

The emphasis on culture as a determinant of citizenship should not be written off as a benign penchant of intellectuals but needs to be taken as a symptom of the wider trend of what in political science is known as "consolidation of democracies". If, as the activists maintain, after years of institutional build-up we have only "formal", "facade", vacuous, and therefore crippled democratic institutions, surely the fault must lie in the "deeper" "anthropological" foundations of the institutions. Thus, no efforts must be spared to turn the "brutish majorities [*oprostachenoto mnozinstvo*]" into citizens, as the former minister for foreign affairs from the first anti-communist opposition Nadezhda Neinski put it. Her statement merits longer quote:

> Interviewer [a popular philosophizing journalist, staunch supporter of the 2013 summer protests]: Because the masses unconsciously find it easier with a "father" or, if our national Revival apostles can forgive me, with a "sultan". I underline this – it's easier not to disturb the *status quo*, 'we are OK like this'. Still, is there energy that can turn today's *rayah* [Turkish: the tax-paying, non-Muslim subjects of the Ottoman Sultan] into citizens?

> Nadezhda Neinski: [..] as we speak a great battle unfolds: a battle between an *enlightened minority* and the belligerent and *brutish majority*. Sounds rough but that's a fact. Which brings us to the role of education: it has to teach people [taste] and rigor (Tsvetkov 2015).

Neinski was the leader of the same anti-communist opposition, embodied by the UDF party, which in the beginning of the 1990s used to speak on behalf of the majorities but now speaks on behalf of an "enlightened minority". This shows that the repetition of anti-

communism 30 years after 1989 leads to a break with democracy, rather than with communism, as was the case of the 1990s.

Education and the formation and distribution of cultural capital is not simply the domain of intellectuals and educated experts. It becomes the primary locus where citizens, true to the 2013 exclusionary model which consecrates citizens according to their rigor, taste, knowledge and entrepreneurship, have to be created. I tease out the rising importance of cultural capital in the determination of civic competences in the penultimate chapter.

The goal of this writing exercise, I hope, goes beyond the (self-referential) imperatives of completing one's doctoral studies and the attendant (if dwindling) academic opportunities that go with it. Bulgaria is a small and generally insignificant player in the international arena, but I am strongly convinced that it offers a privileged view to the future of citizenship. The mounting challenges to political equality and democratic participation, especially in the context of acerbic attacks to the popular vote in the age of Trump and Brexit, bode a dark future for the gains of modernity, midwifed by the 18th and 19th century Revolutionary tremors.

<div align="center">Chapter One</div>

<div align="center">Towards a Reflexive and Negative Theory of Class-Making</div>

Class is a social and cultural formation (often finding institutional expression) which cannot be defined abstractly, or in isolation, but only in terms of relationship with other classes; and, ultimately, the definition can only be made in the medium of time – that is, action and reaction, change and conflict.... But class itself is not a thing, it is a happening.

<div align="right">E.P. Thompson</div>

Introduction

In 2018, Daniel Kaddik, the director of the Bulgarian office of the liberal German political foundation Friedrich Naumann, described Bulgaria's class structure for *The Irish Times* in dramatic terms:

> There are three Bulgarian realities [..] People with an average salary don't live a good life here, with prices for food, energy and other things that are comparable with elsewhere in Europe. Then there is a relatively small middle class who have their own bubble, and work in start-ups or international companies, and live in some areas of Sofia that are comparable with parts of Berlin, for example. Then there's the upper class, which is detached from everything else. They have very fancy cars and private members' clubs, and there is very often an overlap with shady business. I lived in Berlin and I never saw a Maybach, in Sofia I've already seen three (McLaughlin 2018)

This depiction of the contemporary Bulgarian class structure is broad and simplistic but nevertheless strikes a chord. The genesis of this class structure (explored in some detail in

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Chapter three) is the "original sin" which delegitimizes Bulgarian capitalism even in the eyes of its liberal apologists. However, most complaints orientalize capitalism by framing its development in Bulgaria as tarnished by the involvement of the Communist elites and ex-secret services, the corruption, the organized crime and so on. An economic historian dedicated a three-volume history of what he calls "Communal capitalism" in Bulgaria in order to underscore its supposedly deviant illiberal nature (Avramov 2007). The 2013 summer protesters directed their ire explicitly at this deviant, corrupt for of capitalism and fought for aligning Bulgaria with "European normality", imagined as an economy where decent people work hard and strict separation between political and economic matters exists.

Time and again it was made clear by protesters that the summer protest of 2013 marked the birth of the urban middle class, allegedly uniquely capable to bring Bulgaria to "Europe". Yet, the daily marches were attended by people from all backgrounds, from senior executives to underpaid academics and pensioners – the poorest demographic in Bulgarian society. How can we make sense of the common identification of such disparate classes of people into the idea of the "middle class"? What produces the efficacy of the discourse? In what follows I develop a theoretical amalgam in order to explain the formation of this middle class in 2013. I will argue that this middle class is shot through with a fundamental negativity that cannot be captured through the enumeration of positive proclivities, qualities, tendencies and properties, dear to stratification (i.e. "the middle

class tends to favor light opera") as well as Leftist approaches (Balibar in Guibernau, Berdún and Rex 2010 for a critique).

Making sense of social class can easily be located along the "objectivism vs. subjectivism" axis, just like any social phenomenon. Are we "thrown" into the inescapable objectivity of social class, understood as objective structural positions *vis-a-vis* ownership of capital? Or do we make and unmake classes as a will and representation? Social theorists have vexed each other over these questions, akin to the "structure vs. agency debate". The question will occupy us here, albeit not solely for scholarly reasons and theoretical gains. The problem has a tangible practical import in a context like Bulgaria, where, for three decades after 1989, the baby of class was thrown away together with the Socialist dirty water.

Suddenly class thinking re-emerged forcefully in public discussion around the 2013 summer protests. Protesters articulated publicly class consciousness in unmistakably clear and unequivocal ways. I look at these discursive practices percolating in the public sphere and mobilize a non-reductionist (post)Marxist approach, tied with a Bourdieusian analysis of class. Taking seriously into account the 'space' wherein this conversation occurs, I argue that **the public sphere and civil society mediate the modulation of class from objectivity into class consciousness or class-for-itself.** As Gramsci showed, consciousness of class interests and the formation of a class as a collective subject is not

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an automatic reflection of position within the relations of production but a process which hinges on the activities of intellectuals.

To speak of consciousness puts one firmly in the grounds of "subjectivism", yet this alleged subjectivism is the somewhat paradoxical result of an "objectification", meaning the verbalization and symbolic narrativization of class positions, occurring in the public sphere with all the attendant prescriptive effects reinforcing the unequal power relations of the discussing parties. I cannot overestimate the importance of the word "space". First, because the space where the articulation of class consciousness occurs and secondly, following Bourdieu, I treat class itself as a space, as a distance which is maintained by the strategies of distinction of classifying and thus classed actors.

The voices and representations I reproduce throughout this thesis sport a similarity to what Richard Florida theorizes as "the Creative Class" (Florida 2003). He defines it as people who work with their minds as opposed to service and working-class jobs, as holding mental instead of menial jobs. While it can be justified to apply the label "creative class" to the protesters, I have some reservations in doing so. First, the movement was too heterogeneous, and secondly, the effects of this movement's ideology on the political sphere depart radically from the optimistic and rosy depictions of Florida about this class being a harbinger of diversity, openness, tolerance, and so forth. But if we are going to stick with the "creative class", I will show in later chapters the less palatable sides of its politics.

Some scholars working on the Bulgarian protests point to the heterogeneity of the protesters and discount the importance of the discourse of the middle class. For example, the philosopher and cultural critic Valentina Georgieva argues that the diversity and heterogeneity of the "protest multitudes" in the last years precludes their association with one or another determinate class. Drawing on Claus Offe (Offe 1985), she states that the new social movements comprise people from all social backgrounds and raise demands of universal import: "for the environment, for freedom, for fair elections, against the oligarchy and the monopolies" (Georgieva 2017: 303).

The heterogeneity of the summer protest, and the universality of its demands, which preclude the application of class optics for Georgieva, are for me its very condition of possibility. In this chapter I try to theorize the middle class, a long-standing "nuisance" in social theory, as a discursive negativity which unites disparate social groups in their shared enmity to a common enemy.

The Objectivity of Class

Marxists view social class as an intractable objectivity (of positions vis-a-vis capital), rooted in exploitation, that is shaping subjective identifications. On this view, "classes are constituted by modes of production" (P. Anderson 1987: 55) and there are basically two classes: owners of capital and sellers of labor-power, including people in prestigious and

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booming sectors whose well-paid jobs align their interests to those of their employers. Orthodox Marxists account for the objectivity of class with Hegelian language: the concept of "class-in-itself" which mimics Hegel's idea about Being-in-itself, meaning being that has not yet attained self-consciousness. "Class-in-itself" is contrasted to "class-for-itself" which is the coincidence of subject and object, the moment where the class attains consciousness of its interests and objectives.

On the objectivist and structuralist view, capitalism functions in a way that splits society into social classes (understood here as structural positions): owners of capital and owners of labor-power, and some in between, which Marx and Engels thought of as in perpetual danger of proletarianization (1848). However, in Western contexts this "in between" social class has proven notoriously resilient to proletarianization and has defied expectations that it will eventually disappear. If anything, the development of welfare capitalism in the 20th century has proven the opposite: the expansion of "the middle". In short, the "in-between" social classes have posed a problem for the Marxist tradition, leading sociologists such as Erik Olin Wright to frame the problem as an "embarrassment" for the theory (Wright 1997: 13). Yet, Marxists have not been aloof to the problem of the middle class and have attempted to solve it. Because of the strong emphasis on class polarization, inherited from the Manifesto, the 'middle class' has traditionally posed a challenge which Marxists sometimes answer via a recourse to Weberian 'prosthetics' (for example, factoring in "authority" and "knowledge" to explain managers and other middle strata). Or they extrapolate the emergence of "middle-class" professions from the growth

and development of monopoly capitalism (Abercrombie and Urry 1983). This gave rise to theorization of the "new middle class" (a shorthand for salaried employees) in the 1970s and 1980s. The debates revolved around whether this class had its own separate base for existence, interests and so on, whether it exists at all, and whether it will proletarianize (the prediction in the Manifesto) or not (ibid.). Another functionalist line of argumentation explains the rise of the middle class by reference to the increased output of the capitalist economy: someone's got to consume all these commodities. One paradigmatic example is John Urry's theorizing the middle class in a somewhat functionalist vein, arguing that as capitalism grows, so does its need for mid-level managers, social servants and other "white-collar" functionaries (Urry 1973; Abercrombie and Urry 1983). A theory that posits the concurrent co-development and growth of capital and the middle class, however, cannot explain why today, precisely in the most developed capitalist states, the middle class has been ravaged and has entered a spiral of irreversible decline (see OECD 2019). In addition, Abercombie and Urry argue that the middle class is largely considered to be comprising white-collar occupations but even this consideration is subject to revisions. For example, Saraçoğlu (2011: 15-18) defines the middle-class as people in stable, non-precarious employment who make regular social security contributions. In short, what used to be the working class before neoliberalism.

In contrast, nowadays, consumption, comfortable lifestyles and white-collar (but even manual) work tend to drift apart, with increased indebtedness making up temporarily for the loss of purchasing power and stagnating wages, only to eventually compound the problem. In fact, American mass media are dominated by reports about the decline and disappearance of the middle class (however understood but usually with reference to

homeownership, education, stable and prestigious jobs, etc). As Ivan Krastev argues, if the 1968 revolutions signaled the desire of young people to break free from the world of their parents, contemporary protests are led by people frustrated to find out they cannot repeat the middle-classish existence of their parents (Krastev 2011).

Also, changes in the political economy of capitalism which gave us the phenomenon of self-exploiting, independent contractor or the permanent adjunct and intern really complicate the task of theorizing white-collar work the way the new middle-class was theorized in the 1970s and 1980s. These people—sometimes called "the creative class" – are anything by salaried, still less employees of somebody, they work intermittent projects and live rather precariously. Marx famously thought that real subsumption of labor is a more mature form of capitalism but today, the "creative worker" or the Uber driver work individualized, and actually own their means of production, in Marxist terms they work under formal subsumption and being officially "boss-less" and free from the monotonous industrial discipline of the classical shop floor, can happily self-exploit and work themselves to death. The Foucauldian notion of "entrepreneurs of themselves" seems better suited to capture this existence. Radical scholars often count artists as members of the working class (Praznik 2018), arguing that artistic work is work, but I think a more insidious process is at work here too; not only the proletarianization of the artistic worker but also the articization of the "normal" worker because of the extreme levels of flexibilization and precarity associated with "free-lancing" are becoming the norm for

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everyone. Rather like artists living off commissions, nowadays workers stay on standby and do not know when the next job is going to come.

Further examples of "intermediate" classes include attempts by Marxists struggling to make sense of the role and positions of peasants, of small business owners, of civil servants, intellectual producers, etc (see Weininger in Wright 2005: 86). Managers have presented a particularly challenging problem because they do not own the capital they are employed to manage. They are wage-laborers whose interests effortlessly align with that of the bosses. They have been disparagingly referred to as "labor aristocracy" and categories with which to capture such ambivalent positions proliferate (see Balibar and Wallerstein 2011 [1980]: 140 on the distinction between "old" and "new" middle class, for example). One notable example of attempts, within Marxism, to deal with the so-called middle class has been Erik Olin Wright's sociology of class (Wright 2005; 1997; 2015; 2000). He has attempted a rigorous theory of the middle class as occupying "a contradictory" position in capitalism, sharing features pertaining both to capitalists and workers, which makes it politically malleable to go in any direction: conservative or radical. Next to property, commanding authority over workers is one feature that puts managers and other segments of "the middle" in their own specific position. Thus, Weberian "status" markers (such as knowledge) come to the rescue of Marxists when dealing with classes occupying contradictory positions.

The tendency has been to understand social positions in terms of the role they play in relations of production. But Marxism has not been the only way to understand class as emanating from objective positions. Weberians do as well, albeit in relation to the market and life-chances. Liberal stratification theories and public representations of class have followed a similar tendency, albeit connecting class to income levels, educational qualifications and consumption practices rather than to positions in the relations of production. By way of an example, in Bulgaria the so-called "middle class" is habitually associated with professionals working in the burgeoning IT and outsourcing sectors. The figure of this "middle class" is most commonly construed not in relation to production and exploitation but to income levels and popular notions of prestigious jobs. Ironically, the prestigious outsourcing sector in Bulgaria comprises jobs which are far from prestigious in the more prosperous Western countries that outsource said jobs: namely, support agents in call centers or content moderators and data deduplicators that are either still too expensive or complicated for a computer to perform.[3] The sector employs predominantly highly educated young people and their above average salaries allow them to enjoy one of the highest standards of living in a country stereotypically known as the "poorest member of the EU" with a minimum salary of just 260 EUR/monthly. A sizable number of such workers marched on the streets of Sofia in the summer of 2013.

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[3] According to the National Statistical Institute, this sector employs some 42,000 people (NSI 2019), or 6% of Sofia's population (IME 2017: 16). The sector accounts for 2,3% of the GDP (IME 2017: 3).

Yet the summer protests attracted It workers, its "middle class" comprised a variety of people unrelated to the IT and related industries. Low-paid teachers, academics and pensioners also attended the protests (Nikolova 2014b). It is true that iindustrial workers did not embrace the summer protest, but neither did they embrace the winter one wholly (Kofti 2014). Meanwhile, the summer protest counted among its ranks destitute people such as a retired journalist who supplemented his meager pension by moonlighting in a warehouse. Therefore, it is impossible to understand the formation of this class by reference to objective positions in the economy alone, or objective data such as income brackets, as economistic approaches would do. I count as economistic both orthodox Marxisms that focus on positions in the relations of production and give us rather unworkable concepts such as "labor aristocracy", and more mainstream approaches, dear to "stratification" sociologists who focus on "objective" statistical criteria such as median income levels, job segments, asset ownership or consumption spending (see Aronowitz 2003). The latter are unable to define at what threshold a different class begins, except by putting an arbitrary (income) bracket. We need a different kind of objectivity. I find it in (discursive) practices and the symbolic violence they exercise by ordering the social world and relegating every class to its "proper" place. Practices are an irreducibly objective reality but not necessarily an economical one.

Practices mediate the formation of class and class consciousness.4

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4   In my understanding of class consciousness, I follow Erik Olin Wright's treatment of the
     phenomenon of 'class consciousness' as a subjective realization and formulation of interests and

In the Bourdieusian tradition, we speak of practices rather as unconscious bodily and embodied dispositions which simultaneously are acted upon and act upon and reproduce the social world. But here I work with an expanded meaning of the term, in order to accommodate the emergent class consciousness. Writing and speaking from a position of authority is a *discursive practice*. These practices are objective not in the sense of reflecting objective positions in the relations of production (of Orthodox Marxisms) or the income levels (of liberal stratification theories). They create and reproduce the realities that sociologists objectify as "classes". **In that sense they are reflexive – they reflect back on the object they represent.** We need a theory which can encompass not only statistical measurements and positions in production but also culturally mediated conceptions about a profession's symbolic "weight" and prestige. Theories that are attentive to the sphere of cultural production that mediate the formation of class dispositions. Only such a theory can explain why people with vastly different income levels and positions in the relations of production (managers, workers, bosses, pensioners, students, NGO experts, call-center workers, academics, etc.) can recognize each other as members of the same class which they did in the summer of 2013. I find the theoretical tools for this in Ernesto Laclau's theory of political identification and populism (Laclau 2007b; 2007a), along with Pierre Bourdieu's sociology. Before I show how this approach

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goals, crucial ingredients thereof are intentions and will. As Wright says, "If class structure is understood as a terrain of social relations that determine objective material interests of actors, and class struggle is understood as the forms of social practices which attempt to realize those interests, then class consciousness can be understood as the subjective processes that shape intentional choices with respect to those interests and struggles". (Wright 2000: 195)

could explain the formation of the middle class in 2013, I need to address criticisms that Laclau is wholly unsuitable to make sense of social class, waged by theorists who insist on the irreducible and crushing objectivity of class.

For example, Marxists have traditionally maintained that Discourse theoretical and post-Marxist approaches ignore class and substitute it for identity politics. Worse, still, that they ditch materialism for discursive idealism (Geras 1987). Marxists claim the theory is not suitable for thinking and explaining class because it is aloof to class. For example, Ellen Wood has produced one of the most devastating critiques of Post-Marxism taxing it with a "retreat from class", as her (2016 [1986]) book by the eponymous title argues. "Post-Marxism", argues Wood, has hollowed out the *sine qua non* of Marxism: class analysis and class politics, while the agent of "the people" has replaced Marxism's favorite "revolutionary subject" – the proletariat, and thus inadvertently substitutes "postmodern" liberal politics for socialism (Murthy in Postone 2009). In addition to this, Wood offers an uncompromising, even damning, reading of Laclau and Mouffe's alleged radicalization of Althusser's treatment of ideology as a force, completely autonomous from class, interpellating subjects (rather than classes). The critique of autonomization necessarily begets charges of voluntarism, even "absolute voluntarism" (Rustin et al. 1988). In a similar vein, Mouzelis objects to the division in Laclau and Mouffe's *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* between class struggles, occurring at the level of the mode of production, and people/power bloc contradictions, occurring in the "superstructure." According to him,

> [t]his type of conceptualization can easily lead to the strange conclusion that political conflict on the 'concrete' politico-ideological/social formation level has very little to do with class divisions and struggle; and that politics invariably means 'populist' politics, i.e. politics has to do with the 'people' rather than with 'classes' (Mouzelis 1978)

Laclau makes himself vulnerable to such attacks. For example, in *New Reflections,* he claims that there is no inherent antagonism at the level of production; rather, a capitalist negates the worker in his capacity as a consumer, that is to say, in circulation or outside the immediate realm of production because the worker's identity is created outside production, i.e. by consumer, ethnic and other discourses (Laclau 1990: 9). In *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy,* Laclau and Mouffe argue that class struggle is not adequate to capture contemporary political contention as new social movements differentiate themselves explicitly from class struggle (Laclau and Mouffe 2014).

Nicos Mouzelis (1978) criticizes Laclau for arguing that no correspondence exists between political groups and social class. This means that the political arena of hegemonic struggles lying outside the "private sphere" of production, allows for a cross-class 'popular-frontuesque' coalitions between classes. In fact, Laclau explicitly advocates the building of large coalitions between the workers, petty bourgeoisie, intelligentsia and so on. In this regard, the division between "class" and "political group" repeats the division in Weberian sociology between "classes" (defined as market relations) and "status group", marking possible non-economic groupings and identification that crisscross class.

Tony McKenna finds philosophical conditions of possibility for this problem, claiming that Laclau (and the entire post-Marxist lineage) reverts to pre-Hegelian philosophy, namely to Kantian dualism and transcendental subjects in the guise of the "collective will" interpellated by unknowable noumena (Ideology, field of discursivity). This is taken as the primary reason for post-Marxism to abandon class (McKenna 2014: 149). Because "collective will" alone is the expression of hegemony, made possible not through the formulation and pursuit of a specific class interest, but through the articulation of other interests, forming what Gramsci has called an "historic bloc" which cuts across classes. Paradoxically, the road to class hegemony is the abandonment of the specific class demands, McKenna 2014 concludes (ibid.).

Laclau and Mouffe do make themselves vulnerable to such charges by openly dissociating radical politics from class, in statements such as: "there is no necessary relation between socialist objectives and the positions of social agents in the relations of production" (Laclau & Mouffe 1985: 86). Terry Eagleton wryly rebukes such statements by saying "with this theory it is wholly coincidental that all capitalists are not also revolutionary socialists" (Eagleton 1991: 215). Laclau and Mouffe's subsequent works deepen the autonomization of the political from economic determinations undertaken in their book *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* (1985).

As Ellen Wood puts it, in a book highly critical and dismissive of the entire post-Althusserian tradition in which Laclau works, "[c]lass struggle is the nucleus of Marxism"

(1998: 12), thereby delegitimizing any utility of post-Marxism in anti-capitalist politics. Maybe she is right about certain streams of Orthodox Marxism, but I am less convinced about Marx. He never formulated a systematic theory of class and class struggle. Vol. 3 of *Capital* has the beginnings of a chapter on social class but it breaks off after a paragraph (Dos Santos 1970: 167). A theory of class by Marx can only be reconstructed from snippets scattered throughout his oeuvre. Marx and Engels' most programmatic text, the *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, asserts laconically that capitalism is bound to bifurcate society in two opposed classes, and sanctions class struggle as the motor of history. But this is a polemical text, nay, a rallying cry, and it lacks a reliable theoretical armature. The insistence, in the *Manifesto,* that all societies throughout history contain two antagonistic classes contradicts the radical historicism of *Capital* and universalizes the historical organization of capitalist society in classes. In other works, such as *The 18th Brumaire of Louis Napoleon*, Marx makes a cryptic statement about the French peasants simultaneously being and not being a class, which has given rise to controversial interpretations. Marx says that they are a class only in their capacity of being "against capital", hinting to the political underpinning of class. This will be relevant for our discussion later.

Yet, there are certain non-Orthodox readers of Marx, i.e. Moishe Postone's (2009), who insist that class struggle between determinate class subjects is less central to Marx. Instead, both (or all) classes are effects and moments in the logic of capital. In that sense capitalism cannot be reduced to the domination of labor by capital, but domination of both

by abstract time (or value), that is the effect of the logic of capital. And both capitalists (owners of means of production) and workers, who sell their labor power, are here merely moments in the movement of capital (which is an abstract logic and not a class in the sense of juridical owners of the means of production). Marx makes that clear in Vol. 1 when he states that "capital is dead labour, that, vampire-like, only lives by sucking living labour, and lives the more, the more labour it sucks." Capital and labor are not externally related realities but *moments* in the dialectical logic of capital, and one arises imperceptibly from the other. Such a position makes the so-called "boundary problem" (where the middle class starts and ends) superfluous.

To go back to Discourse Theory, further objections are waged at the particular social ontology of Laclau and Mouffe that stems from a broadly defined "Heideggerian Left" group of post-foundationalist theories. Post-foundationalism, as Oliver Marchart explains, starts from the premise of a lack of a final ground (determination, essence, center) of the social. This does not mean an absolute lack of ground, only a final one (2008: 2). Contingency replaces the concrete determinations of old: God, capitalism, thermodynamics, etc. On this view, the social is the scene of events that shake it from outside (rather the gradual maturation of inherent contradictions), of decisions, and antagonisms where "the political" seeks "to arrest the flow of difference" (Laclau and Mouffe 1985: 112) and give it a temporary suturing. Full suturing (or totalization) is impossible, and what amounts to the same thing, thinking of totalities (in Hegelian and Marxist fashion), too.

Laclau and Mouffe rely on a dualism which pits the social against the political. On their view, the "political" works as an ersatz-ground, founding the social in that it is only a moment of decision that provides partial "totalization" via the hegemonic gesture of giving the contingent order a semblance of a permanent fix. It is clear how this Schmittian-inflected claim makes irate the proverbial Marxist theoretician who refuses to treat the political as the realm of freedom, autonomous/independent from economic determinations, who rejects the very autonomization of the political from the economic by treating the economic as a ground (and even base) shaping everything else. In contrast, as shown from his response to Slavoj Zizek's acerbic criticisms of their approach (Žižek 2006), Laclau states that there is no objectivity prior to the hegemonic formation of the political subject and that formation is the only objectivity there is (Laclau 2006), as opposed to arising in response to pressures from the economic "base" or "ground".

However, I believe some of the Marxist jeremiad against Laclau and Mouffe rely on a misrepresentation of their theoretical claims. What the Marxist critics miss is that, according to Laclau and Mouffe, only a crisis in the "social" occasions the possibility for such instituting/political gesture. Therefore, the political decision does not happen in a total vacuum from determinations (or possibilities for its actualizing) emanating from the "social". But precisely in this lack of final ground, a "plurality of contingent foundations" emerges, argues Judith Butler, that aim at a temporary stabilization or grounding of society

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(Marchart 2007: 7). We are in the realm of hegemonic struggles in which various groups compete to "ground" society, only temporarily succeeding in doing so.

Yet, given the legitimate criticisms waged at Discourse Theory for its neglect of class (admitted also by Laclau), is using it to explain the formation of "the middle class" not stretching the theory beyond a breaking point? Given all these anti-economistic moments and 'politicist' biases in the theory, as well as its purported inability to think class, does it make any sense to use it in order to explain processes of class formation? In other words, it possible to reconcile Marxists' concern with class and post-Marxism' "retreat" from it? I believe so. The ground to do so does not lie in a possible methodological concern shared by the schools but is presented by the case study at hand: the 2013 protests.

My wager is that *at the level of discourse,* the summer protests are a case which can weaken even further the problematic dualism between the social and the political. I do so by showing how the field of the hegemonic struggle is not the terrain wherein pre-determined classes meet, make coalitions and confront each other qua political groups, but the *very terrain that foments class formation and consciousness.* In other words, the case of the summer protests of 2013 demonstrates how disparate people and groups can unite behind the identity of "the middle class", forming a "chain of equivalence" that, at the level of its symbolic articulation (and verbalization), can be precisely the class (as opposed to "people" or other signifier occluding or repressing the class composition of the protest). The Essex School offers a convenient theoretical tool of making sense of such

articulations in the guise of the concepts of the "chain of equivalence" and the "empty signifier". Every protest movement bands together a variety of demands whose internal differences are suppressed by their common identification against an enemy. This dialectical and polemical "unity of differences" makes the theory especially apposite for my case of the emerging middle class, composed, as I explained, of people hailing from incommensurate socio-economic situations. The summer protesters of 2013 developed a self-awareness as an enlightened minority of "the middle class". Even words like "the bourgeoisie" were used to describe the social base of the protests, including by the organizer of the protest who is very far away from "bourgeois" by any recognizable objectivist criteria thereof. I do not take this descriptor in a literal economic sense since the movement was sufficiently diverse, with low-income people as well as the wealthy joining its ranks. "Middle class" here is a discursive construct with which even some low-income people identify.[5] Approached from a hardline economic perspective, this class appears as a fictitious one.

In short, both the changes in the global political economy and the specific developments in the Bulgarian context, make the traditional Marxist approaches to "the new middle class" discussed above inadequate not only to explain the Bulgarian case but also to the

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[5] Mine is not the first attempt to bring "populism" and social class on the same plane. For example, Anton Jäger has attempted a convincing historical reconstruction the "class nucleus" of the original Populist movement (Jäger 2018). In this way, he reclaims the term "populism" from left and right identitarians, including from Laclau and Mouffe, rooting it firmly in the terrain of class interests, as opposed to identity politics.

very Anglo-American contexts they emerged in and attempted to elucidate. To make sense of the Bulgarian case we need a less structural and functional approach. This means that we do not start thinking about the fictitious "middle class" from consumption and production, but we arrive at it at the end of the analysis.

The Subjectivity of Class

For Marxists class is a relational and antagonistic reality. But the antagonism between classes is an effect of the objective operations of capitalism. Because capitalism splits society into owners of capital exploiting (dispossessed) sellers of labor power, these structural positions necessarily imply different interests the fulfillment of which generates frictions and antagonism. For example, on this view, workers have an interest to diminish the "depredations" of capital whereas capitalists have an interest to jack up the norm of exploitation and the accumulation of surplus value. As the British sociologist Colin Braker put it, "Capital's endless need for surplus value directly opposes wage-labor's needs, making 'class struggle' an inherent property of this system of social relations" (Braker 2010: 5). This view posits the "inevitability" and "objective reality" of class struggle and thus cannot explain periods of appeasement, of calm, of cooperation and general acquiescence to their condition on part of workers. The Marxist historian E.P. Thompson has tried to avoid this problem Orthodox Marxisms get entangled in, by making "class struggle" not the end but the beginning of the class formation and consciousness. It is a veritable "class struggle without class" (Thompson 1966: 109) during which people who act on their inchoate "class sense" or "structure of feeling" which their oppression and

degradation generate, gradually develop "class consciousness" and a clearer understanding of their friction with other classes, such as the bourgeoisie. Most importantly, for Thompson this is a process which occurs "from below". Thompson offers an anti-economistic break with essentialist understandings of objective "interests" and "struggle", whose absence notoriously leads to recourse to "false consciousness" theories. In *The Making of the English Working-Class,* E.P. Thompson traces the development of the working-class through the category of "experience". A shorthand for cultural practices and institutions, "experience" refocuses the objective and impersonal forces in class formation, making us sensitive to the fact that the class was "present at its own making" (ibid.: 9) In other words, class formation is not merely an objective force that happens to people but a process in which they are active participants, rather than passive recipients of structural-objective constraints.

This makes E.P. Thompson's approach to class formation is useful for me because it breaks with economic objectivism and reductionism which perceive class consciousness and interests as a straightforward function of economic position. His break is so decisive that he has been accused of subjectivism and "populism" because of the importance he accords to popular culture, experience and institutions in the making of class. Stuart Hall, for example, argues that Thompson collapses the objectivity of class into the subjectivity of "experience", treating all experiences of the dominated equally as "class experience", thereby making class the function of class consciousness, on the one hand, and effacing the need for rigorous political organization and revolutionary praxis, on the other. This is

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because the "class", and from there, the potentiality for socialist revolution, can be found in every domain of lived experience instead of in the practices that foster revolutionary consciousness (Wood 1982: 47). A strong attack also comes from Perry Anderson who argues that in refusing to define class by reference to productive relations but to culture, Thompson's class is vulnerable to subjectivism and voluntarism. This begs the question that even if it were true that Thompson extrapolates class solely from the stuff of popular culture, what exactly is "subjectivist" about culture? It is by definition shared and intersubjective practice, but this is another debate.

The same objection applies to consciousness. As Marx and Engels claimed in the *German Ideology*, consciousness is fundamentally social practice, mediated by language, a product of the daily relations and dependence between human beings engaged in practical activities, rather than a metaphysical a priori *a la* Kant: "Language … is practical, real consciousness that exists for other men as well, and only therefore does it also exist for me; language, like consciousness, only arises from the need, the necessity of intercourse with other men..." (quoted in Rehmann 2013: 25). It is therefore the "subjective" aspect of class-being, but only so in inverted commas so that its irreducibly social nature is put in relief.

Ellen Wood defends Thompson, arguing that his

historical project presupposes that relations of production distribute people into class situations, that these situations entail essential objective antagonisms and conflicts of interest, and that they therefore create conditions of struggle. Class formations and the discovery of class consciousness grow out of the process of struggle, as people "experience" and "handle" their class situations. It is in this sense that class struggle precedes class. To say that exploitation is "experienced in class ways and only thence give(s) rise to class formations" is to say precisely that the conditions of exploitation, the relations of production, are objectively *there* to be experienced. Nevertheless, objective determinations do not impose themselves on blank and passive raw material but on active and conscious *historical* beings. Class formations emerge and develop "as men and women live their productive relations and *experience* their determinate situations, within 'the *ensemble* of the social relations,' with their inherited culture and expectations, and as they handle these experiences in cultural ways." (year: 49, emphasis in the original).

In that sense, the criticisms leveled at Thompson that he is a "subjectivist" are not tenable. Consciousness is not subjective voluntarism but an effect of practices. Thompson investigates material practices in cultural and public sphere that give rise to class consciousness. On this view, experience mediates between the objectively given "class in itself" and the rise of its 'subjective' articulation as class consciousness or the "class for itself". While in another work, he maintains that popular culture and practices are inseparable from class formation inasmuch as capitalism affects the entire constitution of society, including its culture (E. P. Thompson 1967). This is a far cry from Bourdieu's caricature of *all* Marxists who allegedly posit the proverbial transition from in-itself to for-itself due to the enlightened activities of the Party (1991).

Therefore, in Thompson the link between class position and consciousness is not assumed but builds up over time as a matter of practices and struggles. Nevertheless, in his analysis there is a great deal of "correspondence" between an objective class position (laborers, artisans, journeymen, industrial wage labor) and the class consciousness even though it is not essentialist and assumed but emerges in and through experience and struggle. This marks the limits of the approach's utility for my project because, as I said before, the slogan of the "middle class" of 2013 attracted people with vastly different occupations and "life-chances".

Also, Thompson's insistence that the class has been "present at its own making" reflects the 18th and 19th century English context while in Eastern Europe after 1989 the class-making project was often top-down and spearheaded by enlightened intellectual elites who applied themselves to the job of making "capitalism without capitalists" (Eyal, Szelényi, and Townsley 2000). The 2013 explosion of "middle class" protest activity in Bulgaria could certainly be perceived as the class "present at its own making" but there is a prehistory of class-making "from above" which I discuss in detail in Chapter three. It is closely bound with the development of civil society in the country. In short, much like in Thompson, the constitution of a class subject is the end, rather than the departure of the analysis. But my case diverges from his because the middle class enjoys a looser relationship with the objective class position of the participants than in Thompson's case.

The constitution of the Bulgarian middle class after 2013 is a contradictory process, involving a variety of social actors who are bound together by no known logical necessity (say, a similar profession or common income bracket) but by their *shared opposition* to an enemy. *It is shot through with a fundamental negativity which cannot be adequately exhausted by the enumeration of positive qualities and properties.* This in turn, is channeled by the discursive, *consciousness-(per)forming* processes in the public sphere which objectify or verbalize the negative sense of belonging (i.e. utterances by protest intellectuals) who performatively summon up the very subject on whose behalf they claim to be speaking. We need to account for that *reflexivity* of class formation with tools, other than those supplied by classical Marxism. Because, *contra* Gramsci, in our case the class does not create its organic intellectuals, but the intellectuals create the "organic class" (of the liberal reform).6 The represented do not precede but follow the act of representation. The subject of the speech act, *contra* Austin, is not the start but the end-product of the act itself.

Therefore, an approach which autonomizes or weakens the correspondence between the objectivity and subjectivity of class is more apposite to explain the case at hand. I find this

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6   Gramsci assumes that the intellectuals are secondary to the main antagonistic classes of society (capital and labor) whose existence is determined by the "original terrain" they occupy in the economy, and the respective functions they fulfill with respect to that terrain. Intellectuals then formulate the objectives of the class and lend it an awareness of itself in the "superstructure" of politics and culture. As Gramsci put it, "structures and superstructures form an historic bloc. That is to say the complex contradictory and discordant ensemble of the superstructures is the reflection of the ensemble of the social relations of production" (quoted in Cox and Sinclair 1996: 131).

resource in the Essex's School Discourse Theory, but I supplement it with Pierre Bourdieu's sociology in order to transcend the lacunae stemming from the psychoanalytic and idealist presuppositions of the Essex School, on the one hand, and to tease out the *reflexive* effect (what Bourdieu also calls "theory effect") of the utterances, on the other.

The Negativity of Class

Can such fundamentally different classes of theories combine to produce a theory of class? It is not enough to show that different demands or subject positions articulate together into a larger whole and start acting as a single "subject"; the sociologist needs to lodge herself inside the "chain of equivalence" in order to explore the practices and logics which allow some demands (or social groups) to join together and preclude this possibility for others. She has to explore the gaps of subjectivity or those "hiccups" which simultaneously enable subjectification and determine its limits. A crisis, which the protest tends to be a response to, provides a fruitful ground for exploring these questions because a lot of what is taken for granted i.e. with regards to class, receives an explicit verbalization and puts in sharp relief otherwise inchoate processes of distribution of class positions in social space. This brings me to elaborate on the theoretical assemblage guiding the class analysis in this dissertation.

Weaving together Bourdieu and the Essex School helps us construct a more "open" social ontology of class formation which transcends the problematic assumptions of "inevitability" of the clash of objective class interests Marxists operate with, their

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insistence on the bifurcation of capitalist society and clumsy attempts to account for in-between class positions which in practice constantly "pollute" the neat binary class structure expected to materialize in capitalism. Also, the approach teases out the social (not metaphysical) conditions of possibility which make some discourses effective vehicles for the constitution of class consciousness. Such an approach is better suited to "map" and account for the specificity of class relations in Bulgaria around 2013 without burying it under a general theory of "capitalism-as-such".

As stated, many summer protesters of 2013 unapologetically asserted their belonging to "the middle class". I find a useful approach to explain that articulation of vastly different "positions" into a common political "position-taking" and technologies of class subjectification from the lens of two unlikely theoretical 'bedfellows': Pierre Bourdieu's sociology of class and the theory of political identification of the Essex School. I think mixing the approaches makes them uniquely suited to explain the "social alchemy" uniting disparate groups behind the "middle class". This is my attempt at formulating a sociology of the chain of equivalence. The treatment of class as the result of practical constitution of a political subject is a point where both Discourse Theory and Bourdieu's work on class can meet. I will unpack this by starting with Laclau.

The Essex School, whose most prominent representative is the late Ernesto Laclau, is a fellow-traveler of (what is sometimes disparagingly known as) Post-Marxism: an umbrella term of diverse theoretical movements which purport to correct Marxism's

economistic biases by drawing on psychoanalysis, language theories, idealist philosophy, even conservative theorists and philosophers such as Carl Schmitt and Martin Heidegger.

For Ernesto Laclau, political practices do not express pre-existing essence of a political subject such as a protest group but constitute it (Laclau in Panizza 2005: 33). In other words, practices precede the "being" of the group. Laclau rejects the starting points both of "objectivist" and "subjectivist" theory, to use Bourdieusian language. That is to say, "the society" and "the individual" respectively. The theory postulates the irreconcilable chasm between the social totality and any given individual will. From this follows that the constitution of the general will, which for Rousseau is the condition of democracy, is very difficult in the large, heterogeneous modern societies. As Laclau argues, Hegel attempted to resolve this problem by positing the division of modern society in civil and political society; or the realms of particularity and heterogeneity, and universality and homogeneity, respectively. Marx is said to have believed in the utopia of reconciled (classless) society where the will of the universal class of the proletariat will finally overlap with and express the general will (2005: 34). Starting from the Lacanian theory of the subject as irremediably split, Laclau postulates that the ideal of social fullness is fully unachievable and impossible; any coincidence between a particular will and the general will is always-already a temporary fragile and ultimately uncertain stabilization. It is the product of hegemonic work; that is to say, of temporarily presenting a particularity as a universality. From this perspective, we can say that there is nothing in the proletariat which makes it "the universal class", or nothing in its suffering that justifies the

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assumption that destroying it puts an end to all suffering. Rather, whenever the proletariat's will, and interests stand for the universal will, it is because the proletariat managed to perform the work of universalization, which is hegemonic work in the precise way Gramsci understood "hegemony" to mean the elevation of the particular to stand for the general. This process is neither totalistic nor complete. The gap always remains, papered over by the fragile articulation of political identities that attempt at building a hegemony, or a bridge between the particular political will and the "communitarian space" (the nation, society, etc.). In other words, it is not the completion of the process of hegemonization of the gap (which is anyway impossible) but the very process of attempting the bridge through the articulation of identities that marks the constitution of all political identities (which Laclau also calls 'populism').

To trace the logic of articulation Laclau starts from a smaller unit, namely, the demand (2005: 34). Just like Marx took the commodity as the basic building block for his theory of capital, Laclau begins with the demand. And just like the commodity in capitalism, the demand contains a particularity and a universality: a particular grievance (corresponding to "use-value") and a universal moment – the "exchange-value". The latter is a negativity oriented towards an outside that connects the demand with other demands, thereby forming a "chain of equivalence" (2005: 33).

When the demands get satisfied, Laclau calls this "logic of difference", meaning that each demand is satisfied in accordance to its own specific logic or nature. Hence, demands are

dealt with according to their specificity (or by acknowledging their difference). The more efficient the satisfaction of demands, the less likely will be the emergence of a popular subject because when they are satisfied, they do not form equivalential links, but "get differentially absorbed within a successful institutional system" (2005: 37). Conversely, the more unsatisfied demands pile up because the institutional system does not absorb them, the more likely are they to forge equivalential links between each other, forming a chain of equivalence and a "populist rupture" (ibid: 38). The demands inside this chain still retain their specificity. Yet, they are also bound together in an equivalential logic which suppresses some of their specificity so that it can articulate them together via their shared negativity – the fact that they have remained unsatisfied. This is exactly how money as a general equivalent function: money allows us to exchange very different commodities because each commodity is a bundle of its concrete specificity as a use-value while simultaneously being subject to abstraction (its exchange-value) which cancels out the difference between commodities, at least in the act of exchange.

Parameter	Logic of difference	Logic of equivalence
Satisfaction of demands	The demand is met	The demands keep piling up and articulate together into a chain of equivalence
Politics	Administration	The Political; populism
Demands vis-à-vis each other	Non-antagonistic to each other; Demands remain a particularity	Demands maintain their difference yet it is suppressed. Each demand is split between its own particularity and that common thing which links it *negatively* with the other demands
Empty signifier	N/A	Yes
Subject	Democratic subject: 1 subject = 1 demand	Popular subject: 1 subject = many demands
Antagonistic frontier	N/A	Yes
Constitution	The demand has a positive content	The chain is negatively constituted vis-a-vis "the enemy"

TABLE 1 LOGIC OF DIFFERENCE VS. LOGIC OF EQUIVALENCE

The articulation of demands creates a popular subject as it draws a line that bifurcates the social into two antagonistic camps: "us and them". This is Laclau's debt to Carl Schmitt's understanding of the political (Schmitt 2007). Schmitt set out to define the political in contradistinction to liberal pluralistic theory. The political for him is the activation of the "friend and enemy" logic, just like the most foundational division for aesthetics is the opposition between "beautiful" and "ugly", "good" and "evil" for morality, and "profitable" and "unprofitable" for economics (2007: 26). The state is "political" not because it is the domain of competing interest groups vying for power (in the Aristotelian-

inflected liberal political theories which consider the state an association of associations),

but because it is uniquely capable of deciding on the enemy and thus declaring war on it.

In contrast to liberal approaches which model the political on the Ancient Greek ideal of

rational discussion and public life in the "agora", for Schmitt the political is the domain

not of reason, discussion and of the peaceful mitigation of difference through deliberation,

but of existential enmity: "us" vs. "them".

We can schematically represent the main approaches to the political like this:

Liberal	Critical	Conservative
Rational discussion and consensus (Habermas)	Agonistic, not antagonistic discussion (Mouffe 2013) Dissensus, instead of consensus (Rancière 2010)	Antagonism to the point of annihilation (Schmitt)

TABLE 2 THE POLITICAL

So, Laclau inherits from Schmitt an approach to the political that emphasizes conflict,

instead of rational discussion in the public sphere. However, unlike Schmitt who theorized

the interstate system (2007: 52) and posited a homogeneity within the states that go to war

with each other, for Laclau the enmity and division happen *within* the state, in the social,

splitting it into two. Laclau calls this "populist rupture" (2005: 38), and the subject that

emerges from the articulation of disparate demands – a "popular subject" (vis-a-vis the

"democratic subject" of the satisfied demand).

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In short, equivalence is *negatively* constituted *against* an enemy beyond the frontier that splits the social in two. This enemy can be "the Czar", "the Establishment", "the mafia", whatever. It cannot be constituted from the particularity of any of the demands since, from the point of view of the demands, they are all different from each other (2005: 39). The demands, therefore, cannot confront the power in their multiplicity. One of them must emerge as the "master" demand which represents all the rest, while the rest *recognize* it as the common denominator uniting them. For the "master" demand to function as a common ground, it has to be sufficiently emptied out of positive content so that all the other demands constituting the chain of equivalence can recognize themselves in it. Laclau calls this an Empty signifier (ES). It is structurally equivalent to the function of gold in commercial society: without abandoning fully its materiality and particularity, gold starts to function as a general equivalent so that goods can be exchanged through its mediation.

The empty signifier is what represents the equivalential moment as such. For example, the ES can be a slogan such as "the middle class", representing the multiplicity of demands and subject positions which articulate together into a chain of equivalence. This can be the variety of – sometimes mutually contradictory – reasons why the people want to the government to resign, the multiplicity of professions, income levels, dispositions and so on they bring to a protest. The ES tones down the plurality of the demands and thus gives the chain coherence and totality (2005: 44). Its representation of the rest is hegemony (2005: 39). It delimits the identity of a polymorphous political subject by pointing towards

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the enemy common to its constitutive parts. In other words, any identity, far from being a function of a positively existing substance, is shot through with a constitutive *negativity*. The shared enemy provides the conditions of possibility for identity formation thus making identity a priori non-identical (not self-same).

In short, the ES rests on a dialectic of sameness and difference. The demands articulated together preserve their difference, yet the latter is suppressed in order to establish the relations of equivalence. I cannot overestimate the fact that the demands still retain their difference. For example, during an anti-corruption protest I attended, I asked a young university student why he is protesting corruption and he explained that it is because corruption drove his mother away from Bulgaria. He added that she will most definitely return if the "business climate" improves. His response really intrigued me as it pointed precisely to the multiplicity of demands in any given protest movement. A demand for the mother can articulate together with a demand for "good business climate" and "sound economic policy", or with a demand for clean environment (by that time, the protesters had reached out to the environmental movement). One discovers the multiplicity and plurality of demands, debunking the homogeneity of populism which Mudde theorizes (Mudde 2004: 544). To this end, one needs to peek behind the ES which lends the chain of equivalence its coherence.

Framing the "middle class" as an empty signifier in which different subjects and groups recognize themselves in a common identity, as if by looking at a mirror, helps us account

both for the heterogeneity of positions and their *shared* identity as a single class subject. It thus resolves the confusion generated by the proliferation of terms applied to all those muddy in-between positions: labor aristocracy, petty bourgeoisie, and so on.

To paraphrase Althusser, the empty signifier interpellates disparate social groups as a popular subject against an enemy by creating an antagonistic frontier. They move on to assert that they represent the social whole ("the general will", on in our case – the middle class). If they are successful, they establish a hegemony. However, this hegemony can never be total and so long as there is politics, the internal frontier will always be up for renegotiation. The social gap endures only temporary suturing, or closure. This is a debt of Laclau to Lacan: the search for impossible fullness by the subject is destined to remain unfulfilled. This holds true also for the identity of the subject: it is never totalistic as it is always constituted vis-a-vis an exteriority – that which lies beyond the internal frontier. Drawing on Derrida, Laclau and Mouffe call this "constitutive outside" (Critchley and Marchart 2004): the I is an I by virtue of a polemical relation to an Other/non-I.

The political subject thus constituted is not a primary given of this process but its end-result. This means that representation is not, as philosopher Hanna Pitkin (Pitkin 1967) defined it, "to make present again" since the "again" presupposes a pre-existing subject that gets represented by someone else. Rather, representation creates its represented *ex post. S*peech acts do not reflect a given presence but create their subject and their own conditions of possibility retroactively (Derrida 1988) (Vatsov 2010; 2009)

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There is a debate to what extent the pure formalism of Laclau is a useful analytical tool. There have been multiple attempts at "correcting" what some scholars call "excessive formalism" in the theory. For example, (Stavrakakis 2002) resents that Laclau drops the criterion of "the people" from his earlier (Laclau 2011) theorization of populism and argues that the presence of the signifier "the people" in concrete political discourses is needed for the identification and adequate theorization of the phenomenon. Other scholars point to the fact that we need to keep analytically separate right-wing from left-wing populisms. Even Chantal Mouffe, in her political practice, insists on the vital importance of a left-wing populist politics with which to counter the rise of extreme-right and neo-fascist politics in Europe, the USA and elsewhere, e.g. (Mouffe 2016a; 2016b), see also (Zabala 2017) on the distinct affective registers for left- and right-populism respectively: "Right-wing populism evokes fear, left-wing populism hope").

In my opinion, the desire to supplement Laclau's formalism with substantive analysis stems not only from political urgency and theoretical considerations, but also from pressures which our own academic field exerts on us. Namely, as qualitative social scientists, we are bound to theorize empirically-informed research. We need to present our own collected data and this need becomes superfluous in a purely formal perspective with its conscious disregard for the "ontic". If Stavrakakis insisted on the re-introduction of the signifier "the people" for any analysis of populism worthy of this name, it is because his own research question (the recent political activity of the Greek Orthodox Church)

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confronted him with an abundance of the expression of "the people" in the discourse of the Church he studied.

I am similarly forced to heed my own "ontic" findings. Therefore, I pay such a close attention to the discourse of "the middle class". "The people" did not play such a huge role for the constitution of the identity of my protesters, except negatively, in the phantasmatic category of the unproductive, passive citizens against whom the middle class rebelled. So, if I had to rely on Stavrakakis' considerations, I would have ended up without a legitimate recourse to Laclau's theory. Ontic researchers cannot discount the importance of their ontic findings, lest they risk negative sanctions from the social sciences field. And precisely for this reason it is best to stick to the theoretical formalism of Laclau, so that even the "middle class" could also be analyzed as a "popular subject".

However, the Essex School theory's psychoanalytic and Heideggerian trappings make it unable to account for the social conditions of possibility for the efficacy of such articulations, instead attributing them to innate possibilities in language and the flow of signifiers. The lacunae become clear when we inquire into the conditions of possibility for one of the demands to emerge as a "master" demand, representing the rest. Why "middle class" or "civil society" instead of, say, "the people"? This weakness in the theory needs to be corrected with a better equipped approach, one that can account for the symbolic efficacy of discourses on class and speech acts, and to the history of the contexts where these political articulations happen. To this end, I rely on the works of Pierre

Bourdieu (Bourdieu 1993; Bourdieu 1991; Bourdieu 2000, 1998; Wacquant 2013; Bourdieu and Wacquant 2013)

First off, I try to take seriously Bourdieu's injunction to not mistake theoretical classes for classes (1991, 1998). He repeatedly warns against the elevation of classes "on paper" into actual social classes (1998: 10-11). This is tantamount to projecting our own scholarly constructs into the objects we study, thereby annihilating our object (Bourdieu calls this pitfall "the scholastic point of view", Bourdieu 1990). Classes for Bourdieu are and remain theoretical or "probable" class (Bourdieu 1987: 7) until political work or mobilization is done that would result in a real class or "for-itself". He defines class as "a group which is mobilized for common purposes and especially against another class" (1998: 11). Until then, the class is theoretical and heuristic device for the scholar to study people who share common ways of existence relative to other groups, but nothing more than that. For Bourdieu a "class-in-itself" does not exist, only for-itself. This can be said also for Marx. Despite the Hegelian trappings, Edward Andrew claims that "in-itself" has been a "Leninist constriction" misattributed to Karl Marx (Edward 1983: 577). The "class-in-itself" is supposed to capture the structural reality of class, prior and independent of any cultural, ideational or behavioral expressions and manifestations ("in-itself"). G.A. Cohen derived it from a famous passage in the *18th Brumaire* in which Marx says the French peasants are at once a class and they are not, until they act politically against other classes. To reconcile the apparent contradiction, Cohen mobilized the class-in-itself vs for-itself distinction (Andrew 1983: 579): the peasants form an economic class but unless they start

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to act politically, they are not a class (for-itself). However, Andrew claims that the distinction operative in Marx a "class against capital" vs "class-for-itself", as opposed to "in-itself". In other words, for Marx class and class struggle coincide, whereas the concept of "class-in-itself" allows for the analytic separation between class as an objective economic structure and the political struggle (1983: 581). Class-in-itself is a product of the theoretical reason of Orthodox Marxists who more readily acknowledge that Marxist theory is the source of class consciousness, imputed to workers by the dedicated intelligentsia, than that they are also the source of the "class-in-itself". The only way to retain this term is to subject it to what Bourdieu calls objectifying the objectifier's objectification: to admit it is a prescriptive construct of "theoretical reason" rather than a reflection of underlying social reality. For Bourdieu the models of classes social scientists construct are not a direct representation of reality but give us an idea of classes as theoretical which help us perceive and theorize reality. Much like the map is not the road itself, theoretical classes are not yet classes. An extreme example of the intellectualist fallacy can be seen in a recent study by the Institute of Market Economics, a libertarian think tank in Bulgaria, that estimates the Bulgarian middle class at around 50% of the population, according to median income (Panchev 2013). The author straightforwardly admits that he is following a theory according to which the middle class should be between 40 and 60 per cent, leaving an upper class at 5 per cent. In other words, here reality is literally made to conform to the theoretical expectations of the average number of middle class in a given modern society. This makes even hardcore "objectivist" and statistical measurements irreducibly idealist because idealism assumes identity between thought/universals and being (Laclau and Mouffe 1987: 88).

The properly *materialist* articulation of class begins with practical, political and/or ideological work of mobilizing groups against other groups. Here Bourdieu breaks with Orthodox Marxism but is in full agreement with Marx on the irreducibly political nature of class. The political work of class-making includes work at the level of representations. Class is inseparable from the classifications and the classificatory struggles social agents engage with. For example, when Bourdieu says that agents try to manipulate their positions by manipulating the representations and perceptions of these positions, e.g. through petty bourgeois snobbery (1990, 2013). Such work is needed for a class to become class in the Marxist sense of the word: a "class-for-itself". "Class is never something immanent and structural; it is also will and representation, but it has no chance of incarnating itself in things unless it brings closer that which is objectively close and distances what is objectively distant" (Bourdieu 1990a: 75). These proximities and distances are situated in what Bourdieu calls "social space." In fact, until a class is effected as a mobilized class, Bourdieu approaches it through his notion of "social space".

The theory of the social space marks one of Bourdieu's series of breaks with Marxist theories of class (less so with Marx). Firstly, because Marxists tend to mistake their own objectification of class for actual classes. This does not mean Bourdieu forecloses possibilities for thinking the objectivity of class, as I show below. Secondly, he disagrees with the reduction of the social to the "one-dimensional" antagonism between capital and labor which animates most Marxist analyses. In order to understand the second point, I

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will reconstruct briefly Bourdieu's theory of the social space wherein agents inhere, which is in the first place a space of relations, not less real than a geographical or physical space (1991: 232). The social space is the first stage of Bourdieu's theory of class. It is populated by fields which are autonomous spaces with their own different "rules of the game" (i.e. literary, artistic, political, economic, academic field and so on). People occupy positions in these fields (and in the social space), relegated there by the volume and composition of the capital in their possession which are also the main principles of division and differentiation of the space (Bourdieu 1987: 3-4). Much like in the ordinary sense of the word, capital, which can be material – i.e. economic assets and property – or incorporated (cultural capital which is acquired over time and is sanctioned or legalized by institutions which guarantee it through diplomas, stamps, titles etc.) determine the position of the agents in the social space and also guarantees for them claims on (future) revenues and profits that the field generates (Bourdieu 1991, 1986). The capitals also determine the relative distance and proximity between people occupying the same social space. So, the social space, the capital and the practices agents engage in while "playing the game" in the field constitute an inescapable, first-order objectivity (Bourdieu 1998). The notion of exploitation is absent from the theory of the fields, replaced, instead by concern with domination between incumbents in the field and newcomers (Burawoy 2018: 5). For Marxists there is one major field – the field of production and the attendant antagonistic relations, rooted in exploitation. All other "fields" - cultural, educational, legal, political and so on, are epiphenomenon in this vertical, base-superstructure depiction of modern society. In contrast, Bourdieu invokes a "social topography" and posits the existence of various fields, populating the social space horizontally. They are autonomous, and their

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autonomy is judged by how far they can keep the influences of the economic field at bay (which Bourdieu posits as more influential than the rest, without to reduce them to the economic field) (ibid: 6).

Social space is an objective space "determining compatibilities and incompatibilities, proximities and distances" (1991: 232). Agents placed close to each other would enjoy similar conditions and conditionings which would engender similar dispositions, representations and interests. The similarities of habitus reveal similarity in trajectories (1987: 5). In short, the closer the agents are each other, the bigger the likelihood for the "probable class". However, the spatial proximity of people does not engender automatically their grouping into an actual class which Bourdieu defines as a "group mobilized for struggle" (1991: 231). Similarly, distance within the space does not preclude grouping together either, i.e. when workers and bosses associate on the basis of national identity (1991: 232) or other principles of vision and division (say, gender issues uniting women of different classes).

Bourdieu taxes Marxism of assuming the emergence of a class-for-itself is the product of two contradictory logics: either total determinism or voluntarism in which the consciousness is dispensed by the enlightened political party (1991: 233, 1987: 7). In short, the "short cuts" between position in the space and the emergence of the "class-for-itself" is what makes Bourdieu irate with Marxists. One simply cannot automatically

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extrapolate the latter from the former because this occludes the proper *political* work expended to bring about the classes (1991: 233).

Until this "political" work is done, people remain in a "serial" or individual state (1991: 236). Of what consists the political work? Of representation and of publishing, literally making public, visible, sayable, objectified, explicit. This is not only the work of intellectuals and politicians (even though this is what the political field is mostly commonly about, 1991: 236-7) but even so-called "ordinary people" constantly bring groups into existence by classifying them, i.e. by naming, cursing, swearing, vilifying, accusing, criticizing, praising, blessing, and so on (1991: 236). As Bourdieu says, "one of the elementary forms of political power should have consisted, in many archaic societies, in the almost magical power of naming and bringing into existence by virtue of naming" (ibid.: 236). Until that political-taxonomic work of naming and classifying is accomplished, classes remain "predictive and descriptive" (1987: 6) theoretical constructs (and Bourdieu urges the critical social scientist to objectify and objectifying gesture of the objectifiers, 1991: 243). Class becomes "objective" in and through the political work of naming and grouping.

Yet while everyone can engage in taxonomies, not all taxonomies exercise equal "structuring" or demiurgic power onto the social world. Some taxonomies are more legitimate. Those best placed to engage in naming and in the struggle over the imposition of the legitimate vision and hence definition of the world, are people rich in symbolic

capital, most commonly guaranteed by (educational) qualifications. The latter establishes

an "authorized perspective" (1991: 240). In the struggle of the imposition of the legitimate

visions of the world, agents wield symbolic power in proportion to their symbolic capital

(which is Bourdieu's term for prestige, honor, reputation, legitimacy) (ibid.). In short, the

more legitimate the speaker, the more legitimate his vision of the world will be. But where

does s/he draw power and legitimacy from? Those who are "recognized" by an official

authority (i.e. a university) are recognized by a universal authority in that it is recognized

by all (1991: 241):

> authorized (and full-time) professionals, which includes all those who
> speak or write about social classes, and who can be distinguished by the
> extent to which their classifications involve the authority of the state, as
> holder of the monopoly of official naming, of the right classification, of
> the right order (1991: 242).

In other words, this process needs a subject, one that perceives and recognizes the

taxonomic act of naming. Social actors do not perceive classifications and classify

arbitrarily but based on the position in the field they occupy (1987: 2). As Bourdieu says,

"socially known and recognized differences exist only for a subject capable not only of

perceiving the differences, but of recognizing them as significant." This makes the social

word a symbolic system which like language is organized according to a system and logic

of differences (1991: 237).

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I find a great deal of similarity between the way Bourdieu and Laclau discuss the workings of political representation and, what amounts to the same thing, the being of the group/class/etc. For example, Bourdieu describes the circular movement in what he calls (after Marx) "political fetishism", in which a group's existence materializes through its being represented by one of its members (plenipotentiary, chair, general secretary, etc.) who is legitimized to make utterance on behalf of the group. Much like the Empty Signifier, the representative enjoys a metonymic relation to the group: s/he is one part of it that stands for the whole (1991: 249). But s/he does so only by the initial act of delegation in which the group recognizes his or her right to represent or speak on the group's behalf.

Ultimately, "the sign creates the thing signified" (Bourdieu 1991: 205) and projects back to it the reality of its existence, not least by mobilizing it (ibid: 206). The most common site for this is political field because it is "an activity which works through signs capable of producing social entities and, above all, groups." (1991: 250). Delegation is a magical act ("the mystery of ministry") which enables a collection of persons to exist as a group (or a fictitious person and body) (ibid: 208). This process is lubricated by symbolic power which ensures that the represented recognize their representative as legitimate, meaning they misrecognize his or her source of power which is themselves, but they think it is his (ibid: 209). Symbolic power is violence which represses its violent nature and its source, it starts to appear as *causa sui* (1991: 249). The most perfect expression of this is charismatic authority which is believed by the followers to stem from the personal

qualities of the leader rather than from the process of delegation which expropriates them from the power to speak for and represent themselves. This is the essence of the theory of political fetishism which Bourdieu models after Marx's theory of the fetishism of commodities.

"Social space" must be understood in terms of positions, dispositions and position-takings. "Positions" denotes the objective positions in social space of the elements inhabiting it. It resonates with the Orthodox Marxist idea of the objective "class-in-itself", minus the fact that Bourdieu does not pretend the social space is more than a theoretical apparatus. Disposition is a synonym for the habitus or every day and embodied practices which reflect back on the classifying subject and simultaneously class it. Position-taking express everything from political position to choice-making in other spheres. The social space is not just the container of the elements and fields populating it; it is co-extensive with a gap; it is the space that remains *between* the elements within that space. It is a *continuum* where social actors carve out spaces for themselves in trying to maintain a distance to each other. This continuum houses not only classes but also fields where class struggles also occur. Of crucial importance here is the space left in the continuum after the class is carved by its practitioners struggling to demarcate themselves from others. As Bourdieu says,

> this idea of difference, or a gap, is at the basis of the very notion of space, that is, a set of distinct and coexisting positions which are exterior to one another and which are defined in relation to one another through their mutual exteriority and their relations of proximity, vicinity, or distance, as

well as through relations of order, such as above, below, and between (1998: 6).

In other words, class is the effect of the space, the distinction, the gap or the emptiness maintained by the daily actions of classifying and choosing subjects. The "social space" both "houses" groups which enjoy relatively common conditions of existence and is the gap between the groups that defines their mutual exteriority. Class expresses nothing but the distinction between these otherwise "theoretical" classes. By placing the idea of the gap or distinction at the center of his understanding of social class, Bourdieu offers a *negative and relational* reading of class. The gap is nothing but an emptiness, a negativity which separates and thus constitutes (theoretical) classes and it therefore does not carry a positive content of its own. This precludes any essentialism of the sort expressed in statements such as "the working class has an interest in fighting exploitation" or "the elite despises boxing" because, as Bourdieu explains, boxing was an aristocratic sport before it was taken up by commoners. So even if today the elite might consider boxing uncouth, this was not always so. Practices, objects, preferences that are currently associated with one social class could change their "practitioner" and move up or down the social space.

From this we can extrapolate a "distinctive theory of value": value arises from the play of differences and distinctions; something is valuable inasmuch as access is restricted to it and loses value in direct proportion to its becoming widespread or adopted by the popular classes. To take an example, today the raw industrial aesthetic drawn from factories is one of the defining stylistic feature of the so-called "creative class" interiors. Raw, exposed

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brick walls and concrete floors are a must in every self-respecting "creative class" establishment. The fashionable "lofts" that the "creative class" of the Global North inhabits or would like to inhabit, are ex-industrial spaces converted into flats (Zukin 2014). And yet, in no way would the members of the creative classes or IT industries who enjoy such spaces or patronize "industrial chic" bars consider themselves "working class". They like and have appropriated the look of the factory without living the lives of the industrial proletariat which used to work in these factories. Perhaps a factory worker would find the idea of living in the same place he works absurd, yet this is precisely how today ex-industrial co-living and co-working establishments market themselves to "creatives". The conscious aesthetization of the functionalist and minimalist industrial interiors marks precisely the break with the industrial working-class situation which seeks practical things and considers the factory a space for the necessary work it must do in order to secure the conditions of living, rather than as an aesthetic object to admire, or the space for living. So even though the same object moves up and down the class hierarchies of society, this does not bring classes together but helps them maintain their differences from each other.

Thus, there is a fundamental negativity informing Bourdieu's theory of class which precludes any positive enumeration of features of the behavior in the classes which can easily result in essentializing preferences and practices as prevailing in this or that class. Except as a "snapshot" of the historically specific and highly contextual set of preferences we associate with this or that class. But the very fact that they travel up and down in the

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social space shows that there is nothing particularly "upper" or "lower" class in an object or attitude, but it receives its class content from the position in the social space it finds itself in. And the motor propelling its movement within the social space is the struggles for distinction waged by social classes.

In other words, from Bourdieu's perspective, class is the result of the work expended on maintaining the difference or distinction between the classes. Distinction is not an innate feature of an object (that would amount to fetishism), it is the very distance and gap between elements in the field engaged in polemical and relational position-taking. By position-taking Bourdieu means the choices, tastes, politics that agents have. Bourdieu inveighs against assumptions that position-taking is somehow mechanically determined by one's position in the social space or the economic field. Position-taking does not spring automatically from it but is the combined result of the volume and composition of one's capital (which are a function of the position, that is to say, what kinds and quantities of capital one inherits and the capitals acquired by virtue of one's educational and professional trajectory), the workings of the habitus, the historical and thus contingent distribution of the elements in the social field, the strategies – not necessarily conscious and intentional – actors deploy in order to maintain their distance from others, and the proximity to themselves, respectively. As Bourdieu says, "taste is what brings together things and people that go together" (1984: 241).

There is thus a certain objectivity that precedes that which appears to be constituted by the practices that maintain distinction between classes. In *Practical Reason* Bourdieu illustrates this pre-existence of the first-order objectivity of social class (that is, one's class position as determined and expressed by one's property titles, certificates, and economic capital) in his wonderfully circular way: "the Harvard accent [..] opens all doors, especially those of Harvard" (1994:175).7 In other words, the objective inscription in a class, or social space, as Bourdieu prefers to call it (1989, 1998) pre-exists the second-order objectivity through which the habitus, together with the symbolic representations (discourses, self-consciousness, etc.) recursively (or reflexively) recreates one's class belonging. Thus, one already needs to be in a possession of a "Harvard accent" (to be a member of the elite) as an informal requirement to get to Harvard, given that Ivy League schools heavily recruit from the elite layers of society. We see a similar dynamic unfolding in the protests. Participants recognize their "commonality" in their shared class habitus, manifested in appearance and taste, which helps them identify and exclude "outliers". Taste is not innate but is formed in the social space (the first-order objectivity) wherein one's socialization occurs. But while the "first-order objectivity" is important it does not exhaust the process of class recognition: the anti-government protests comprised members of all social "strata" and were therefore *discursively* constituted ex-post as the "protest of the creative middle class" through performative utterances of intellectuals and activists

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7   My translation. I quote from the French edition because the English translation from 1998 has omitted the "Harvard doors" which is crucial: it means that not only a Harvard graduate is given the opportunity for social advancement (in other words: to join the elite) and receive recognition, but an elite background is already a condition of possibility to enter Harvard.

which posited the existence of this class (and in doing so helped constitute it). There is thus an irreducibly reflexive aspect to the workings of the habitus and the objectification in the exercise of symbolic violence. The compatibility which for Bourdieu must preexist its own constitution and get experienced by unsuspecting participants as "happy accidents" (1984: 241), is in our case constituted discursively by the intellectuals who task themselves with elaborating the identity and objectives of the protests, chiseling away all elements that do not belong.

The process of keeping distance to others (distinction) emerged in a sharp relief in 2013 when the summer protests viscerally rejected and construed their identity in opposition to the winter protests (explored in detail in Chapter three), and the so-called "counter-protests" in the same year (Chapter five). I treat the summer protests precisely as political work that transmogrifies a class-in-itself into for-itself, if we are to retain this distinction. Bourdieu's theory is all the more opportune for this case, also because the protesters did explicitly define their objectives and identity not against one but against two classes: that of "the oligarchy" and "the poor". The differential composition of capital in one's "portfolio" (partially) explains the rivalry.

A few words about Bourdieu's theory of capital. If we take into consideration only the overall volume of capital in people's possession, we will arrive at a simple vertical depiction of society as split between rich and poor. However, according to Bourdieu, this is not enough to capture existing divisions in society. He thus breaks capital into

economic, social and cultural capitals, and the uneven distribution thereof accounts for precise positions that fracture and thus complicate the neat representations of rich vs poor (Bourdieu 1998). The introduction of the disparity between economic and cultural capital immediately produces a fault-line which remains hidden in the simplistic "rich vs. poor" representation. For instance, we can now appreciate the opposition between those who are rich in cultural capital but less so in economic capital (i.e. university professors, secondary teachers, artists) and those who are rich in economic but less so in cultural capital (i.e. industrialists). In short, people can be wealthy and poor in different ways, depending on the types of capital in their possession.

Classes in the abstract may be defined in terms of the overall volume of capital but once the capital is disaggregated into its composite parts, we see the presence of fractures which leads Bourdieu to speak of "class fractions". A class fraction emerges primarily in relation to the composition of capital, less so its volume (Bourdieu 1984). It can be opposed to other class fractions within the same class enabled of the differential capital portfolios. For example, within the "poor class", people relatively richer in cultural capital (i.e. teachers) can harbor contempt to people relatively poorer than them in this form of capital (i.e. farmers). This makes Bourdieu's approach to class somewhat "occupational" (professions are treated as classes) but for the reasons I explained above (the work of maintaining distinction, the gap), it is not a substantive approach to class as in liberal stratification theory, but relational and negative. To go back to the summer protest, the protest-intellectuals managed to articulate their opposition to both the oligarchy and "the

poor" because, despite the vast disparity of economic capital in their possession, both the rich oligarchs and the poor are perceived as equally deprived of taste, civility, class, in short, of cultural capital. Bourdieu maintained that class analysis entails both economic, symbolic and practical relations (Weininger 2005: 84), resolving the Weberian opposition between "class" and "status group" (Bourdieu and Wacquant 2013: 300). In line with this, the chapters to follow will detail the class struggle in seemingly unrelated terrains, such as citizenship and national identity.

The (Negative) Relationality of Class

All Marxist and Weberian approaches to class accept that classes are relational: i.e. the rich cannot be so without the poor staying poor and so on (Wright 2005). In contrast, liberal stratification theories operate with an idea of class as the product of individual merits and endowments which results in little more than moralization and uplifting of the poor through more education, inculcation of work habits, etc. (Wright 2015: 10). Rather than relational and dependent on each other for the distribution of their life-chances, classes are external realities and whatever happens to one class is the result of the personal efforts (or lack thereof) of its members. Because classes are treated as external to each other and are considered the product of aggregates of people with similar individual capital holdings, this approach is vulnerable to 1) fixing these separate categories of classes into fixed essences which 2) an unworkable and ever-expanding theoretical nomenclature is deployed to capture. The second problem leads to the minting of a new

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class category for every new profession or configuration in the capital portfolio that occurs with changes in the political economy.

This thesis accepts the basic premise that classes are relational. Try as they may to hold onto their separate spaces, classes do not have a separate existence from each other. Marx captured this succinctly when he referred to capital as "dead labor". Capital is a form of objectified labor which returns to the laborer as an alien and dominating form. For the purposes of teasing out the relationality of classes, I reach for a neglected concept of Bourdieu's: "class-for-others". I argue that the emergence of class-for-itself depends on yet another moment: for-others. I have been influenced by the Bulgarian sociologist Todor Petkov who works in the Bourdieusian tradition. Petkov's singular contribution to the movement of class-in-itself (the "objective" dimension) to class-for-itself (the "subjective" dimension) is by elaborating Pierre Bourdieu's concept of "class-for-others". Bourdieu only mentions that term once, in a short 1977 essay called "Une Classe Objet". Unlike dominant classes (=subjects), the dominated classes are deprived of the "means of production" and articulation of their own identity and interests. One of the differences between dominant and dominated classes, says Bourdieu, is that the former are able to objectify their own interests and agendas by "reducing them to subjective intent" (Bourdieu 1977: 4). They do so by controlling cultural producers, tasked with objectification: artists, journalists, intellectuals, and so on. In contrast, the dominated are deprived of the resources to articulate and represent their own interest and thus must shoulder representations about themselves produced by others. For instance, this can be

anything between disparaging and more "positive" sugary, folkish figuration of the peasantry as simple and uncorrupted people, that the bourgeois entertains. Forced to accept foreign identity, they are alienated from themselves. They are thus a class-for-others because they exist as a class only on account of the representation another class constructs of them. This is not just an issue of symbolic representation but exercises tangible political effects, explaining, for example, why peasants overwhelmingly vote for doctors, lawyers, members of the free professions, in short, for the dominant classes (Wacquant 2004: 394).

The social groups most deprived of any capital are the most vulnerable to political alienation and political fetishism because they have no other way of existing, of speaking for themselves, other than delegate that power on somebody else: "they must always risk political dispossession in order to escape from political dispossession" (1991: 249, 1977). Their representative brings them into existence by their discourse in an act which Bourdieu calls "usurpatory ventriloquism, which consists in giving voice to those in whose name one is authorized to speak" (1991: 211) and simultaneously with that oppressing them by exercising power over them which they mis/recognize as legitimate (ibid: 212).

For this process to work perception on part of the dominated is a crucial ingredient. They are not passive victims of domination. Rather, the dominant classes dominate the dominated and the latter are accomplices in their domination because they have

incorporated the structure of perception "rooted in the objective structures of the social world" while the relations of power are "present in people's minds in the form of the categories of perception of those relations" (1991: 236). In short, power seems self-evident and naturalized and the structures of perceptions incline the social actors to accept the world rather than rebel (ibid. 235) because of the "ontological complicity" between incorporated and objective structures (ibid: 238).

The bringing about of groups into existence by naming them is thus a question which is at once theoretical and practical because it involves knowledge of the world and the categories in which it is perceived (1991: 236). As Bourdieu says, "Distinction - in the ordinary sense of the word – is the difference written into the very structure of the social space when it is perceived in accordance with the categories adapted to that structure" (1991: 238).

According to him, the efficacy of representation is further enabled by structural homologies in the fields (1991: 244). Every field establishes different rules of the game and hierarchies and they are not reducible to the economy (although the economic filed imposes its structure on the other fields, 1991: 230). Every field has its sets of dominated and dominant, ordered by the differential volume and composition of the capital, operative in the field. This fact enables people who occupy dominated positions in different fields to feel solidarity with each other, i.e. left-wing journalist jabbing at right-wing ones

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pleases workers even though this has not been the intention of the writing parties (1991: 216).

The paradox of "class-in-representation" is that it

> exists in and through the body of representatives who give it an audible voice and a visible presence, and in and through the belief in its existence which this body of plenipotentiary succeeds in imposing, by its mere existence and its representations, on the basis of affinities which objectively unite the members of the same 'class on paper' as a probable group (1991: 251).

This reveals a "parallax" of sorts between working class and the intellectuals clamoring to represent them. As if one needs to leave the working class (or other oppressed and capital-deprived constituencies) in order to be able to represent them because of the prerequisite of symbolic capital needed for the job, which is acquired in fields other than those habitually inhabited by the working class (i.e. universities, public spheres, publishing, etc.). This paradox is beautifully described in the auto-biographical account of Didier Eribon *Returning to Reims* (Eribon 2018). The summer protests of 2013 did not have this problem to such an extent because of proximity between many (but not all) of the protesters and their intellectual spokespersons. Also, many protesters took to the public sphere to ruminate on the protests' objectives even though they were not members of the "talking class". Unlike the winter protest, which did not have its intellectuals to speak on its behalf, they were a class *subject*.

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In line with Marx, the sociologist Todor Petkov says that the objective class identity stems from one's position vis-a-vis the means of production: owner or laborer, and this position

> is not necessarily accompanied by explicit designation but can be within the sphere of what Bourdieu calls 'doxa' – the unreflected upon ontological complicity between habitus and habitat due to which a bourgeois can have bourgeois behavior and lifestyle without to resort to written codex of the bourgeois behavior and taste and without proud displays of self-assertion as a member of his class. (Petkov 2011: 238)

Mobilizing Bourdieu's notion of "class-for-others" Petkov explores the "constitutive namings and attributions of identity" which are "socially efficacious" irrespective of one's objective class position (ibid.). The most elementary of those performative acts of naming is the "us vs. them" which at once establishes both the name-giver's and the namee's class belonging in their respective class-specific properties. Class identity is always *relational* (ibid.: 239). The act of naming may appear like a simple constative – one simply recognizes an other as a member of a class, but as Petkov says, this is a constitutive act of ascription of class identity which follows the logic of the self-fulfilling prophecy in that the very "label" summons up the content it comes to designate: "become what you already are" (2011: 239). As Przeworski says, "[t]he ideological struggle is a struggle about class before it is a struggle among classes" (quoted in Calhoun 2012: 187). In other words, the class-for-itself does not pre-exist practices of classification but is their effect: classification classifies the classifier, as Bourdieu quipped.

I argue that the performative act of class-naming mediates the movement from objective positions to the subjectivity of class (and class consciousness). In other words, the 'subjective' dimension ("class consciousness") is premised on an objectification, which is not the objective position in the social structure, but the process of verbalization and the positing of classes as objectively existing worked out by the "social alchemy" of the class-for-other. (We can elaborate this thought by exploring the processes of "abjectification" of class that accompanied the making-of the "class-for-others" – literally, the class othering – during the counter-protests and the construction of the anti-citizen, as I do in Chapter five.) Class-for-others radicalizes the relational dimension in Bourdieu's class theory by introducing an irreducible polemical layer to it and by accounting for the unequal distributions of the conditions of possibility for making statements in the public sphere: for example, neither the winter, nor the counter-protests could rely on a rigorous intellectual support and defense of their interests and objectives, they were class objects.

There is some debate as to what the becoming a class "in and for itself" entails. I understand it as the class becoming conscious of its interests and pursuing its goals through class struggle. Erik Olin Wright insists on more precision. He argues that class consciousness pertains to individuals (Wright 2000: 193); it is their subjective orientations and interests (or those portions thereof with clear class content). In contrast, the notion of class formation is to be applied at *groups* and collectivities and is thus his version for the "in-and-for-itself". Wright defines class formation as "solidaristic class relations within class structures" which arise through class agents pursuing their material interests (2000:

221). He lists a plethora of contexts where this can happen and a great many of those are what the expression "civil society" habitually invokes in mind: unions, political parties (2000: 222), clubs, networks, churches; in short, "[a]ny form of collectively constituted social relations which facilitate solidaristic action in pursuit of class interests is an instance of class formation" (2000: 191-192).

So why not also a protest? Especially one that unequivocally drove home the class perspective to both protest waves.

The Objectification of Class

Finally, I will focus briefly on the space where the reflexive utterances get uttered, namely, on the public sphere as the *midwife of the transition to class-for-itself.* A great deal of the processes of class subjectivation E.P. Thompson traces happen in the context of what, for the lack of a better word, can be called "public sphere". The public sphere is a "midwife" of class formation and class consciousness as attested by the circulation of revolutionary propaganda, riots and demonstrations, asserting the first democratic principles articulated in the pamphleteering of reform societies. So, the category of experience which mediates the formation of the class is crucial but equally so is the *context* wherein this experience gets experienced. The public sphere is a "collective mediation" and the most important ground for the bourgeois revolutions (Negt and Kluge 1993: 9). In working-class mobilization, since the 19th century, the most immediate context is the work-place where exploitation is most acutely felt but also the "public sphere" which verbalized this

experience, giving it a determinate form.8 Here public space is understood both as a space where pamphlets, papers, letters and other forms of the written word circulated and as a space where people, inspired by these pamphlets, applied themselves to the task of bringing their visionary prescriptions about.

Jürgen Habermas, the most famous historian and theoretician of the public sphere, detailed its emergence in the post-revolutionary transformations of Western European societies and their rising bourgeois classes (Jürgen Habermas and Burger 2008). The public sphere, understood as a space of free association and discussion, embodied by cafes, newspapers, clubs, and so on, has been instrumental for the solidification of bourgeois hegemony but also for radical politics. For example, the Paris Commune was the crystallization of political radicalism fomented by discussions in near-underground clubs and associations during the Second Empire (Ross 2015). Nascent clubs and associations were instrumental for the organized labor movement as well and consequently, suffered severe repressions at the hands of the liberal state (Edward P. Thompson 1966). Geoff Eley says that "Habermas... misses the extent to which the public sphere was always constituted by conflict." (Calhoun 2011: 132). Ironically, the conflict was obscured by an ethos of disinterestedness, as public sphere advocates would guide the boundaries of the discussion

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8   18th century Radicalism understood society as irreconcilably split into productive and unproductive classes. The former encompassed laborers, artisans but also capitalists (Thompson 1966: Chapter 4). The latter enveloped priests, magistrates and the landed gentry. It would not be before the 19th century where laborers' sense of exploitation within the work-place sharpened and the owners of capital were assigned to the "unproductive" class.

on the "common good" by excluding radicals, suspected of promoting only "special interests" (Calhoun 2011: 148).

So, what is the public sphere? A putatively neutral sphere of rational deliberation ridden with conflicts and exclusions. A textual space enabling inchoate, embodied experience to "blossom" into consciousness. A terrain of class conflict which entices the participants to temporarily bracket off class and assume a position of disinterestedness to wax solemn about things of universal import. An open space that depends on the strict separation between the public-rational and the private-mundane, "special interests" and "the public interest". These are not merely ideational principles derived from philosophic reasoning but the very material effects of the power struggles which went into the making of the bourgeois public sphere. According to Craig Calhoun, the Napoleonic Wars midwifed the British public sphere. To the series of paradoxes above we would be justified to add war as a condition of possibility for polite and peaceful discussion among peers. The inclusive public sphere shaped up as *bourgeois* through the violent exclusion of working-class and artisan radicals and populists: "[a]lmost as soon as distinctively bourgeois political claims emerged, [..] so did efforts to distinguish the claims of the bourgeoisie from plebeian and artisanal politics" (Calhoun 2012: 156). Negt and Kluge (1993) detail the emergence of proletarian public sphere, distinctly more embodied that the textual bourgeois public sphere. Interestingly, the bourgeois and noble guardians of the boundaries of the public sphere invoked the supposed proclivity to unreason, passion and narrow material interest of workers and artisans to justify the latter's expulsion from, and incompatibility with the

public sphere and its ethos of disinterestedness and Reason. Exactly the same thing happened in the "long 2013" in Bulgaria.

Despite its bourgeois trappings, Habermas sanctions the public sphere as a domain equidistant from both state and market, a space where free opinion circulates and of association beyond and despite class inequalities, which in turn enables democratic participation. He thus urged bracketing off class and other "particular" properties of the interlocutors as a necessary condition for an egalitarian discussion in the public sphere. Contra the normative dimensions of Habermas' theory of the public sphere, the case of the summer protests is one where not only class inequality is not bracketed off for the purposes of egalitarian discussion, but where the public sphere itself became the main terrain where they were prescribed. As Veronika Stoyanova puts it, following Gramsci, "civil society is far from a neutral site of freedom; instead, it is the very sphere wherein hegemonic (class) struggle takes place" (2018: 39). Pierre Bourdieu also has few illusions about the inclusiveness of the public sphere and the right of everyone to have a political opinion (Mattelart and Siegelaub 1979). By counting rates of non-responses to political questions, Bourdieu teases out the conditions of possibility for voicing a political opinion as well as for having it in the first place. These boil to the volume and composition of capital and especially so to cultural capital but also to the sexual division of labor.

Historical context is also important. The sociologist Lilyana Deyanova details the battles in the post-1989 public sphere in Bulgaria which gradually marginalized dissident

intellectuals, as technocrats and experts from think tanks came to dominate civil society. She ruefully acknowledges that they impose a new type of censorship and as a result, Bulgarian public sphere does not exist (as a critical-reflexive space for free discussion) (Anguelova-Lavergne and G′oreva 2010). Cultural capital is not enough to explain the antagonism as both groups are sufficiently rich in it. While the dissident intellectuals spoke on behalf of Truth, the experts imposed the language of the Procedure ("governance", "good practices", "capacity-building" and other buzzwords from the democratization handbook) (ibid.). Most importantly, the civil society experts were richer in social capital which helped them build networks quickly, especially with donors and the mainstream media (ibid). The experts' English proficiency helped them navigate better the waters of the new geopolitical position of the country and secure funding from international donors while the academics and traditional intellectuals languished in poverty (Lavergne 2010: 215). This capacity itself reflected another (and repressed) advantage the experts had: close family ties with the Communist nomenklatura who send their children abroad and gave them the best possible education. As the author of the most controversial book on the Transition *The Experts of the Transition,* argues, the old elites managed to reproduce themselves in the guise of their children occupying the prestigious positions of democratization experts, spanning culture, politics and international relations. The combined effect of cultural, social and economic capital, derived from their privileged relation to international donors, ensured the domination of these civil society elites over the public sphere. Ivan Krastev calls this milieu (of which he is an important part) "the liberal estate". As I argue in Chapter three, as part of their efforts to maintain a liberal consensus now under increasing attacks, the civil society of the liberal estate applied itself

to the job of mapping and constituting the "social base" for the reform consensus. I will demonstrate that the 2013 middle class protest was the crystallization of this search for the social base of the reform. To this end, I quote from ruminations in the public sphere by people from "the liberal estate" but also by protesters who espoused similar views.

In this dissertation, I arrive at class by following the discourses about the "middle class" in the supposedly egalitarian public sphere, rather than extrapolate the "class truth" of the public sphere in the typical gesture of the theoretical unmasking against fake liberal egalitarianism and universality. This necessitates accepting the premises of liberal theories of civil society (i.e. the sphere of free deliberation and association between juridically free and equal individuals). But by following closely the discussion in the public sphere we will arrive at that which liberal theorists tend to suppress about it: social class and *eo ipso*, inequality. In this way we can recuperate Karl Marx's theory of civil society which is a radicalization of Hegel's understanding of it as the system of needs and therefore of market exchange. In *On the Jewish Question* Marx showed how the so-called political equality of citizens masks class privilege and bourgeois class power (Marx 1978). By inverting the theoretical movement and starting from public sphere to class, I confirm Marx conclusions albeit in non-economistic terms. In short, instead of unmasking and engaging in sociological reductions of the participants in the discussions to uncover the nucleus of class, it is enough to follow the discourses in the nominally egalitarian Bulgarian public sphere which celebrated the "birth of the middle class" and disparage the working class and the poor.

Conclusion

The purpose of the above theoretical excursus was to explain how it was possible for diverse groups (positions) to recognize themselves as a single subject. The Essex School's Discourse Theory helps us see how their shared identity arises through the negation of a common enemy. Despite their internal heterogeneity, the protesters perceive themselves as a single subject: *negation converts heterogeneity into a homogeneity*. Differently put, enmity lends the sociological heterogeneity of the participants a fictitious homogeneity of a "middle class". However, the Essex School does not account for the social conditions of possibility of this conversion and articulation of diverse class positions into a common position-taking. That is why I supplement it with Bourdieu, more specifically I select insights from his sociology of class and symbolic power in order to understand the sources of the performative efficiency of class naming, as well as the reflexive workings thereof. This leads us to the problem of symbolic violence and the prescriptive effects of the discursive practices of "naming class" by legitimate representatives occurring in spheres of cultural production and the public sphere. Furthermore, the struggle for the constitution and establishment of the legitimate classes produces effects in the very context where it occurs, namely, in the public sphere, by delimiting its boundaries. This begets problematization of the liberal belief in the inclusive public sphere. The public sphere is less public when we consider the unequal access to expressing opinions in it, as well as the lack of sympathetic representation of the winter and counter-protests in the established liberal outlets. I mobilize the term "class-for-others" to account for the inequality of access to the means of self-representation, as embodied by the two protest waves of 2013. Which

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brings me to the central problem of my project, namely, how a class is formed.

I have proposed to think of the problem in the following way. We have discursive articulations of class and the sudden eruption of activity pointing to the emergence of what Marx called a "class-for-itself". The symbolic efficiency of this class-for-itself has the objective positions within social relations of production as its social condition of possibility. If we remain here, however, we could be accused of reducing the social to the economic, on the one hand, and the economic to abstract ahistorical subjects that preexist social structures and construct them from outside, on the other. In order to avoid this economism we have to take into account that attaining class consciousness is mediated by what Thompson referred to as "experience" and the cultural realms (e.g. media, intellectual discourses, etc.), where the symbolic efficiency of intellectual discourses ascribe and affirm class interests and political identities. In other words, the symbolic violence of intellectual discourses in the public sphere prescribes and validates class belonging and identity. It is therefore a reflexive force in that it reflects on the very object it purports to speak about. It brings it about. Therefore, to make full use of the possibilities the concept of a "class-for-others" offers, it is also key to consider the spheres and discursive practices that prescribe classes and manage their boundaries. This happens in a number of spaces – not only the streets during protests (slogans, demands, etc.), but also in mediatized public sphere. Just like in E.P. Thompson's book, I look at the cultural institution of the public sphere, but I expand his focus because there we find not only the

cultural practices of the class in question but also cultural practices which *prescribe class identification.*

The lively debates in the Bulgarian public sphere produce effects which *reflexively* impact the very operation of the public sphere. In other words, the public sphere is not a neutral terrain on which various actors meet and exchange their views; what is being said in it affects it. Part of that conversation was on social class. Yet what are the conditions of possibility for such articulations in the public sphere? What enables access to media and whose opinion do media amplify? Such access is not reducible to economic class, understood in the Orthodox Marxist sense. Possession of cultural and social, rather than economic capital, plays a key role: the public discussion about the protests was dominated by academics, journalists, writers, intellectuals, experts, journalists, artists even though the protests was much more diverse.

The intellectual objectification of the dynamics and relations in the protest, the definitions given by the opinion-makers, were much more important for the constitution of the identity of the protest, than the "actual" or "objective" and diverse class habitus of the participants, which however must be recognized as having supplied the commentators with the original impetus to venture their definitions, establishing a degree of isomorphism between some of the groups represented in the protest and the discourse of the middle class. In short, the identity of the protest as bourgeois is not coming solely from the objective distance from necessity enjoyed by its participants but by the *objectified fantasy*

of this distance; that is to say, as verbalized/objectified by the protesters and their intellectuals. This objectification in the public sphere lends an otherwise messy and diverse social movement a coherent identity that acts as a mirror and which helps protesters even of "moderate means" to recognize themselves in the figure of "the middle class".

It is not possible to demonstrate that these protesters are an elite who enjoy the luxury of free time, art and immersion in legitimate culture and bring these dispositions to the protests. In fact, this cannot be shown since the movement spans a diverse group of people with very unequal economic power: there are rich entrepreneurs as well as unemployed teachers and precarious intellectuals. Their elite-ness is derived less from their position in the social field than from enjoying the status of holders of cultural capital and of having creative, middle-class aspirations (see Stoyanova 2018).

This means that we cannot take a purely objectivist and positivist approach to class (i.e. by measuring income levels and pretending to know better than participants about their objective class interest) to determine whether this is really a protest of the bourgeoisie or middle class. I would propose a pragmatist solution. To paraphrase the Thomas theorem, "if protesters and detractors define the protest as bourgeois, then it is bourgeois in its consequences." This allows us to autonomize the notion of "the bourgeoisie" from any criteria based on objective positions *vis-a-vis* the means of production which mechanically define the bourgeoisie *qua* property-owners. In turn, this enables us to appreciate the

presence of not so well-off people in the protests instead of writing it off as a pathological aberration that would claim these people suffer from "false consciousness". The upshot is that they do not protest because they are bourgeois, but they constitute themselves as bourgeois because they protest (and because of the unique and creative ways they protest). Here I understand the bourgeois position not solely in the objective sense of one's position with regards to the means of production (i.e. owners of capital versus sellers of labor-power) but as a degree of distance from necessity (Bourdieu 1984). Distance from necessity is determined by ownership of economic capital but it cannot be exhausted solely by it. Had it been, it would have been impossible to understand the extremely austere position of disinterestedness intellectuals take, especially apropos consumption and "materialism" (explored in Chapters three and five).9

A class is not the starting point but the end point of its becoming. In other words, we will not assume that the protesters who argued that the protest is of the "bourgeoisie" or "the middle class" said so because the notion does express the direct relation to their own position in society; we will treat "the middle class" as a speech act, and thus, not as the beginning but rather, as the result of the protest. To repeat, *they are not protesting because they are "bourgeois", they constitute themselves as bourgeois because they are protesting*. The practice of protesting thus validates ex-post the protesters as "creatives", as opposed to the more intuitive assumption that assumes a direct and mechanical

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9   As Bourdieu quips, "the ideology of disinterest, [..] is the professional ideology of clerics of every kind" (1991: 215)

correspondence between class position and consciousness. Creatives and intellectuals were present in summer while absent in the winter utility bills protests but like I said, objective class parameters and measurements are not enough to understand the summer protests since many a non-creative participant marched that summer, too. Rather than a direct relation between class and political position, we are thus faced with the question of hegemonization which a particular class fraction within the protest managed to exercise over the whole protest, on the one hand, and the discursive prescriptions of class interests and consciousness, on the other.

To recap, in Marxist parlance we have three moments: objective (in-itself), "subjective" (for-itself) and the intersubjective for-others (which depends on an objectification: I am I inasmuch as I am for-another) in the constitution of a class and class consciousness. The for-itself moment cannot come via a Fichtean declaration of a consciousness which determines itself: "I am I"; it has to happen through an antagonistic recognition by an *Other* and their authoritative acts of naming that bring a group into existence.

However, in our specific case, we may as well abandon the first moment (the "class-in-itself") and discuss the insurgent "middle class" from 2013 as a "class-for-itself" without really having a class-in-itself reality to it because of the diversity of milieus the participants hailed from. We can treat it as a fictitious class which nevertheless expresses the truth about social class inasmuch as a class is a product of antagonism which it does not pre-exist it (as we know from the Marx of the *18th Brumaire*). Also, "fictitious" does not mean untrue, not least because agents living by this "fiction" act out on it with very

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real consequences. In addition to that, "fictitious" denotes a future oriented temporality, a hope in the something to-come, much like Marx treated finance capital as a fictitious capital in the sense of claims to future streams of income (Henwood 1999) (see also Stoyanova 2018 on the "aspirational" and future-oriented goal of middle-class ideology).

Let us attend now to the mechanism and logics by which the articulation of "middle-class" class consciousness occurred. As the winter protest of 2013 was what the insurgent middle class first recoiled from, I turn to it next.

Chapter Two

Volksgesellschaft: Civil Society Against the Consensus

> "Politics is war pursued by other means."
>
> Michel Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, vol. 1, Foucault 1988: 93

Introduction

This chapter zooms in on the winter protests of 2013. They erupted over abnormally high utility bills but articulated wider discontent with the Transition and with the established political parties of the period. Sporadic gatherings of a few disgruntled citizens burning their utility bills in protest here and there rapidly picked up heat and soon thousands-strong marches engulfed every major town in the country. The bills bonfires took on a more sinister dimension with a series of tragic public self-immolations in protest of the abject conditions of life in the country. Eventually the center-right GERB government resigned, citing a clash between protesters and the police.

I focus on the protesters' discursive repertoire, and more specifically, on the mobilization of one of the key signifiers of the narrativization of the democratic Transition: the idea of civil society. I root it in a "longue durée" of civil society thinking that goes much before the times when "civil society" came to express the network of NGOs, think tanks or became associated with the normative ideal of an inclusive public sphere. To this end, I

revisit earlier discussions within political theory which understand it as the domain of the cultured, educated, economically active and propertied classes. Classical civil society whose main vector of inclusion was the possession of property and qualifications that made one relatively independent (i.e. a practitioner of "liberal profession") was explicitly defined in opposition to "the people", the "plebeians", the lower- or toiling-classes dependent on wage-labor.

This discussion of classical civil society puts in sharp relief the deployment of the term by the winter protesters. It paves the way to the main argument of the chapter which is that the winter protests' discourse overcame the opposition between "civil society" and "the people" as it used both signifiers interchangeably. Posters saying, "we are the people" and pamphlets heralding the rise of "civil society" abounded. I capture the resulting discursive innovation with the term "people's civil society" (J. Tsoneva 2013) or Volksgesellschaft, a play on Hegel's bürgerliche Gesellschaft (bourgeois/civil society).

A crucial aspect of their repertoire was the strong, visceral rejection of political representation and the entire political establishment of the Transition. This makes the winter protest of 2013 a case study of popular appropriation of the key signifiers of the Transition, showing that they are not the preserve of liberal experts but lend themselves to popular appropriations with the ensuing intriguing semantic innovations. In raiding the semiotic field of Bulgarian liberalism and "hijacking" the discourse of civil society hitherto monopolized by the country's NGO sector (see Lavergne 2010), the protesters

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used it interchangeably with the notion of "the people" and asked for nationalization – the opposite of any respectable post-1989 liberal civil society agenda, which roots mostly for "decentralization" and privatization. Yet, having appropriated the key signifier of "civil society", the protests put forward demands that were democratic rather than liberal, i.e. for the nationalization of the energy grid. They staged a rebellion not so much against the signifiers of the Transition, of which they availed themselves freely, but against their representatives: political and NGO elites. The liberal frame of the "hijacked" discourse was kept but protesters evacuated its liberal content and filled it with a democratic-popular demand (to some commentators – even "populist"). They thus exploded the simmering tension between majoritarianism and constitutionalism inherent to liberal democracy, as well as the supposed inevitability of privatization and the roll-back of the state, revealing the fragility of the liberal consensus. In fact, as the influential political scientist Ivan Krastev said, the winter protests were "against the consensus" (2013). The notion of "the people" subsumed that of "civil society" overcoming the tension/animosity between them that is long-standing in liberal theory as well as in civil society praxis. In the next chapter I show how the summer protest re-hegemonized civil society, tying it back to the "civil sector" of NGOs as well as to the rising middle class. As I stated in the introduction, the winter protest threatened the reforms consensus, whereas the summer protest shored it up.

No single social group can monopolize the signifier of "civil society". The work of sociologists Nadege Ragaru and Georgi Medarov inspired me to follow the struggles for appropriation and re-appropriation of master signifiers of the Transition. Ragaru (2010)

follows the tribulations of the notion of "corruption" once it leaves the domain of mediatized expertise of anti-corruption policy-makers and enters popular vocabulary. The "social life of concepts", by the apt expression of sociologist Jean-Louis Fabiani (Fabiani 2010), seems to reflect, and produce, the social status of the speaking subject. The (not so) subtle changes in meaning effected to the key political signifiers of the Transition in the course of their mobilization by the popular classes should not be written off as uneducated discourse but should be understood as the weaponization of the dominant discourse, calling out the powers that be. Thus, in the hands of the elderly woman waiting for the doctor, "corruption" may come to mean the very anti-corruption liberal reforms in healthcare that legally stipulate mandatory co-payment at hospitals (Ragaru 2010: 200). Further, while for the liberal experts anti-corruption was a way to diminish the role of the state in the economy, for Ragaru's interviewees corruption came to signify precisely the roll-back of the state and its redistributive functions (ibid: 203). Medarov (2017) follows this approach and has masterfully shown the impossibility of academic "Transitology" to totalize its intellectual production. The proliferation of popular definitions and counter-knowledges about "what really happened" (Chalǔkov 2008) points to a vast field of guerrilla appropriation, contestation and subversion of academic knowledge and policy expertise: at the very moment concepts coined by academics and policy-makers go in wide public circulation.

The fact that "civil society" enjoys almost universal endorsement by policy-makers and so-called "ordinary people" alike, does not mean that everyone understands the same thing

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by it. If anything, it is the exact opposite: sameness (of form) is the very condition of possibility for divergence of interpretation (of content). The fiercest battles happen precisely over shared preconceptions; it is as though a common denominator needs to be in place on order to begin to measure and declare things incommensurate. (Which points to the limit of any strict Schmittian understanding of the political as a Manichean battle to the death between foes. The condition for disagreement is an agreement on a pre-discursive *a priori*. Therefore, to keep Schmidt, we will need to 'Arendtize' him, to illuminate the *sine qua non* of the shared and agreed-upon ground where political collision is made possible and unfolds.)

To make sense of this discursive war I turn to Michel Foucault and his "rule of the tactical polyvalence of discourses" (Foucault 1988: 100). According to Foucault, "we must not imagine a world of discourse divided between accepted discourse and excluded discourse, or between the dominant discourse and the dominated one; but as a multiplicity of discursive elements that can come into play in various strategies." This implies reconstructions of the "shifts and reutilizations of *identical formulas* for contrary objectives" with respect of the position (of power) occupied by the speaking subject (ibid. emphasis mine). Discourse can both reinforce and undermine power:

> We must make allowance for the complex and unstable process whereby discourse can be both an instrument and an effect of power, but also a hindrance, a stumbling-block, a point of resistance and a starting point for an opposing strategy. Discourse transmits and produces power; it reinforces it, but also undermines and exposes it, renders it fragile and makes it possible to thwart it. (ibid.: 101)

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Further,

> There is not, on the one side, a discourse of power, and opposite it, another discourse that runs counter to it. Discourses are tactical elements or blocks operating in the field of force relations; there can exist different and even contradictory discourses within the same strategy; they can, on the contrary, circulate without changing their form from one strategy to another, opposing strategy. (ibid: 101-102)

Discourses are deployed and re-deployed as weapons in a polemical struggle which means that no single "warring party" can totalize them. For example, Foucault shows that the opponents of absolutism utilized the very juridical discourse which underpinned the monarchy to challenge it: "[p]olitical criticism availed itself, therefore, of all the juridical thinking that had accompanied the development of the monarchy, in order to condemn the latter" (1988: 88). This appropriation sought to undermine the powers that be, but it retained a basic assumption on the nature of power, shared by the juridical discourse: that power is "exercised in accordance with a fundamental lawfulness" (ibid.)10

Michel Foucault's notion of "tactical polyvalence of discourses" helps us understand the Volksgesellschaft not as a separate or a dominated discourse but as *a tactical mobilization of the dominant discourse against its representatives*. This mobilization, however, did

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10 This sounds to me as a Hegelian determinate or immanent critique. This is the critique which seeks to overcome the situation it inheres in by relying on, and weaponizing the very premises that underpin the order under attack.

affect the semantic coordinates of the discourse, resulting in a compelling destruction of the boundaries between "civil society" and "the people". In turn, this created a universalistic (so long as the national boundaries permit) and radical-democratic political imaginary which tried to redeem a subjugated population. In the process of polemical re-signification of "civil society", its previous representatives such as NGOs were excluded. Even though the protests erupted over dramatic increases of utilities bills, they quickly transformed into a "populist" call for the abolition of all political representation. The protests rapidly integrated demands for a "radical overhaul of the political party system" and a "new Constitution". They articulated a radical democratic desire for a political system beyond representation by asserting that the *de jure* sovereignty as "the people" needs to be given more than a symbolic recognition and must be exercised *directly:* beyond party mediation.

Before I proceed to showing how the protesters collapsed the boundaries between civil society and the people, I will sketch some historical and theoretic tension points between these terms.

Classed and Classical Civil Society

In Eastern Europe, the idea of civil society received its impetus when dissident intellectuals weaponized it in the struggle against the "totalitarian" state. In doing so, they resuscitated the concept from its near-oblivion in the West (Todorova 2009, Killingsworth 2012: 7). This is captured by the now tired formula of "civil society against the state",

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peddled in e.g. Havel's famous (Havel and Keane 1985) treatise on the subject, and taken up in numerous other studies and political pamphlets. However, this frame was a rather novel development in the history of civil society thinking; perhaps unique to Eastern and Central Europe and not a mere derivative from Western liberal thinking (Falk 2003). Throughout its long history, "civil society" was not always imagined in a radical opposition to the state. For example, ancient deployment of the concept used it interchangeably with "political society", with "civil society" meaning simply the orderly political organization of the group as opposed to "barbarian" societies (Ehrenberg 1999). John Locke's understanding somewhat echoed this; he considered civil society a *political* commonwealth which produces its own legislative and executive powers. He thus pits civil society against the state, albeit the state of nature (including the family) and tied it to preservation of property rights. To the extent that civil society was conceived in opposition against the state, it was with regards to the absolute monarchical state where power was structurally similar to that of the "conjugal society" (in Locke's social typology), namely, the family where the power of the father is absolute, arbitrary and thus violates natural law and rights. Similarly, Montesquieu theorized the social order in the French monarchy from the perspective of civil society. Weaponizing "civil society" as an expression of the separation of powers that is most adept at checking absolutist power (both from below and above), Montesquieu grounded it firmly with the estate of the aristocracy, and its elaborate systems of mores and manners (Richter 1998, Ehrenberg 1999).

Early modern theory initiated the differentiation between "civil" and "political" society (at least with regards to absolute monarchy) but never saturated it with the same degree of hostility achieved by Eastern European dissidents in the 1980s. Those intellectuals tied civil society and democracy together in an opposition to the Socialist state, with civil society becoming the domain free of the totalizing political impulses of the State. This was also a departure from 1970s theorization which did not consider the state as posing a danger to civil society but the opposite: that too much civil society activity threatened the state. Such was the conviction of scholars like Samuel Huntington who taxed high levels of "middle class" political participation with producing "instability" in society (Bermeo 2003: 12).

The end of the Cold War sutured firmly the articulation of democratic participation and civil society: flourishing civil society was as indispensable to the image of the modern democratic state as was the market economy. In the 1990s civil society and democracy (at least in its liberal and representative form) were unequivocally linked in the mutual opposition to Communism and Totalitarianism. The dismantling of the totalitarian state and the transition to democracy were to be achieved not only through the institutionalization of the rule of law, the separation of powers and competitive elections, but also through the empowerment of civil society. Because of the strong link forged between civil society and democracy in Eastern Europe, with liberal democracy functioning as the most appropriate political framework for the pursuit of "apolitical" interests on part of free, associated citizens, we are used to thinking of civil society and

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democracy as bound by necessity to each other, but this is a rather recent innovation. For example, for Montesquieu these things hardly belonged to each other. He argued that democracy can lead to the despotism of the masses and only civil society, embodied by the nobility can preserve freedom by delimiting the twin threat of despotism from below as well as from above (de Dijn 2007). There was an enmity at the core of civil society thinking to be sure, but its object was not so much the state (as in the 1980s East-European renditions) but the popular classes whose appearance with the 18th and 19th century revolutionary tremors on the political scene (hitherto reserved for the nobility) generated the high point of tension, captured by the liberal fears of "the revolutionary crowds" (Borch 2013: 26, 38). (It is only after Habermas that efforts were expended to decouple civil society (which Hegel called bourgeois society) from its rooting in the bourgeois class and to reformulate it as a sphere equidistant from both state and class/the economic sphere (Cohen and Arato 1992: ix; Steenbergen 1994: 1).

There is thus a long history of elitist figuration of "the people" as fundamentally incapable of self-governance, of reason, as driven by chaotic, base and irrational impulses, from Gustave le Bon to Ortega-y-Gasset and everything in between but it won't preoccupy us here. Classical civil society in contrast, overlaps with the domain of civilized, educated *individuals* driven by knowledge, civility and Reason rather than by instincts and feelings. (Christian Borch's *The Politics of Crowds* is an excellent introduction to this topic). The very birth of popular sovereignty with the French Revolution was accompanied by attempts to delimit it, fueled precisely by concerns, on part of educated revolutionaries,

about the masses' alleged deficiencies. The attempt to save the democratic revolution from the "irrational demos" led to the invention of representative democracy whose proper subject was civil society (M. Hristov 2010).

In order to understand how the winter protest of 2013 departs both from the "classical" and the contemporary parameters of liberal democracy, we must operationalize a clear definition thereof. This necessitates a brief reconstruction of the idea of democracy for which I rely on C.B. Macpherson's magisterial study *The Life and Times of Liberal Democracy* (Macpherson 2012 [1979]). Macpherson rejects any simplistic and apologetic genealogies of liberal democracy (and by extension – of "Western Civilization") which posit its distant beginnings in Ancient Greece. Instead, he limits its beginnings strictly to the 19th century liberal modernity (2012: 8-9). In order to distinguish modern liberal democracy from earlier articulations of the democratic idea, Macpherson singles out the variable of "class" as opposed to ritual invocations such as "equality before the law" in more mainstream accounts. On his view, liberal democracy is the democracy of "class-divided societies" (ibid.) which arose in the 19th century. Before that, liberalism and democracy had been considered contradictory and incompatible because democracy was

> defined as rule by the poor, the ignorant, and incompetent, at the expense of the leisured, civilized, propertied classes. Democracy, as seen from the upper layers of class-divided societies, meant class rule, rule by the wrong class. It was a class threat, as incompatible with a liberal as with a hierarchical society. The main Western tradition down to the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, that is to say, was undemocratic or anti-democratic. (2012: 9-10).

By contrast, early modern radical democratic thinking – for example, Thomas Moore's *Utopia,* imagine a radically inclusive and *classless* society without property and distinction, the condition for which being the exclusion of private property (Macpherson, 2012: 17).

The revolutionary tremors in the late 18th and 19th centuries eventually midwifed the unstable articulation of liberalism and democracy. In the *Democratic Paradox* Chantal Mouffe theorizes modern liberal democracy as the contingent articulation of two contradictory logics: that of political liberalism (rule of law, constitutional rights, etc.) and the democratic tradition of popular sovereignty (Mouffe 2009: 18). In contrast to Macpherson's class approach, she singles out pluralism as the defining feature of modern liberal democracy (ibid: 19). Unlike some liberal theoreticians who stress deliberation and reasoned mediation of differences which accompany pluralism, though, Mouffe's pluralism is shot through with an irreducible polemical-antagonistic element stemming from her Schmittian theoretical trappings. On her view, the articulation between the logics of democracy and liberalism is always unstable and open to contestation; it is never fixed but this perennial and polemical tension is simultaneously what balances out the assemblage so that neither part gains a complete upper-hand over the other. Without waxing so philosophical, political scientists also acknowledge the constitutive tensions within liberal democracy, with popular sovereignty opposed not to property but to constitutional checks and liberal rights (Smilov 2013). If for Mouffe the very tension between its constituent parts sutures liberal democracy, in Macpherson's more historical

and class-sensitive approach the articulation of liberalism and democracy became possible through the idea of "limited" or "representative" democracy which reconciled the principle of popular sovereignty and elite rule while keeping the former in check. The catalyst for this had been popular uprisings and the emergence of mass social movements such as Chartism in the 19th century which called for universal male suffrage and the shortening of the working day and thus played a crucial role for the gradual democratization of the liberal regime (in the sense of integrating populations other than the propertied classes, Macpherson 2012). The gradual articulation of the contradictory logics of liberalism and democracy received practical expression in the rise of institutional arrangements such as the Senate in the United States as a "defense" against more radical and inclusive versions of democracy which had been a threat to property (Graeber 2013).

Political representation was the governing technology ensuring simultaneous adherence to the revolutionary principle of popular sovereignty *and* delimiting the dangerous excesses that too much access of the demos to the political scene would purportedly generate (Hristov 2010). Such restrictions culminated, with the Thermidor, in the introduction of property and educational qualifications for voting, thereby ensuring that only those most suitable for governing – the propertied and educated classes – would have access to political office and representation. As sociologist Momchil Hristov says (anachronistically deploying the term meritocracy),

> precisely the civil society in its early liberal form from the end of the 18th and the beginning of the 19th century was called upon to embody the

principles of republican meritocracy of enlightened individuals who exercise their reasoning autonomously in the public sphere in their capacity as private property owners (ibid.).

This educated and propertied middle class was supposed to be ruling, not in their own name, but in the name of the people. But who were the people? As Agamben observed in *Homo sacer*,

> Any interpretation of the political meaning of the term people ought to start from the peculiar fact that in modern European languages this term always indicates also the poor, the underprivileged, and the excluded. The same term names the constitutive political subject as well as the class that is excluded – *de facto*, if not *de jure* – from politics (Agamben 1995, quoted in Hristov 2010)

"The people", argues Rosanvallon, imbues democracy with a fundamental ambiguity. The principle of abstract popular sovereignty that founds democracy co-exists uneasily with the sociological reality of the panoply of concrete, plural and very unequal groups. The preservation of the principle of popular sovereignty required the excision precisely of those classes of the demos which the Revolution had empowered to a degree that had come to be perceived as threatening to itself (In Hristov 2010).

As comte de Volney, a revolutionary, exclaims: "the barbarians are not some tribes living in the distant past or in the exotic ends of the world; the savages are among us" (Hristov 2010). This, argues Hristov, after Rosanvallon and Foucault, marked the process of

securitizing, sanitizing, disciplining, moralizing and educating the demos through the educational and security apparatuses of the state (prisons, workhouses). The inculcation of bourgeois values such as respect for property (and propriety) and the moralization of the "dangerous classes" takes its most clear expression in the words of Edmund Burke: "patience, labour, sobriety, frugality, and religion, should be recommended to them; all the rest is downright fraud" (see Thompson 1966: 56) As Proudhon aptly observed, "democracy is demopaedia" (ibid.) The educated middle classes applied themselves enthusiastically to the job of elevating the plebeians from their wretched moral and material conditions through philanthropic initiatives and campaigns.

Stefan-Ludwig Hoffman (Hoffmann 2006: 28) contends that in 19th century England and France the first civil society associations were predominantly middle-class, with both "the rabble" and the traditional notabilities enjoying minimal representation. The main goal of these civil networks was "moral improvement of society" (ibid:.29). As Hoffman argues, the civil society associations aimed at creating a "classless civil society" (2006: 27) for themselves imbued with internal egalitarianism:

> The sociable societies of the *ancien regime* did have an egalitarian ethos, but they were not harbingers of democracy. By inventing 'the social' as a distinct sphere separate from politics and absolutist hierarchy, enlightened sociable society could enjoy the theater of equality with its tone of transgression and excitement, without seeking to undermine the existing political order. (Gordon 1994: 33 quoted in Hoffmann 2006:22-23).

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This egalitarianism precluded the expression of material interests: political and economic self-interests were banished for being destructive. Instead, only a cultivated individual who can reign in his own base impulses and interests could legitimately claim to be working for the common good. This classless civil society naturally had its condition of possibility in social class, as it was the educated and the propertied middle classes who were most suitable for the task of social moral reform. (In that sense the Volksgesellschaft is a civil society not of lofty morality but precisely of crude, egotistic, material interests – from the point of view of the early practitioners of civil society – utility bills, end of poverty, etc.).

Associations, especially of the elites, were exclusive, if not always to Jews and women, then most noticeably to "the common people" (Hoffmann 2006: 22). However, liberal reform-minded civil associations' exclusivity was quickly challenged by the proliferation of workers' clubs which put civil society on a course towards democratization (Hoffmann 2006: 73), the attendant proliferation of "proletarian public spheres" (Calhoun 2012), and popular Radical and Jacobin societies (Thompson 1966). This coupled with the increased number of Catholic clubs, engendered liberals' hostility towards associational life in the early 20th century (Hoffman 2006: 77). In short, the availability of associations which is considered the hallmark of democracy today did not necessarily spell the birth of democratic (in the sense of inclusive and egalitarian) society.

In short, the proper subject of democracy, in these early post-revolutionary elaborations was not the demos but the (propertied) civil society capable of rational opinion, discussion and political participation. In the 1990 "civil society" became once again the subject of the new democracies in Eastern Europe (Buden 2016). There is thus a recurring historical tension between "civil society" (of the educated, the propertied, the polite, and so on), and "the people"/"the crowd"/"the masses" as the violent subject of every Revolution with its Terroristic and democratic excesses. In his account of the post-1989 transformation of CEE, political scientist Gary Madison similarly invokes an image of civil society meaning, among other things, a society where people are simply civilized and polite with each other (Madison 2016).

Let us see how the protesters of winter 2013 utilized the mutually exclusive discourses of "the people" and "civil society" in such a way to sublate the historic tension between them. In doing so, they invented a synthetic "people's civil society" which I call *Volksgesellschaft*. Contrary to earlier post-1989 formulations, Volksgesellschaft is calling for the abolition of representation, thereby divorcing "civil society" from "representative democracy" while tying it to a more direct form of democracy.

Towards a "Polemology" of Civil Society[11]

By "polemology" I mean the struggles for signification which propel the scholarly practices of codification and classification making up the discourse of civil society outside the academic field. The protesters appropriated this notion to turn it against its traditional representatives – specifically NGOs and political parties, and to force a demand, radically at odds with the experts' notion of civil society, namely nationalization of huge chunks of the energy sector, and the abolition of political party representation. This is a radical break with civil society as the proper subject of democracy after the Revolution, exercising its hegemony precisely through political representation over the dependent, uneducated, property-less demos.

The result of the winter protest's appropriation was an illiberal civil society devoid of a chief ingredient in the liberal definition thereof: namely, the pluralism of voluntary associations and the rational pursuit of particularistic goals in the public sphere. The winter protest effaced pluralism from civil society [12] at the very moment of its

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11 I borrow this expression from my friends Momchil Hristov and Todor Hristov who coined it in order to capture their own scholarly militancy within the Bulgarian sociological field.

12   This notion is important in nearly all theoretical attempts to define 'civil society' as the networks of voluntary associations of individuals who come together for the sake of peaceful and legal pursuit of various plural interests in the public sphere.

deployment of the discourse, and this made possible the mobilization of liberal topoi for non-liberal ends.

The repetition of the Same (discourse), on part of the protesters, wrought change in the content of the idea of civil society, all the while it preserved its form. This would not have been possible, however, had it not been for the inherent heterogeneity – the "tactical polyvalence" – of the discourse which opens it up for a variety of polemical interpretations and re/deployments. Therefore, the Same is in effect un-selfsame, and this applies also to the subjects of appropriation. As Foucault argues, there are no dominant and dominated discourses. There are however, dominant and dominated classes. But, following Foucault, it would be a mistake to assume a pre-existing homogeneity and completeness of the subject who appropriates and refashions the discourse of civil society; doing so would mean falling in the same trap Austin did when he assumed the prior completeness of a speaking subject as the unidirectional source of speech acts. In contrast, the subject is retroactively constituted as delimited and complete in the very act of speaking[13], including through polemical interventions *within* the protest, and not just *between* the protest and its adversary – the experts and the political elites.

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13   If I utter "happy birthday" and hand you a gift, does that speech act not also reflect back on me and constitute me as a gift-giver, in addition to constituting you as a recipient and a birthday girl? (see (Vatsov 2010 for further reflections on the retroactive constitution of the subject of the speech acts.)

As stated, the 2013 winter protests demanded nationalization of the energy companies. But soon they broadened their demands and asked for direct citizens' control over the state and the radical restructuring (almost to the point of abolition) of the party system. For example,

The poster above says that the country should be governed by citizens assemblies "without political parties and intermediaries"14. Also, citizens should be given "the right to law-

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14   The winter protest did not invent the virulent rejection of political mediation but inherited it from earlier movements and radicalized it. Most notably, from the environmental movement which formed after 2007 and whose protests always emphasized that political parties are not welcome, as these are "citizen's" protests.

making initiative" meaning every citizen assembly, which drafts a law, should be able to pitch it freely to Parliament.

Meanwhile, the following banner was held in front of the city council of Varna. It demands full "civil organizations participation in the government. Call-back of mayors, city councilors and MPs. Trials for the criminals!":

FIGURE 2 CIVIL ORGANIZATIONS DEMAND THE POWER. SOURCE: FACEBOOK

There were similar anti-party banners during the summer protest. For example:

FIGURE 3 "PROJECTS YES". PHOTO BY THE AUTHOR

Let us dwell briefly on the similarity and differences between the two posters. They both reject political parties'' mediating role between citizens and the state. However, while the winter protesters imagine the direct participation of the citizens as an *informal* civic assembly (rather than as NGOs which are held in mistrust), legislating through eased referendum procedures, the summer protests reasserted the NGO as the legitimate representative of civil society and even as a legitimate contender for power (which up to this point the NGOs were not imagined as capable of being). Let us consider this example:

The above call-out from the city of Pernik (a declining industrial town struggling with large unemployment rates) invites everyone to "a national protest against the arbitrariness of [the energy companies] and the national politics in the sphere of energetics. [..] Let us show that Pernik has an active civil society."

Similarly, the Varna protest leader who made the news because he was knifed during a protest, assured the media that he is not giving up the struggle because "civil society is united for the first time and we won't allow any political party to "exploit us". To this a leader of the protest added they are not going to betray "the people" [*narod*] (BG NES 2013)

Numerous posters like the one above shows that the liberal signifiers such as "civil society" are popular with the protesters. Liberal experts do not have a monopoly over

these signifiers. The latter lend themselves to appropriation and dispersion. The liberal experts call these protests "anti-austerity" and "populist", even "a Bulgarian version of the Libyan Jamahiriya model" (A. Levy 2013), which moreover demanded the impossible – nationalization of the privatized energy companies and end of poverty. The then-minister of finance Simeon Dyankov thundered that all totalitarianisms start with populist protests like these.

But the appropriation of the liberal signifiers (such as "civil society") proves that this was a revolt *not* against the liberal ideas *per se* but against their representatives. The crisis of representation (which contemporary political science calls the "democratic deficit") is a crisis of the representatives, affecting the ruling elite, the political parties, the experts and the NGOs. People carried posters "we are the people" [*narod]* and "let's take back the state" (Fileva 2013a), in addition to "civil society united". The subject that forecloses mediation (in energy and in politics) was a "people's civil society": a Volksgesellschaft. It was a universalistic civil society, meaning everyone is included, except for those who claimed to be the representatives before – i.e. NGOs and special interest parties.

The crisis of the representatives became most visible when the president invited "civil society" representatives for a consultation. A barrage of insults at the selection ensued calling the invitees "pseudo-citizens" (Simov 2013), "bankrupt oligarchs", "state functionaries", rather than authentic protesters (Panayotova 2013), and so on. Indignant at the fact that spokespersons of big capital were among the invitees, the leader of one of

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the largest trade unions asserted that "there should have been solely organizations that represent themselves" (Glasove 2013).

I would like to turn attention to a short article which poignantly expresses the crisis of representatives. Written by Alexander Simov (2013), a left-wing journalist and an ardent supporter of the winter protests, who became a BSP MP a few years later, the article puts forward a vision of a subterranean war which goes on in civil society. First, he asserts that the oligarchy is scared by the vast number of protesters who refuse "to pay the bill for [the elite's] dark, illegal and shameful enrichment." Then Simov slams the Bulgarian president for inviting representatives of the protests to a citizens' council attached to the caretaker government to discuss ways of solving the crisis. According to Simov, these people do not belong to the protests but are

> representatives of big capital and well-paid right-wing economists and analysts. Is citizens' voice that of economists who joyfully congratulated [finance minister] Dyankov for his income-freezing policies? I guess we need a new revolt – revolt of the citizens against the pseudo-citizens. A revolt against the panoply of foundations, bankrolled by foreign donors, which have clogged [civil society] and act like factories for hazardous ideological poison. We must rebel against big capital which defends its own interests. [..] The political elite is not the only problem. Bulgaria is full of pseudo-citizens who will always be ready to serve corporate interests.

The summer protests also redrew the boundaries of citizenship along class lines, albeit excluding the majorities. I dwell on this in Chapters four and five.

Because of the strong anti-elite pathos of the protests, I call their version of civil society "Volksgesellschaft": "people's civil society". It differs from dominant ideas of civil society not only because it overlaps with "the people" (reinforced with the patriotic images drawing on the 19th century national-liberation struggle), but also because it does not seek autonomy from the state (as in the 1980s 'civil society against the state' frameworks) but a direct access to the state (just like it seeks unmediated access to the energy producers, unsoiled by the brokerage of the privatized electricity companies.)

As this poster says: "one people, one state, all together. Burn the monopolies! Goodbye to all parties! Nation-wide protest 24.02.2013":

FIGURE 5 "ONE PEOPLE – ONE STATE". SOURCE: FACEBOOK

Let us consider the demands, as drafted by different protest committees that gathered in the town of Sliven on 01.03.2013:

1. Creation of a public council of experts with a mandatory citizens quota. This council is to work out a program for the implementation of the citizens' demands. [..]

2. Replacement of the proportionate electoral system with majoritarian one.

3. 50% citizens quotas in all state regulatory agencies.

The list appeared in the liberal newspaper *Dnevnik* where the author of the dispatch admits the protest fills her with anxiety and quotes bystanders characterizing the protests as "stupid" (Fileva 2013b). The chief reason being that the protesters do not really know what they want and how to achieve it (despite the long list of demands). Yet, in the same report a mother of two is quoted saying that she is tired of the misery and of depriving her two children of necessities and she urges her older son to emigrate. When a party associated with the summer 2013 protests announced the creation of a citizens' council, *Dnevnik* did not (quote anyone) call it stupid, still less the protesters who plan to leave or already live abroad.

The list of demands continues:

4. Immediate discontinuation of all trials against debtors of the energy companies.

5. Diminishing of the "green energy" quota [this is the electricity produced by private green generators from which the state is bound by law to buy at a higher price than that of the nuclear power plant].

6. Nationalization of the energy distribution companies (known as "ERP") in accordance with the European laws and directives.

7. Abolition of all intermediaries, the National Electrical Company must assume their functions.

8. Declassification of all contracts with the ERPs and private producers of electricity. And repudiation of all such contracts that harm the state and the citizens.

9. The persons responsible for such contracts must be tried in a court of law.

10. Introduction of individual contracts with Toplolofikatsia [the socialist-era central heating company which to this day operates with collective contracts]

11. Individual meters [in many places Toplofikatsia calculates consumption according to a complicated "prognosis" formula and is unable to account for individual consumption].

12. Abolition of the [private] metering companies [where individual consumption of heating is calculable, it is done by private intermediaries that sell expensive meters to end-users].

13. Repudiation of all concession contracts for public water supply. The state must assume the functions of the privatized suppliers of water.

On the first glance the winter protests appear nationalistic. But this conclusion can miss out on the approbation of liberal signifiers by the protesters. For example, in addition to nationalization, they also wanted transparency. Other demands included the abolition of the Value added tax on utilities, anti-monopolies legislation, cancelation of privatization contracts, introduction of e-government (Dnevnik 2013b), "normal bank credits", "deepening of the connections between businesses and tertiary education", voiced by the union of the National Economy University (Fileva 2013a) (However, leftist student organizations also participated in the protests, i.e. the "Student initiative against budget cuts in education.") The last few points are normally associated today the with summer "middle class" protests, showing once again that the winter protests articulated in a single chain of equivalence liberal demands with 'socialistic', anti-cuts, and anti-privatization

ones. In short, the liberal and the common/popular/national assemblage did not merge together only "civil society" and "the people" but operated effortlessly also on the terrain of their economic imagination too. This produced the amalgam of anti-corruption rhetoric (again the chief ingredient of the summer protests later) but one that refocuses corruption as the enemy of the people as opposed to the businesses, as the summer protest understood it. For example, a protester wrote that due to corruption, "citizens are barely surviving, popular discontent is not accidental [..] the fate of the *narod* is in the hands of [the courts]" (Varna 24 2013).

Eventually, as part of the protests, a blockade of the Central Railway Station in Sofia was organized and to the list was added a demand to reverse the privatization of the state rail company (Vesti 2013).

As the influential Bulgarian political scientist Ivan Krastev correctly observed, these protests are "against the [liberal] consensus." (Krastev 2013) He only failed to acknowledge to what extent the attack on the consensus was couched in the central signifiers of the said consensus (civil society, anti-corruption, rule of law, etc.).

In short, the protesters asked for a thorough revision of the privatization of public services. But they did so in a way that imagined a more direct empowerment of citizens and civil society, within a "European law" framework. To reiterate, they are not against the idea of

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civil society, but against its concrete representatives cast as sell-outs on the payroll of "big capital".

Tatiana Vaksberg (2013), a liberal journalist working for the Bulgarian office of Deutsche Welle, expressed her genuine surprise at the fact the protesters do not find in NGOs legitimate representatives of civil society (Vaksberg 2013). Like other experts, she blamed protesters' ignorance: "a huge number of people actually cannot define the term "civil society" and believe that its "authentic representatives" are students and the pensioners" (ibid.)

Further, the protesters explicitly directed their ire against the energy (but also water, heating and other) monopolies. This enabled the President of the country (who started his career as a real estate developer) to interpret the demands as calls for market competition and liberalization, instead of nationalization. But that backfired, and he was booed (Fileva 2013a). The economic illiberalism of the protests was not easy to subsume under a rhetoric of privatization and competitiveness, despite their political liberalism (i.e. the ideas of civil society, experts, consumer rights and democratic participation). Perhaps this kind of economical illiberalism, and not Orban's political-illiberalism, is the form of illiberal democracy we need to pursue?

When I asked an informant, a high-level manager in a foreign-owned call-center, what she thought about the winter protests, she replied she was horrified at them because demanding nationalization is an "impossible populism." Another informant said that the protests are "sad. To protest poverty is like protesting the elemental forces of nature. The protesters know what they don't want but do not know what they want."

The question of knowledge looms large. "Populism" suddenly becomes an epistemological issue. (In the chapters to follow I will show how knowledge claims become important also as determination of citizenship). Did people not know that private property is natural? (As is public poverty). Did they not know that European law protects it? That "civil society" and "the people" are not the same thing, and that pensioners are *not* the representatives of civil society? This was also the attitude of people like Ivaylo Dinev, a political scientist, author and a popular Bulgarian left-wing activist with a long record in student mobilizations. He assumed a pedagogical stance and wrote an open letter to the protesters, entitled "Why is civil society not united?". This is how he answers his question:

> civil society is not united, and it will never be because its very essence produces differentiation between agendas, and antagonism between particular interest groups. This may sound counter-intuitive, but it is actually a positive thing. There has never been, and there will never be, a common protest of "the people" (*narod*), [still less of] "civil society" because it is the domain of difference in which different groups seek support for different causes. [..]

> Civil society is the clearest emanation of the sphere of action for individuals. [..] We must rejoice at the fact that we have distinct causes because this means freedom and being informed. If there was a single cause it would mean that we believe in one and the same thing which would spell the end of civil society (Dinev 2013).

Then he links the idea of the common interest to totalitarianism. But even within his didactic approach, he lets the "common" slip through. He says that the protesters must seek the support of the "millions of dormant" citizens because "you are all on the same side of the barricades: that of the citizens", thereby assuming that the citizens can be, after all, united. At least he is sympathetic to the protesters, even when he tries to lecture them.

Other instances of the pedagogical approach are less sympathetic. In a TV talk show with political experts which broadcast live from the protest, the opposition between the knowledgeable subject (the expert) versus the ignorant one of the protests, forcibly emerged. The TV host asked one of the leaders of the protest what they are fighting for, to which the latter replied that "we want to live normal and decent lives. To live off our honest labor." Then he listed some of the more concrete demands: nationalization, etc. This was interpreted by the sociologist Andrey Raichev and owner of Gallup's Sofia subsidiary, one of experts in the TV studio, as "they want a revolution!". Then the experts concluded that what the people wanted is basically not possible and their demands are merely an echo of the fact they are in pain but cannot express it meaningfully besides "Oohhh! it hurts", as Raichev gesticulated, to impersonate (but in effect to caricature) the protesters. When the protester voices concrete demands, the expert hears merely noise. As

the sociologist Todor Hristov (T. Hristov 2008: 94) argues, experts sometimes treat what people say as a reflection of an obscure reality which remains hidden to the latter, just like a doctor deciphers the symptoms of sicknesses whose mechanisms are out of reach for the patient's consciousness.15

It is easy to dismiss the anti-privatization and anti-austerity Volksgesellschaft as the "cries of pain" of an uneducated populist movement, ignorant of political theory, European law, and even of its own needs. When experts do that, they behave like Enlightenment intellectuals who define the production of knowledge as a process whereby knowledge colonizes the emptiness of non-knowledge (Foucault 2008). Instead we should treat the protesters as subjects endowed with critical competencies whose knowledge is under

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15 This reduction of the protesters' concrete demands to undifferentiated noises people in pain emit contrasts radically with the media treatment of the summer protests when "deep interpretations" abounded. For example, there was a performance with a ballerina and a piano during one of the summer protests and experts competed to reveal the deep meaning of such acts. No one went to the ballerina to ask her what she is doing there. By contrast, when the poor were on the street in the same summer, as part of a pro-government rally, aggressive journalists rushed to inquire into their motivations to join the protest: "explain yourselves! Why are you here?" and when they received explanations, treated them as irrelevant (Nikolova 2014a). And another contrast with the summer protests: the winter protests' list of demands was much more concrete than the general pathos of the summer protesters demanding "morality in politics". Yet few experts scorned the summer protests' desire for something so vague as "morality" or "European values"; in one instance their non-knowledge of the concrete paths to achieve "morality" was even taken as their virtue, since, according to one commentator: "it is not their job to know and formulate policy, theirs is simply a cry of pain" (Kiossev 2013). So, in the first instance a cry of pain is discovered where there was none and taken as a delegitimation of the protests. In the second, it is their virtue.

perennial threat of being subjugated by the expert discourses that try to discipline the narrativization of the Transition, and what amounts to the same thing, its direction.

The authorities and experts discounted acts of collective political resistance as manifestations of contingent individual idiosyncrasy or inarticulate "cries of pain". To illustrate, where the authorities saw self-immolations in the winter of 2013 as instances individual madness, for the protesters they are the spectacle of the perishing of the numerous martyrs of the Transition. Where experts see Bulgaria's transition as a case of "late but successful democratizer", the protest saw "economic genocide". In that sense, the waves of self-immolations politicized death and in doing so, they disturbed the necrological limits of modern biopower: "If biopower "make[s] live and let[s] die", sovereign power "take[s] life and let[s] live" (Foucault 2008.: 241).

According to Foucault, the emergence of biopolitics and its primary concern with life privatized death (ibid.: 247). Public ritualizations of death subsided since the 18th century, turning death into "the most private and shameful thing of all" (ibid.) The winter protests, and especially the public self-immolations, took death out of the domain of the private and politicized it, forcing "Power" to watch its grisly spectacle. Neoliberal austerity measures produce a sense of abandonment which make possible the weaponization of one's death as a way of addressing this abandonment. Neoliberalism turns the "losers of the Transition" into living dead (Mbembe 2003), and some of them respond to that by transiting to a state that corresponds to their notion: that of dead dead.

In doing so, the protesters depicted a society that is nominally at peace as actually at war. While the protest rhetoric against foreign-owned electricity companies might seem similar to conspiracy theories and it has been interpreted like that (e.g. Stoyanova 2018), I think such a conclusion is unjustified because while conspiracy theories construct a knowledge of a hidden elite that tries to disturb an allegedly peaceful and harmonious society, the protest understood society as at war with itself and waged one against the legitimate spokesperson and representatives of this society.

Conclusion

The chapter's focus implies that there might be multiple discourses of civil society in Bulgaria. Actually not. There is one discourse on civil society which is ridden with a panoply of "civil society" representations, each at war with the other. The winter protest "pirated" the official discourse from its official spokespersons – the talking classes (including policy elites). Semantic struggle can occur insofar as the warring parties share a fundamental common ground: "[t]he tactical reversibility of the discourse is [..] directly proportional to the homogeneity of the field in which it is formed" (Foucault 2008: 208).

When this appropriation befell the idea of "civil society" the ensuing production of counter-knowledge about the Transition kept a liberal form. However, the protests relied on an understanding of "civil society" which rendered it coterminous with "the people":

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a Volksgesellschaft which broke with liberal articulations of the concept by filling it with national-popular tropes. From a terrain for expressing diverse social interests, "civil society" now meant the *single* interest of a unified *demos* nixing political and economic mediation. They thus exploded the tension between liberal constitutionalism and popular sovereignty, inherent in liberal democracy since its inception. The protesters spoke the language of the transition but directed it against it.

"The people" is not a number but a representation, a subject position which formulates a political syllogism that begins with the assumption of equality and challenges the administrative apparatus with its hierarchical distribution of functions.16 The democratic syllogisms of "the people" entrap the authorities by holding them accountable to their own standards. This is what literal interpretations of *narod*, such as Ivaylo Dinev's, omit when they assert that "there has never been, and there will never be, a common protest of the people" because there is not one people but particularistic interest groups. If, however, we take *narod* as a representation that obeys the "rule of the tactical polyvalence of discourses" which can be mobilized by any group or individual to put forward a universal claim, then the *narod* emerges retroactively in the very speech acts of polemical

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16   See also (Ranciere 2001), Thesis 5: "The 'people' that is the subject of democracy - and thus the principal subject of politics - is not the collection of members in a community, or the laboring classes of the population. It is the supplementary part, in relation to any counting of parts of the population that makes it possible to identify 'the part of those who have no-part' with the whole of the community."

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representations themselves and is irreducible to empirical particularistic groups. In short, the representation creates its represented, not vice versa.

And importantly, this was a protest against political representation. Pierre Bourdieu ends his essay on political delegation with a curious observation: "[T]he final political revolution, the revolution against the political clericature17 and against the usurpation which is always potentially present in delegation, is yet to be carried out (1991: 219)". Inasmuch as liberal anti-populists identify the rejection of political representation as one of the surest signs of populism, Bourdieu's statement, which also sounds like an injunction or at least an invitation to rebel, thus makes him a populist or sorts, despite his conscious objections against "radical chic" academic populism which treats popular cultural productions on par with "legitimate" ones (Bourdieu 1990: 387).

The winter protest was an instance of such a revolution against delegation and against the (neoliberal) consensus, yet one which deployed signifiers from the vocabulary of the consensus. The next protest wave of 2013 which erupted in summer attempted to take back the liberal signifiers appropriated by the winter protest. To this attempt I turn next.

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17 Bourdieu traces the origins of delegation as theory and practice in the Church.

Chapter Three

Bürgerliche Gemeinschaft: The Civil Moral Community

The democratic community doubtlessly exists but it is a minority within Bulgarian society. The dominant type of political culture in Bulgaria is the political culture of the peon/subject, not of the citizen. In this respect we are indeed a minority. But at the same time, real reforms are always pushed by minorities, [against] recalcitrant majorities.

Political scientist Antonii Galabov for Capital *Weekly*, 4th October 2017

Introduction

One of the pernicious effects of the neoliberal turn is the evacuation of traditional class politics, dealignment of class voting and party representation and a general watering down of class consciousness, especially of the dominated classes. The declining rates of union representation correspondingly lead to a decline in working-class identity and its dissolution into a "vast middle class" which the sociologists Boltanski and Chiapello (2007) consider a non-identity, a "negation of class consciousness, since there is no opposition to another class". In short, the "middle class" is a way of not speaking about class, a way to depoliticize social classes and, what amounts as the same thing, to blunt class antagonisms. This is not just a western phenomenon but occurred also in the East in the wake of 1989. For example, in Bulgaria the discourse of the middle class in the early 1990s carried with it the promise of deliverance from class, with social class and the ideology of class struggle being the omnipresent feature of the official state socialist

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discourse. The 1990s discourse of the middle class also whiffed of an unrealized promise of equality and western-style prosperity for everyone, a utopia wherein socialist proletarians could finally be private citizens, minding their business, unbothered by the constant politicizing impulses of the "totalitarian" state.

If in those early temporal and geographical contexts, "middle class" expressed a tendency towards "depoliticization", in 2013 Bulgaria, the middle class became *repoliticized*. It became a rallying cry. This chapter zeroes in on the summer protest's deployment of the idea of civil society, middle class and then gives an historical background of the creation of the class. Like in the previous chapter, I treat "civil society" as a contested terrain of competing discourses. Here I show how protesters refocus it – contra Hegel's understanding of civil society as a "system of needs" – into the cultured domain of the *greatest distance* from material necessity and need. According to the protesters, what made the 2013 stand out in the history of protests after 1989 is that people rallied behind immaterial values such as "European values". However, this strong anti-materialist view does not insulate the protesters from the materiality of class. Rather, one of the main points of these protest discourses was that the protests portend the emergence of the "middle class".

As previously argued, the winter protests hijacked the discourse of civil society and directed it "against the [liberal] consensus" (Krastev 2013). The summer protests "re-appropriated the appropriation" but unlike the winter protest's *Volksgesellschaft*, their

civil society was an elitist and minoritarian one. I call it *Bürgerliche Gemeinschaft*: bourgeois community to render the intimate, almost face-to-face nature of the movement, as described by its participants. Unlike in winter, when the liberal media scoffed the utopian, populist or unrealistic demands of the protest, the summer protests were often heralded and celebrated as civil society bursting onto the scene to complete the unfinished Europeanization project of 1989.

First, I show how the "bourgeois community" was defined in opposition to the February protests. Next, I show how the discourse of "the middle class" informed the summer protest's idea of "civil society" resulting in a very narrow understanding thereof. The difference between the two civil societies can be summarized like this: whereas the winter protest tied the notion of "civil society" to the universalistic category of "the people (*narod*)", thus expanding it, the summer protesters indexed their civil society to the middle class understood as a community of citizens, endowed with reason, knowledge, culture, taste, and civility. It was emphasized that these features are unevenly distributed across society which made the summer protest's civil society much more exclusive. If the winter protest subsumed civil society to the mass citizen, carrier of popular sovereignty, the summer protest subsumed the citizen under narrow, bourgeois understanding of civil society.

Crucial here is the context wherein these discourses occurred. This means a close attention to the public sphere from where I derive most of the evidence. As I stated in the first

chapter, the public sphere modulates the transition between a class-in-itself and a class-for-itself. This is not about "class" in general but as an emic category, which is not very common in the bourgeois public sphere outside of labor union and other leftist discourses. Media talk of middle class in Western contexts also occurs, though it is a pseudo-sociological category expressing the decline of class identifications. As Boltaski and Chiapello argue, class identifications have increasingly hollowed out since the 1970s. The declining rates of union representation correspondintly led to a decline in working-class identity and its dissolution into a "vast middle class" which they consider a non-identity, a "negation of class consciousness, since there is no opposition to another class" (Boltanski and Chiapello 2007: 300, 348). In contrast, "middle class" became precisely a rallying cry in Bulgaria's "long 2013".

I analyze the discourses against the backdrop of the efforts of liberal experts to create a "social base" for the liberal reform consensus, that began to falter after the ex-czar upended the country's political life and destroyed the first anti-communist opposition in 2001.

Civil Society Against the Mafia

The winter protests of 2013 toppled GERB's center-right government and a care-taker cabinet organized new elections. GERB won but could not form a majority so the Bulgarian Socialist Party (BSP), together with the liberal DPS (representing the country's Turkish and Roma minorities), formed a coalition, with the leader of the far-right Ataka

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propping voting in the legislature when needed. Shortly after assuming office the prime minister appointed the infamous media entrepreneur Delyan Peevski head of the national security agency (DANS), triggering mass protests.

The protests generated an immense outburst of creativity. For example, an entrepreneur started serving his fellow-protesters free coffee in the morning, collected back the paper cups and built a space ship model urging the BSP to get lost in outer space. A month into the protests, when the French and German ambassadors issued statements of support (they did not endorse the winter protests), the protesters expressed their gratitude by building a symbolic Berlin wall from carton boxes in front of the German embassy and hammered it down. This act symbolized Bulgaria's return to Europe, they explained. At some point a white piano was installed in front of the Parliament, while on at least one occasion a ballerina led the rally. Numerous picture galleries with portraits of protesters circulated in social as well as mainstream media. Witty protest banners received symbolic commendation across sympathetic media. I will further explore the significance of the individualized, creative banner in Chapter five.

In addition to the artistic output, the protests concentrated a lot of intellectual energy. Unlike the winter protests who did not have many renowned and respected intellectuals speak for them, the summer protests immediately attracted scores of journalists, NGO experts, university lecturers, lawyers, entrepreneurs, project managers, and so on, who generated a feverish public discussion. Just nine days into the protest, they authored a

declaration entitled "Charter 2013: Restoring Democracy and the Rule of Law" which was an early programmatic document defining the long-term objectives of the movement. The Charter construes a symbolic pedigree of the protest to the early 1990s democratic outbursts (and to the Czech Charter 77) and declares the struggle against corruption and "the plutocracy" the most important task at hand. Among the problems it identifies are 'the broken social contract", "the lack of legal guarantees for large property holdings", "suffocation of independent entrepreneurship", "the nurturing of a culture of dependency on the state institutions", the inordinate influence over the state of "secret societies". The Charter suggests grassroots citizen action and application of pressure against "the plutocratic networks with the tools of the liberal democratic public sphere and the law" (Dnevnik 2013a). It promised the establishment of an "expert committee" which is to assess the state of Bulgarian democracy and devise concrete steps for dismantling the plutocratic regime.

It would not be an exaggeration to say the document betrays an explicit liberal and pro-business (even big property) orientation. Lawyers and journalists predominate among the signatories (23 and 22 persons respectively). The image we get is of independent members of the professions rising against the corruption-oozing mafia-state. The rest of this section details how the summer protest activist-intellectuals conceive of their enemy in the face of the government. The discourses below consider this enmity in very radical terms, almost as species difference. The axis upon which the enmity pivots is culture and cultural capital, rather than material-economic differences.

In a newspaper interview, entitled "the New Middle-Class Rebellion", the renowned Bulgarian theater director-cum-protester Yavor Gardev endorses, and defines the 2013 summer protest as an expression of "civil society" understood as a community of "self-respecting free citizens." Democracy, he says, rests on the free expression of the will of the free citizen. This is profoundly a non-economic and non-materialist mode of being: "There is a category of citizens who insist on their free will. That is to say, they do not sell their vote." This is an allusion to the question of election rigging and the market in votes, in which Roma voters are the prime suspects. Gardev's interlocutor accepts the premises of the statement and provides a counter-example from the protests: a famous banner of the summer protest stating "I am not paid. I hate you for free." Gardev agrees with the contrast and adds:

> Today the most productive and innovating social stratum is not represented in Parliament. It does not recognize itself mentally and culturally in the MPs. [..] I would call these protesters in Sofia an emerging middle class. They hold their destiny in their own hands because they possess the necessary intellectual capabilities to make a living. Maybe it sounds rude and undemocratic, but this stratum looks at the people in parliament as if they were apes, [..] wild animals [..] It is not politically correct because we are all people, but I hear this in the vocabulary of the protesters. This is about a species difference *à la* Darwin. [..] It is as though the protesting stratum lives in a foreign country. It is reduced to the position of right-less pariahs, while these are precisely the free people: they have ideas, they are productive [and] are moving forward the economy and our social life (Petkova 2013).

Framing the enemy in strong civilizational and evolutionary terms, Gardev calls the

political elite "another anthropological type" which he admits to detesting. This "type" differs from the protesters in that it is "not intelligent enough" (ibid.)

Echoing this, the renowned and widely translated Bulgarian novelist Georgi Gospodinov, whose very first article about the summer protests called the protesters "beautiful" and this descriptor stuck both with their proponents and detractors, ventures his explanation about the roots of the crisis rattling Bulgarian society, to which the protests are a response:

> Underneath the financial crisis lies another crisis, personal, global, and more difficult to see as it cannot be exhausted with bank failures. [..] It's a crisis of morality, cultural crisis and a crisis of the meaning to live here. [..] I have a civilizational problem" [with the behavior of politicians]. (Atanasova 2014)

When asked what can be done about this crisis, Gospodinov states that the solution is to

> inculcate taste through reading. For me, to be a person of taste is also a political problem. The big problem of our politicians is not ideological [..]. The big problem is with the mentality and [lack of] taste (ibid.).

Thus defined, the problem requires intervention right into subjectivity (in addition to pervasive calls for lustration). The crisis cannot be tackled by redistribution, financial regulation of any similar economic policies because it runs deeper than economics: it is a non-material crisis of taste. The deficiencies in the oligarchic elites (and their constituencies) are thought to be remedied only by the "Cultural revolution" the summer

protest portents (Daynov 2013). Much like Pierre (Bourdieu 2011) observed with regards to the 19th century French literary field, cultural production is "the reverse economic world" where the production of pure values, morality, culture and disinterestedness (in the material) occurs. The novelty here is the application of these positions, derived from cultural production, to the field of politics.

In line with the above examples, Evgenii Daynov, a public intellectual, political scientist, founder of the think tank Center for Social Practices and an early civil society activist, known as "the blue Shaman" because of hippie style, defined the summer protests as a "Cultural revolution": "[the then PM] and his clique triggered a Cultural revolution, at the end of which Bulgarians will stop being peons, moochers and servants" (Daynov 2013a) (presuming this is what they used to be before the 2013 Revolution). In other words, what democracy lacks is democratic subjectivities, i.e. citizens, but the protest will finally produce them. The citizens must replace the docile and dependent "populace" who prevents the completion of the Transition. Further, the Cultural revolution, according to Daynov, transforms Communism into an aesthetic problem:

> If your problem [with Communism] runs as deep as aesthetics, it means that you are from another culture. Because they reached such a depth in their rejection [of communism], the Poles became the most successful ex-Communist nation. [In contrast], no matter how many times Bulgaria declares its "Euro-Atlantic civilizational choice"18, it won't "fix itself" unless the culture of helplessness (of the population) and that of cynicism (of the ruling elite) is replaced by the contemporary culture of the citizen.

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18 "Civilizational choice" is a popular expression coined by the President Petar Stoyanov (1997-2002) from the UDF, who described the protests in 1997 in such terms.

(2013)

In other words, mere evolutionary change or institutional reforms cannot make the culture of the citizen the dominant one. No less than a Cultural revolution is needed to achieve that.[19]

To sum up, according to these voices, the (post)Communist crisis we must tackle is not material (utility bills, poverty, inequality, etc.) but cultural, civilizational, moral and aesthetic. These discourses put the whole operation of the production of political distinctions and subjectivities firmly on cultural and aesthetic grounds. This betrays the intellectuals' understanding of the level of democratic development of the country. According to them, the fact that Bulgaria is a liberal democracy and an EU-member state is merely a veneer that covers its opposite. Namely, Bulgaria is only formally a democracy, as its liberal institutions are lacking in substance. This substance is taste, "citizen culture", love for reading books, beauty, rigor, and as such it is immaterial, spiritual, and sadly lacking in the majority of the population seduced by the "welfare populism" of the oligarchs.

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19 Lavergne (2010) quotes Daynov arguing that in the new "Aquarius era" only 'the fittest' and most adaptable segments of the population will survive, echoing classic platitudes of social Darwinist thinking, with a pronounced occultist-esoteric layer.

Who are the two sides in Daynov's "cultural barricade"?

> On the one side is the government (and its [..] cliques) which stand for the Asiatic-serfdom culture, characteristic of the space between Brest-Litovsk and Shanghai. On the other side there are the protesters, united by their attachment to the European civic culture (2013).

On this understanding, "civic culture" (racially localized in "Europe" as opposed to "despotic Asia") is supposed to rectify the deficiencies by the allegedly skewed institutionalization of liberal democracy, yet it is also more foundational than the political institution-building.[20] Culture emerges as primary to politics, it is the transcendental ground on which politics itself can function, giving the popular "beyond Left and Right" idea a culturalist spin:

> the more enlightened part of society [knows] that not all divisions can be submerged in the typical Left-Right divide; there are more fundamental differences which transcend it. Namely, the differences between the civilized and the barbarians. Only civilized people can split into left- and right-wingers, whereas the barbarians should not be let into the debate because they will simply beat up and rob the arguing parties (ibid.)

As this section gives a concise enough picture of the moral-civilizational-aesthetic

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20 In that sense, these discourses parallel scholarly preoccupation with the so-called "consolidation of democracy" popular in Transitological and political science literature. "Consolidation" here expresses the idea that while formal institutions have been "planted" in the ex-Communist states, they have to grow deeper "roots" into the consciousness and culture of the wider population in order to function properly.

problem with the ruling elite, let us now move to intellectual ruminations *a propos* the winter protests of the same year. They were crucial for the stabilization of the identity of the summer protest but were also a crystallization of the discursive formation of the cultural frames of the "middle class" in the preceding decades. In other words, the difference between winter and summer is not a seasonal phenomenon of limited to 2013 but the product of a distinction that was constructed over a period of time. I look at this in detail in later in the chapter.

"June is not February"

Despite some formal similarities in the discourses of the two protest waves (anti-corruption, civil society, anti-monopolies, civic empowerment, etc.), the June or summer protesters quickly turned to a politics of distinction *vis-a-vis* the winter of 2013 and established a strong opposition between the two protests. This section focuses on axes around which the distinction pivoted. In the pages to follow I will reconstruct the debates against the backdrop of the question what civil society is and who counts as part thereof.

I begin with two immediate reactions to the protests that appeared within days after the marches started. Their importance lies in articulating one of the most enduring lines of distinction between the two protests: distance and proximity to material necessity. Protesters emphatically explained that the summer protest, unlike the winter one, is not for everyday material trivialities such as bills and food, but for morality and European values. Written just two days after the beginning of the summer protest, Bozhidar

Bozhanov an IT expert, published an article titled "The middle class has found itself", arguing that this is a protest of civil society, very different from the winter ones. He elaborates:

> Normally I don't go to protests. [..] I didn't approve of the winter protests. But [the summer] protest is an altogether different thing. It comprises the *active* part of the population, the young people who work and pay taxes. [..] People with good standard of living and people with [political] position. I can summarize the social distinctions between the two protests [like this]: in February marched people who cannot pay their bills. Now are marching those who 'pay the bill' of the country. The *middle class* found itself and reminded itself that it exists. Journalistic claims that this protest is about bills and food are untenable: the middle class has [a different] agenda (Bozhanov 2013, my emphasis).

Only three days after the protests broke out, Diana Popova, an art critic, curator, university lecturer and journalist wrote an article entitled "The rebellion of the masses versus the rebellion of Reason":

> Not only were there more people in the past few days, there were people of better *quality*. I walked past men in corporate suits, groomed women and mothers with children, all looking appropriate, normal and peaceful. I didn't see those dirty, shaggy, unable to form a sentence consisting of noun and verb primates who were objectifying their Neanderthal essence through cursing, beer-drinking and creation of chaos. I didn't see flying bottles, stones and toilet paper rolls. To the contrary, [these protesters collect their garbage].
>
> Most of the conversations I overheard contained clearly articulated discontent, expressed through correct grammar and morphological constructions. There were no inarticulate remarks [as in winter]. I didn't see a single person who wouldn't know why he or she is on the street.
>
> The June protester is educated, intelligent and knows what bothers him, unlike the February protester whose demands abounded in outrageously [*bezobrazni*] utopian slogans demanding immediate resolution of his quotidian [*bitovi*] problems.

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> Indeed, the drive of the [February] masses was purely quotidian [*bitov*]. Today it is on a more elevated level. We have become mature enough to possess spiritual needs and the consciousness to articulate them (Popova 2013, my emphasis).

As the world-renowned Bulgarian opera singer Alexandrina Pendatchanska (Pendatchanska 2013) put it, the summer protest is a "real citizens' protest, which cannot be reduced to utility bills" like February 2013. We can discern two radically different protester subjectivities from these ruminations. On the one hand, the real citizen is a hard-working, ascetic, self-help anti-communist who roots for "European values" instead of material needs. In contrast, the February protester is a crude, uneducated, materialist mass-person who only cares about their quotidian needs such as food prices and utility bills. The June protester is a person of quality, a spiritual idealist who puts aside his or her own narrow material interest and marches for values and morality instead of utopian absurdities. It is as though s/he has come out straight from the pages of *The Silent Revolution* (1977) in which Ronald Inglehart depicts the new post-materialist subjectivities motivated not by material needs but by the values of autonomy and self-expression. This dichotomy automatically delegitimizes social discontent with worsening work conditions, wages, public services and suchlike.

This distinction assumed a tangible aesthetic expression. Prof. Tsocho Boyazhiev, a philosopher, photographer and a member of the informal student groups in the late 1980s, was both an active participant in the summer protest and sought to document and preserve

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the protest through his photography in which portraits singling out individual faces in the

protest predominate. This is how he formulated the differences between the two protests:

> [The summer] is a protest of individuals, of discernible people. Zooming in on individual faces is the only way to render the spirit of the protests adequately. [..] I did not want to take photos of the winter protest. The two protests are very different. In February there were people with hidden faces, with hoodies, not because it was cold, but because their [social] profile was different. Their spokespeople were well-known left-wing activists who marched the streets yet were unable to say anything [of substance], no clear demands. The rejection of political parties is absurd. It is idiotic. It reminds me of the return of the ex-czar who came back as the [anti-partisan] csar but forgot to add that we must be his subjects. We were subjects [during Communism] until we decided to become citizens. And now the winter protests wanted us to become subjects again. This is why I did not have an interest in photographing their faces. These disfigured [*razkriveni*] faces! (Boyadzhiev 2013)

In contrast, the faces of the summer protest "express a particular spirituality, a strange

spiritual implacability" (ibid). The post-material spirit oozes from their otherwise material

faces. Similarly, in the words of the theater director Gardev, while the February protest is

about all things quotidian [*bitovi]*, the June protest represents a "qualitative leap" in

Bulgarian history:

> It turned out that Bulgarians don't come out to protest only when push comes to shove in *bitov* plan. This is a qualitative leap in Bulgarian history. At the beginning of the 90s one could see a similar ideological upsurge [..] Bulgaria was full of people who dreamed of meaningful and free life. A life with dignity. These things are different from the utility bills (Gardev 2013).

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Meanwhile, paraphrasing prime minister Boyko Borissov's notorious 2009 statement that the nation is composed of "bad material", uttered before a congregation of the Bulgarian diaspora in Chicago, the crime journalist Kiril Borisov thus defined the whole opposition:

> The good material is not on the street because it is hungry. [..] [The protesters] are professionals, have jobs, income, education, and can have a career abroad. These people do not care that [the government] is raising the child benefit payments [..]. (Borisov 2013)

This line of argumentation was also taken up by people on the Left who opposed the summer protests precisely for the same reasons their supporters endorsed them. For example, the famous commentator and journalist Velislava Dareva published an article in the BSP's daily newspaper, entitled "The Rebellion of the Sated". In this article Dareva follows up on the picture of the radical antithesis between February and June already established by the protesters:

> They are young, smart, beautiful, educated, intelligent, inspired, charming, smiling, nice, cultured, artistic, amiable. And satiated. The others, some pathetic 7, 272,041 people are stupid, dull, deflated, depressed, uneducated, uncultured, crooked, ragged, repelling, limited, misguided, uncivilized, and dark (Dareva 2013).

I have attended countless marches in summer of 2013 and have seen pensioners and poor people attend these protests. Nevertheless, such totalizing juxtapositions in the media have a strong performative efficiency carrying a compelling aesthetic dimension, facilitated by the instrumental interventions of several key literary and intellectual figures. For example,

Georgi Gospodinov also joined the protests, and just four days after the eruption of popular discontent, stated that "the protesting person is beautiful" (2013). Since this is almost a programmatic article for the protests, I will quote generously from it:

> A while ago I wrote that the person who reads is beautiful. This is because he [*sic*] executes an invisible work over taste and it is more difficult to become a villain if you have taste. For this reason, the protesting person is also beautiful. [..] The well-read protesting person can be easily recognized, and he makes the protest lighter and meaningful. Literally and metaphorically, this is a protest of [our] children. The children and the grandchildren of those who came out in February over the utility bills. But June is not February. The children of June want much more. And it is not about money and bills (Gospodinov 2013).

To his credit, Gospodinov's "the protest of the beautiful" quip has a strong a performative dimension. He argued that it is not that the beautiful people are protesting, but conversely, protesting makes one *eo ipso* beautiful. Despite the qualifications, Gospodinov-inflected characterizations of the protests as "the protests of the beautiful" predominated, taken up with delight both by supporters and by detractors of the protest. For example, here is how a Zornitsa Markova, who works in the PR agency of one of the protest leaders, converted the performative dimension of Gospodinov's beautification thesis into a fixed essence: "I wish all the speculations about whether we are Right-wing or not stopped. [Interestingly, she does not say Left-wing, as the opposite of Right-wing!] This protest is a protest of normality, of the beautiful and the truly intelligent people" (Bakalov 2014a).

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In addition to the aesthetic and taste dimension we see the division of the protests in terms of generations: pensioners vs. the young. Gospodinov also asserts that those on the street are people of means:

> Those on the street every evening have a job. They pay their electricity and heating bills. They are all sorts of people: parents, professors, journalists, writers, bikers, theater directors, engineers, students, readers (Gospodinov 2013).

But not workers. They are the answer to a crisis much graver than any economic and financial crisis:

> the financial crisis, which the experts deal with, is only the iceberg of a much deeper and invisible crisis, and much more personal. It is a crisis of meaning and a deficit of future. Numbers don't solve all problems. [..] Expertise comes after morality. Economics is after ethics. Because the expert without morality is only a useful tool in the hands of those who can buy him, of every oligarchy (ibid.)

On this view, if the February protest was a response to a mere economic crisis, the June protest comes to rectify an elusive crisis because it is invisible, intangible and immaterial: just like the demands for morality of the protesters (in contrast to the vulgar materialistic demands of February). Somewhat paradoxically, however, intellectuals are only capable of discerning the differences between "June" and "February" "materialistically". As the above-quoted Boyazhiev said, the February people could be recognized through their "twisted" or "distorted" faces.

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As stated, one of the ways the summer protesters differentiated between the two protest waves of 2013 ran along a "spiritual" vs. "material" axis. While the winter protest did not posit as mutually exclusive the idea of civil society and material needs; rather, they nested the former in the context of the latter (inasmuch as the immediate cause for the protests were the high utility bills), the summer protest brought "civil society" firmly into the orbit of "moral" post-materialist concerns such as decommunization and Europeanization. Some explicitly tied the exercise of sound moral judgment to particular class ethos and position: that of the middle class. For example, an informant of mine argued that only the middle class can save the country from corruption because it is immunized from it whereas the rich and the poor are tempted to bribe and take bribes (and welfare), respectively. In contrast, the middle class is affluent enough to pursue a moral life, and it can afford being decent and law-abiding citizens, as opposed to engaging in "free-riding" or petty bribery.

The understanding that the summer protest is moral and lofty is not autonomous from recognition of a particular material reality, namely that of class. The winter protest did not speak of their own social class, except in an oblique way of "we are poor". By contrast, the summer protest produced many an instance of a self-conscious articulation of class interests (framed in the language of disinterestedness!), or what amounts to the same thing, of class consciousness. I already hinted to this phenomenon in the section above, for example, by quoting from the "The middle class has found itself" article which informed

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us that this is a protest that can "pay its bills". Yet a closer look at the participants reveals a more complicated picture.

The Middle Class: The Heterogeneity of a Class Subject

This is the time to illustrate the problematique of the first chapter of this dissertation. Namely, the fact that diverse and contradictory groups and people (in terms of economic positions), recognize themselves in a common subject – that of the creative class, the middle class, civil society, etc.

Rossen is a middle-aged unemployed secondary teacher who is very devoted to the summer protests. Shortly after we began our conversation, he got a phone call that left him visibly distressed. I asked if there is something he needs to take care of, so we can reschedule the interview. He replied I shouldn't worry and added that he's just been told that his job application is rejected. It turned out this was yet another unsuccessful job application. He was very bitter and kept repeating they won't find a better teacher than him. Then he asked me to buy him a beer because he was short of cash. I got us beer and we resumed talking. He likes to joke about himself that he is a "right-wing hippie" and revels in re-enacting the perplexed glances Westerners cast at him when they hear about the paradoxical position of the "right-wing hippie". The hippie counter-culture in Bulgaria appeared in the 1970s, shortly after its Western counterpart, and Rossen has been a member ever since. To this day, tales circulate about how the school and police authorities tried to suppress long hair, jeans and other external signs that betrayed belonging to the

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movement. The Bulgarian hippie movement created its own ritual – "July morning", invented in 1989 – named after the eponymous song of Uriah Heep, that involves spending the night on the beach and waking for the sunrise on July 1st (R. Levy and Gelinski 2013: 35). Just like in the West, the sexual revolution of the 1960s and 1970s was the radical negation of the uptight and patriarchal official morality propagated by the regime. Yet despite starting from shared presuppositions – about the desirability of free sexuality, anti-war, the similar taste in music – Pink Floyd, Led Zeppelin, and so on, by virtue of its opposition to the patriarchal morality of the Socialist regime the Bulgarian hippie movement became right-wing, unlike its Western counter-part which is a current of the Left. Rossen still wears the paraphernalia of the 1970s counter-culture: long hair, beads, and likes Rock music.

Rossen did a PhD in Social Anthropology and is well versed in classical literature and the arts. He writes articles for academic journals. In addition to his academic output, he writes poetry and volunteers time to the running and upkeep of a small cultural center which fellow protesters and he created. There he organizes poetry evenings and other cultural events. Eventually he started a blue-collar job in a foreign-owned retailer in Sofia.

Asen Genov is a civil society activist with impressive record. He was active in the anti-ACTA protests in the beginning of the 2000s. After the big protests against the BSP-led government in 2009 were crushed by police violence, he and Konstantin Pavlov, a close friend of his, founded a foundation for civil society promotion. As latecomers to this

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market, their foundation did not last long but the two friends remained very active, especially in matter related to internet regulations, digital rights and online entrepreneurship. He triggered the summer protests by creating the Facebook event of the first protest on 14th June 2013. Pavlov completed a doctoral degree in sociology and has several successful online businesses behind his back. Genov finished professional high school (the Bulgarian public-school system is split into prestigious gymnasiums and less prestigious professional schools), specializing in pottery. His modest education has not deterred him, and he is a voracious reader and writes prolifically on Cold War history and politics. During a focus group on the protests I attended, he defined them as "the protests of the bourgeoisie". Yet he is routinely the victim of bourgeois contempt and is acutely aware of class domination. His lack of education titles makes him the target of insults of accomplished intellectuals, including from the Left, he explained in our interview.

Ivo Prokopiev is one of the richest media entrepreneurs in Bulgaria. I did not interview him, but he endorsed the summer protests on many occasions in the mass-media. He co-founded and owns the two main liberal newspapers in Bulgaria: *Dnevnik* [meaning "diary"] and, tellingly, *Capital* (a business weekly). Prokopiev owns a variety of industrial factories and financial businesses, too. He was the chairman of the Confederation of Employers and Industrialists in Bulgaria, the association of Big Capital in Bulgaria, as well as a chairman of the Union of Publishers. He sat on various advisory boards, from the President's to the UniCredit banking group. He and his newspapers were ardent supporters of the summer protests of 2013. (These papers are among the most important

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sources for this dissertation). They were much less enthusiastic about the winter protests of the same year, summoned against the electricity price hikes. The papers enjoy a reputation of being among the few outlets for serious investigative and analytic journalism in the country. Because the summer protests were directed against another media owner – Delyan Peevski – Peevski's media started referring to Prokopiev's papers as "the Capital circle", counting member even the President of Bulgaria at the time, who also supported the summer protests.

What is the social alchemy making it possible for a blue-collar anthropologist and unemployed teacher, a potter-autodidact historian to march side by side to entrepreneurs?

It would be a mistake to brush off their participation in the movement as a form of "false consciousness". One way of understanding it would be by showing how both protesters are relatively rich in cultural capital and occupied a similar professional milieu and networks (before becoming an entrepreneur, Prokopiev was a journalist). Also, both men display similar distaste for the drab and stagnant life of Socialism. Veronika Stoyanova provides a plausible interpretation by locating a utopian impulse in a "middle class" aspiration, expected to realize in the future (2018). In addition to these "positive" moments (possession of cultural capital), shared historical experience, and even a utopian expectation that makes Rossen, who knows full well that he is poor today, to expect an elevation into the deserved middle-class status, a polemical negativity lubricates their

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alliance. Namely, the shared antagonism to the twin enemy of the post-communist oligarchic elite and the "gullible" voters supporting them.

Also, self-understanding as *productive*, as opposed to the "thieving" mafia and the masses, imagined to be subsiding on welfare. Because of the stress on productivity, the summer protests of 2013 came to be known, to their enemies but also to some of the participants, as the protests of the "creative class". Even the word "bourgeoisie" was used (by participants and detractors alike).

In short, most importantly, acts of "class naming", coupled with the negative charge of anti-communism, mask the heterogeneity of class positions (and demands) within the protest, and articulate a single class interest and identity.

"Bourgeois" and "creative class" were not necessarily unwarranted labels, because there were actions on part of the protest which could legitimate them. For example, the owners of "betahaus", one of the first co-working establishments in Sofia, donated tables, electricity and wireless internet on the 27th day of the protest, so that "citizens [with laptops] can make use of them while they simultaneously work and protest" (offnews 2013). Betahaus's announcement read that

> In order to express our civil position without harming our professional duties, on July 10th at 9am in front of Parliament, you will find everything you need for a wholesome working-day (except a photocopy machine).

Everyone is welcome to exercise civic control during work, so long they bring a laptop (Dnevnik 2013c).

It was also announced that a place for charging of mobile devices will be designated.

FIGURE 6 FREELANCERS TAKING ADVANTAGE OF THE FREE WORK DESKS PROVIDED BY THE BETAHAUS CO-WORKING SPACE. IMAGE SOURCE: OFFNEWS.

Meanwhile the prominent activist Asen Genov (who created the initial Facebook event for the protest) enticed people with "liberal professions" who reside outside of Sofia to

come to Sofia on 10th July with their "personal car", to visit a museum and join the protest in the evening (Genov 2013b).

We have all the ingredients here to conclude that this is indeed a creative class protest of people with "liberal professions". The enthusiastic support to the protest by "creative class" establishments like "betahaus" which cater to freelancers and creative workers, the tables with Wi-Fi and power cords so that the freelancers can work while fulfilling their civic duty; the offer to combine a cultural visit to Sofia with the civic duty – is this not a radical departure from standard working-class contention repertoire, the quintessential element of which is the strike, that is, to exercise pressure on the government and the bosses precisely by disrupting work, and by refusing to work? Yet, the novel approach of these Betahaus protesters does make sense when your own boss.

The summer protest of 2013 was depicted as a part of the so-called global "middle class revolutions". This is how influential liberal intellectuals like Francis Fukuyama interpret the global outbursts of protests since the Arab Spring in 2011 (Fukuyama 2013). Left-wing Guardian columnist Paul Mason takes stock with such characterizations, highlighting, for example the crucial role Cairo's poorest, trash-collecting residents played in sparkling the Tahrir rebellion (Mason 2012). In a similar vein, Richard Seymour, another prolific left-wing author, disputes the application of "middle class" or "petty bourgeoisie" to these protests, arguing that

> While workers have not led these global movements politically, they have added critical momentum and muscle – in Egypt, in Turkey, and in Brazil. Even in Bulgaria's complex uprising against austerity, privatisation and corruption, the threat of labour action makes a difference (Seymour 2013)

Closer to home, the 2016-7 anti-corruption protests in Romania were also interpreted as an instance of "middle class" politics (Deoancă 2017). There are strong overlaps with the Bulgarian summer of 2013: anti-corruption, virtuous, active citizens. However, my approach differs in that, while Deoancă extracts the ideological content from the objective class positions, I arrive at the class from the ideological contents percolating in the public sphere. In other words, my analysis parts with vulgar and objectivist class analytic and starts from different considerations: not from objectivist discernment (which is always-already appointment) of class "substance" through explicit class analysis on part of the analyst, but from the protesters' perception of the social base of their movement articulated in the public sphere. The public sphere mediates the modulation between "class-in-itself" and "class-for-itself."

A critical and Marxist perspective would be superfluous should one decide to tease out the class layer in the Bulgarian summer protest. There is no class substance waiting for demasking behind the noble and abstract pronouncement of citizenship, the public sphere and their political equality. The social actors under scrutiny here are their own class theorists, and articulate class consciousness. Therefore, merely sticking to the surface of the statements is enough to arrive at the class component at this point. Let us hear some more statements.

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Notwithstanding the fact that people like Gospodinov speak about the political elite, the source of the malady is often perceived to originate in the *demos*. The summer protester's idealism was subjected to a materialist analysis from a surprising corner. Georgi Ganev, chief economic expert of the Center for liberal strategies (CLS), published the following crass class analysis. I find it important because it complicates the situation by triangulating the opposition between the February and June protesters. Referring approvingly to statements of the Bulgarian Socialist Party that the June protests are protests of the "bourgeoisie against the poor", Ganev adds that the antagonistic parties are not two but three: "The poor are not alone. [..] This is about the formation for quarter of a century [since 1989] of a coalition between the paupers and the oligarchs." (Ganev 2013). According to him, what holds the coalition together is the exchange of votes for welfare, while the summer protests signify the rise of the Bulgarian bourgeoisie against the powerful coalition of paupers and oligarchs:

> The decades-long [..] coalition between totally dependent paupers and the oligarchs has relegated Bulgarian society to the muddy swamp it inhabits today. Against this crystal-clear coalition which tries to secure the eternal reproduction of poverty, welfare handouts and stealing [..] rose up the Bulgarian bourgeoisie. Yes, the bourgeoisie. I shamelessly abandon the euphemism of "the middle class" and still more shamelessly want to rehabilitate the word "bourgeoisie" (ibid.)

I'd like to make a short caveat at this point. Based on his theorization of the relations between class locations, interests and consciousness, Wright discusses six possible

positions of class formation and struggle: from direct polarization between workers and capitalists to various forms of integration of the working-class into the middle class and the concomitant dampening down of the conflict. The sixth, the so-called "implausible class formation", is a scenario in which the workers, managers, and the capitalists form a working-class bloc against the petty bourgeoisie and the intellectuals/experts, united in a bourgeois bloc (2000: 209).

Yet, if one follows the descriptions of the fault-lines of the summer of 2013, it is exactly the "implausible scenario" which happened! (i.e. Ganev 2013 on the coalition of paupers and oligarchs against the middle-class citizens).

To go back to the case, unlike supporters of the 1990 anti-communist mobilizations who did not shy away from using words like "the masses" or "the people", Yuri Ivanov, a software engineer argued that the summer 2013 protest, even though populous, is not a "mass". Rejecting the application to Bulgaria of the slogan of the popular "Occupy" movement about the 99%, he argues that

> we are not the 99% but the 30% or 40% of hardworking and responsible citizens whom the [Communists] always try to rob. We do not protest the reasonable expenditure of state money (cynically called "austerity"), rather we understand that politicians shouldn't be vested with more powers to spend our money. We do not fight for the abolition of the free market society but for the liquidation of those metastases that make it less free and market [..] They call us the middle class but there is nothing mediocre/median in us (Y. Ivanov 2013).

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Let us be clear: I am not imparting any class "substance" to the protest, like Fukuyama, Krastev, Mason and Seymour do in their respective analyses of global protest cataclysms; I am merely repeating the summer protesters and their intellectuals' own articulation of class, their conscious objectification of their own class position. Here we have an example of the process of *naming* class (Petkov 2011) which reflexively constitutes that which it names: Ganev literally dusted off the hitherto discarded word "bourgeoisie" (discarded because it was a part of the Socialist era intellectual and political vocabulary) and applied it to the protest.

An historical excursus is due in order to understand what processes this class discourse is a crystallization of.

The Making of the Bulgarian Middle Class

As in other post-socialist countries, the transition to liberal democracy and the market posed the acute problem of creating a capitalist society in the absence of a capitalist bourgeoisie. This problem of "capitalism without capitalists" has been explored in detail in the eponymous book by Eyal et al (2000) and in (Mikhalev 2003). The gist of the argument is that the intelligentsia (the "new bildungsburgertum" or knowledge bourgeoisie) urgently applied itself to the task of building capitalism. As Gil Eyal (2000) shows, the intelligentsia, working with the technocratic managers, has been instrumental in creating a consensus for monetarism in the Czech Republic after 1989. This happened

through an elective affinity between the two distinct groups whereby the managers supplied technocratic arguments while the intellectuals engaged in an almost religious purification of the nation from its communistic sins. This expert and spiritual assemblage forged a strong social consensus for monetarism and steered the country on the paths of the neoliberal reforms.

In the Bulgarian context too, the emergence of the capitalist class structure was originally a political problem. Before the economy could work out and entrench a typical capitalist class structure, crucial political decisions had to be taken, aiming at the creation of a bourgeoisie. Two early historical processes are crucial in the development of the class structure and the creation of a class of owners (bourgeoisie): the privatization of the state enterprises, and the restitution of the nationalized property.

Firstly, the privatization of the public property and Socialist-era enterprises and the lubrication of the transfer of ownership through generous bank loans created its own class of the so-called "credit millionaires" who never paid back the credits. The credits also facilitated the first stage of the privatization of state property in which private companies lodged themselves at the "entry" and "exit" of the production process, selling expensive raw materials and buying the end-product at production costs, only to resell it at "market prices". Bank loans were instrumental for the maintenance of this classic case of "privatization of profits and socialization of losses and amortization" because they delayed the inevitable bankruptcy of the state-owned enterprises and gave the private

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firms enough time to parasite on them (Raychev and Stoychev 2004: 55-56). This system of "informal" privatization bled dry not only the "real" economy but also the newly created banking sector which collapsed in 1996 (ibid.). The ensuing hyperinflation crisis triggered the mass protests of 1997 and the change of direction towards shock therapy I described in the Introduction.

Another form of privatization was the so-called mass privatization which was designed by the BSP as a "socially just" form of redistribution of state property but concentrated wealth in the hands of a few investment funds (Raychev and Stoychev 2004: 56, (Medarov and Tsoneva 2015: 20). The anti-communist opposition assumed power on the wave of the mass protests of 1997 and started the so-called "workers-management" and direct privatization. It did not benefit workers but the senior managers, who, in most cases, were close to the ruling elite (Raychev and Stoychev 2004: 56-7).

Mafia syndicates of racketeers accompanied the process of distribution of public property and constituted the major source of the violence during this period. Originally members of Socialist-era wrestling and boxing clubs whom the roll-back of the state left unemployed and under-funded, they found gainful employment as bodyguards and "muscles" of the new bourgeoisie. Gradually they acquired a patina of legitimacy with the efforts of the state to reign in the private security sector and introduce some regulations (Djekova and Roussev 2015).

Secondly, from 1992 onwards, the so-called Compensation of Nationalized Properties Act and the Ownership and Usage of Agricultural Lands Act engineered the return of nationalized properties to their original, pre-1944 owners. The process of "restitution" of these properties can be understood as an attempt to restore the old bourgeoisie especially in a period when the creation of the new one proved so problematic and fraught with violence and criminality. The restitution meted out a lot of violence, too, but since it was framed as redressing an "historical injustice" and because it mostly affected poor and invisible urban dwellers (who lost their social housing to the new-old owners) as well as Roma people, who were mostly employed in agriculture and lost their livelihoods as a result of the liquidation of the socialist-era big agri companies (Begg and Meurs 1998), it is not perceived as violent as the privatization process. It led to the destruction of capital and the slaughtering of livestock which could not be sold (Medarov 2013). The Bulgarian Marxist sociologist Petar-Emil Mitev wittily described the process of the liquidation of the socialist agricultural production, by reversing Thomas Moore's description of the enclosures movement in England in the 18th century: "In Bulgaria [of the 1990s], men ate the sheep" (Raychev and Stoychev 2004: 51).

Marxists are fully justified to refer to restoration of capitalism in ex-socialist countries as "primitive accumulation" meaning the violent privatization of public or common property (Webber 2008; Sárközy 2008; Traykov 2018) or accumulation by dispossession (Harvey 2005). Liberals are not blind for the violence either. But whereas for Marxists violence is a normal part of every primitive accumulation, liberals write it off as an aberration

stemming from the illegitimate involvement of the ex-Communist elites. Raychev and Stoychev reject the framing of the emergence of the mafia syndicates as a "criminal aberration" because they are "the essence of the Transition" (2004: 59).

The Sociologists Andrei Raychev and Kancho Stoychev depict the transition as a process of "decapitalization" of the economy which was experienced by the general population as "mass declassing" (2004: 40). Their theory about Bulgarian class structure around the collapse of socialism is entertaining and I will dwell shortly on it. They argue that until 1989, 80% of the population was a Socialist "middle class" who enjoyed full employment, good education, social benefits, cheap transport, universal healthcare, affordable "high-brow" cultural consumption, above 90% owner-occupancy rates (this is still the case to this day), social mobility and other perks. The sociologists argue these are "status characteristics" of the Socialist "middle class". Its ethos was very egalitarian, fueling resentment towards the privileges of the nomenklatura (2004: 63). In the Transition this Socialist "middle class" imploded. Raychev and Stoychev describe the process as a dispersal of the previous complicity between class, status, consumption and income levels. They illustrate it with the proverbial professor who grows tomatoes, having been forced to retreat to the subsistence economy by the crises and the privatization of the economy. By 1999 the 80% of the Socialist "middle class" had imploded into 50% "bottom" or underclass, 35% "lower class", 15% "middle class" and 1-2% upper class. The sociologists speculate that in the next years, when the traumatic "dispersal" will have been stabilized (mostly through the education system), a new class structure will emerge which

will reclassify Bulgarians: 20% underclass, 55% lower class, 25% middle class and 1-2% upper class of owners. This process will signify the end of the Transition and the emergence of a middle class without inverted commas (2004: 79). It will also mark the change from "network" to capital/market motivation on part of the economic elites, namely the emergence of a properly "economic" and not political capitalist class, drawn from the nomenklatura, as in the beginning of the Transition.

The last prediction seems to have failed to materialize fully. Bulgaria is considered one of the most corrupted countries in Europe. The failure of the theory to explain this development stems from its severe methodological nationalism and neglect of the political economy. The sociologists gloss over crucial developments in the political economy as well as the effects of the place Bulgaria occupies in the "world system". Low-value added production for export and low domestic purchasing power result in stagnant markets, low profit margins and generate incentives for corruption.

Raychev and Stoychev argue that the Socialist regime was perceived as an epitome of inequality while the market was expected to redress those inequalities, as the informal networks did during Socialist scarcity (The idea of the market as equalizer dominated debates in early post-socialist sociology, for example the famous "theory of market transition" debate Nee 1989; Szelenyi and Kostello 1996). Bulgarians found the hard way that this belief in the market as a vehicle for equality was untenable. Similarly, it was widely believed that EU-integration will discipline the corruption only to find out that the

EU funds are actually beefing it because the funds and the public tenders through which they are distributed are widely suspected of reinforcing political and economic elite networks.

The unacceptable (from a liberal point of view) mixing of economic and political actors and practices has many faces but it showed its most grotesque one through the appointment in June of 2013 of Delyan Peevski a head of national security. Peevski's meteoric career in national politics began under the ex-czar's government when he was appointed head of the large Varna port having just graduated from law school. Eventually he acquired media companies and became a Member of Parliament from the DPS which represents the Turkish and Roma minorities. He is the epitome of the illegitimate concentration of political and economic power.

But I am getting ahead of myself. Let us attend to the formation of the middle class first. If the class of owners of the economy (the bourgeoisie) was the result of political acts of economic restructuring in the 1990s (i.e. the privatization efforts), the so-called middle class was the brain child of Bulgarian civil society.

In Bulgaria the liberal-reforms "knowledge bourgeoisie" and the main representatives of civil society after 1997 was the network of NGOs and policy institutes (think tanks) acting as shadow "ministries of reforms" (Lavergne 2010) or what Ivan Krastev, the chairman

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of one of the most influential Sofia-based think tanks, the Center for Liberal Strategies, calls "the liberal estate" (Krastev 1999). Despite hailing from the universities, they became active as policy-makers and this makes Bulgaria's case different to the academic intellectuals in the Czech case. According to the Bulgarian sociologist Lilyana Deyanova, in Bulgaria those of them who could not convert their academic capital into public expertise ended up more marginalized both in terms of diminishing economic and cultural capital (Lavergne 2010). The civil society of "the liberal estate" marked the transition from a "civil society against the (socialist) state" approach to a finding a *modus vivendi* with liberal and reformist governments (Lavergne 2010: 160-161 and Krastev, 1999). It was not free of frictions. An exasperated policy elite often complained of the resistance of the "state institutions" towards the implementation of liberal reform packages (Elenkov 2004). Nowhere is the historic mission of the "liberal estate" to steer the capitalist transformation of the country more poignantly captured than in an article for *Capital* by Ivan Krastev who lauds the consolidation of the loose anti-communist opposition into a unified party of the liberal reform. This consolidation occurred in a critical moment of mass protests triggered by the worst economic crisis after 1989 which was skillfully used by the Right to frame the neoliberal reforms and privatization as inevitable. The success of the market reform would spell the end of the hitherto prevailing "model of democracy without capitalism or [..] democracy instead of capitalism" (Krastev 1997). The moment was ripe also because the 1997 protests show that society is ready: "In Bulgaria there is a majority backing radical change. Society is ready to support either radical privatization or radical nationalization. But it won't support anything that is not radical" (ibid.). These

protests brought to power the anti-communist opposition which embarked on sweeping austerity, privatization and liberalization reforms.

As Ivan Krastev recalls elsewhere, his and other think-tanks were established when the reformist impulse stalled because the Socialist Party won the elections in 1994 (Krastev 1999). This is not just an isolated Bulgarian phenomenon:

> the rise of think-tanks can be interpreted as a new strategy for the institutionalization of the liberal political agenda following the electoral failures of liberal parties in the region [and the upsurge of] political and social[ist] nostalgia [..]: most people had started to be highly critical of the post-communist changes. The magic words of 1989 were exhausted (ibid.: 3).

On his view, the chief objective of think tanks in Central and Eastern Europe "was not to change the status quo, but to preserve the policy paradigm which had been established in 1990–91" (ibid.) He admits the policy paradigm was openly "anti-Keynesian" and "had its origin in the Washington-based consensus centering around privatization, limited state intervention in the functioning of the market, support for private initiatives, and anti-inflationary measures" (Krastev 1999: 8).

Krastev argues that a "populist" backlash against the reforms has always accompanied them (1999: 8). To illustrate this, in another article, he warns against the proliferation of anti-corruption discourses and politics because they can be appropriated by the disgruntled

majorities to attack the privatization of state-owned production facilities and assets (1997).

Yet, the "magic" of the 1997 popular consensus for the reform did not last longer than a term. The popular support for the UDF government drained literally overnight with the electoral defeat of the anti-communist opposition in the hands of the exiled ex-czar who swept the elections clean on what the NGO-experts (who supplied the anti-communists with policy papers) perceived as a populist program: a strongly charismatic, anti-establishment "morality in politics" platform. The 2001 destruction of the political model which presided over the alteration in power of the ex-communists and the anti-communists since 1989 was taken as the first alarming manifestation of the threats "populism" posed to the liberal reform package (Krastev 2007).

Civil society promptly reacted and in 2002 established "Global Bulgaria" (GB) – an umbrella organization founded by an association of think tanks (such as OSF, Krastev's CLS), bankers, businessmen, media/PR bosses, and others. *Capital* weekly, the flagman of the business and liberal press in Bulgaria (founded with capital from Reuters and whose owner, Ivo Prokopiev, also joined GB), dubbed Global Bulgaria "an association for values" (Capital 2002). The express aim of the organization was to prepare Bulgarian society for the "challenges of globalization" and for the bid for EU-accession.

One of the most interesting results of the electoral lacerations wrought to the neoliberal consensus, and of direct relevance to this thesis, is that the policy and business elites in GB realized they needed a *social base* for the liberal consensus. The electoral vulnerability of the consensus pointed to its own solution: the thin social support for the liberal reform had to be beefed up. To this end, a class of people most positively predisposed to the neoliberal reforms had to be located, and since every constative is also a performative (Derrida 1982, Bourdieu 1991), produced and nurtured. This also meant the engineering of a technocratic elite to transparently manage the future outpour of EU funds.

We can say that the class of civil society (as by the 1997 elections which the Right won on the wings of mass discontent, the notion of "civil society" had dropped its riotous dissident intelligentsia patina from the late 1980s and had become associated with the network of NGOs, think tanks, experts and professional opinion-makers): Global Bulgaria, bankers and the most important policy think tanks of the transition began looking for the *civil(ized) class of society* to act as the social base and executor of the liberal reforms.[21] It was a twin project to discipline the elite by creating a new generation

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21 Towards the end of the 1990s and the early noughties, the idea of "civil society" began to shed some of its "mass" as well as "protest" semantic layers and got equated with the network of professional NGOs and think-tanks. This is related to the stabilization of the liberal consensus in the country brought about by the UDF government which came to power after two months of popular mobilizations and riots. For example, reports that monitor the "state of civil society" from 2005 and 2011 focus mostly upon the NGOs (Kuzdilovski 2011). It is important to note, however, that the NGO sector is admonished for being overly responsive to the needs and agenda of their foreign donors instead of those of the Bulgarian citizenry. The most visceral criticism of this type was articulated by intellectuals decrying the "NGOization of civil society". Lavergne's 2010 book I quote from is a case in point: it is both an extremely rich study of the history and operations of think-tanks but also an engaged party in the battle to take "civil society" from its representatives in the face of the liberal

of transparent technocratic managers of EU-funds, and to locate and nurture the social base (or class) supportive of the liberal reforms among the population.

This is not to suggest that the think tanks demiurgically invented neoliberal capitalism or its "natural" class base in Bulgaria. They sought to direct the Transition (Krastev dubs them "the invisible hand of the Transition", 1999) by supplying the government with policy, translating and applying global "good governance practices" locally and exporting knowledge about the pace of the reforms back to their (mostly American) donors (Guilhot 2005) and Lavergne 2010 on the flow of knowledge production). Thus, we need to factor in the international context: for example, the global rise of anti-corruption politics at the end of the 1990s propagated by the World Bank and the IMF (Krastev 2004), which think tanks translated into Bulgarian political life via an initiative called "Coalition 2000" of broadly the same organizations that later fed into GB (see Ragaru 2010). The initiative successfully created the topic of corruption as a legitimate problem to be discussed the public sphere and tackled in politics. Even the "populist backlash against the consensus" cannot be understood without the efforts of civil society to align Bulgarian politics with the global trends, as popular opposition immediately "vampirized" the anti-corruption discourse and turned it against its representatives (Ragaru 2010: 187-194). Thus, the BSP,

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experts. Lavergne for example has been a vocal critic of the NGOs' "distortion" of "authentic civil society" accusing the experts of sabotaging its "birth" (Lavergne 2013). Other such attempts are e.g. Ivancheva and Gagyi's report which "hijacks" civil society for the Left from "the colonial" and "donor-driven" liberal NGOs (Gagyi and Ivancheva 2014: 4). The claims that the liberal representatives of civil society are not "democratic enough" can only be waged from a belief in "authentic" civil society which is not donor-driven but "of, and for the people".

the ex-csar and the far-right Ataka party which experienced a meteoric rise in national

electoral politics in 2005, all availed themselves generously of anti-corruption rhetoric.

The "rule of tactical polyvalence of discourse" thus precludes any conspiratorial lens

which both academic and more pedestrian analysis of think tanks abounds in: even when

think tanks are successful in imposing a particular policy frame, their hegemony over the

discourse is fragile and the latter is vulnerable to subversion and appropriation by other

actors in the political field who then weaponize it against the consensus. An unintended

consequence of securing a hegemony is arming your opponents with the same discursive

arms which helped you defeat them in the first place.

Let us attend briefly to the first target of civil society class-propaedeutic intervention: the

elite. I quote Svetlyo Bozhilov from GB, a banker and a philanthropist:

> Bulgaria is on the doorstep of Europe but is not yet close to it. *Public opinion is unstable and hesitates.* For example, we are not able to understand that the decision to shut down the Kozloduy nuclear reactors is a necessary political decision, just as we complain that entering NATO will result in 20,000 redundancies in the army. This calls for a counterpoint debate to clarify everything. And as the state is not yet mature, *civil society must educate the elites and pave the way*. That is why Global Bulgaria began to study the state of the Bulgarian society to understand where the weaknesses of the elites are. We must rely on the *active people, 30 to 40% of the population*, who have the *right vision for the future*. Business and NGOs are interested in things to move forward [..]. We need to prepare well before the accession of the European Union lest we leave control of that to the Reds. Civil society control over the procedures for absorption of the EU funds by the state and the private sector is necessary... This is about 4% of our GDP. "Global Bulgaria" offers a model for public-private structures to control the spending of European money... These are

monitoring structures that include representatives of civil society and the state (Bozhilov in Lavergne 2010: 436, my emphasis)

On this view, society is not yet fully mature for the challenges of globalization, and neither are the elites ready for the challenges of managing the EU-accession funds. Public opinion oscillates on issues over which there must be a clear consensus, and a well-prepared elite is needed to steer the ship in the right (in both senses of the word) direction. Bozhilov defines the mission of civil society to educate the elite but also admits that they rely on "30% to 40%" of the population, "the active people" who sport the "correct vision for the future". To this end, GB prepared and delivered a comprehensive "map" of Bulgarian society in order to lay out directions for nurturing the "social base" of the reforms (Krastev, Dimitrova, and Garnizov 2004) and, what amounts to the same thing, for furthering the reforms. GB's first "state of the nation" report, co-authored by the CLS director Ivan Krastev, maps Bulgarian society and identifies four groups (ibid: 25):

- "absolute pessimists": 54% or the majority (losers of the Transition), pessimistic both in their personal outlook and for the future of the state[22], characterized by low education, income and levels of civic activity (ibid: 26).

- "optimists": a segment of "younger, university-educated urbanites [who] benefited from the reforms and carry the highest charge of social optimism (Krastev et al 2004: 8) ("14-15%" of the total population).

- "untypical pessimists", mostly civil servants, enjoying higher income and status but sporting a pessimistic outlook (ibid. 26)

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22 "The majority (57%) place themselves on the upper five rungs in 1989 while 22% say they were on the lower four. Now the ratio has been reversed: the majority (62%) see themselves ont he lower four while 20% say they are perched on the top five steps of the social ladder. This reversal in the social status assessment is a valid cause for social pessimism." (Krastev and Dimitrova, et al 2004: 11)

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- People who are optimistic about their personal trajectories but have absorbed the prevailing pessimism in the country (26%) (ibid. 27).

Business people benefit from the reforms but are arguably recalcitrant to pursue them due to nepotistic entanglements with the political elites, ruling them out as the social base for the reforms. The report finally locates the class of the reforms in the demographic of upwardly mobile people ("winners of the transition") despite their pessimistic outlook (ibid. 31). The authors quote Eurobarometer that "only 31% are content with their life" (2004: 3) and state that the majorities "do not know what is good about democracy and have forgotten what is bad about socialism" (ibid: 17). Therefore, they are assumed to never support the liberal reforms, so the policy elites' natural allies lie in the upwardly mobile neither "too rich, nor too poor" educated demographic of urban stock. **This is the embryonic theoretical middle class which in 2013 breaks into the political scene fully conscious.**

This search for the social class of the reform produced projects such as CLS's "Guide 2020" which, in stating that Bulgarians refuse macro-sociological identificators such as "social class", proceeds to map "micro-trends" of new niche markets as indicators for the existence of active and entrepreneurial people capable of changing societal trends (Mineva 2008; Rudnikova and Mineva 2008). A second report zooms on in this demographic and dubs it "angry young people" who are at the beginning of their promising professional careers (i.e. in IT) and are frustrated less by their salaries (although they expect them to grow) than by having to pretend that they are "Europeans in the deep Orient" inhabited

by "drivers who change lanes without signaling", public transport free-riders, and people without civic culture more generally. In 2013 this line of disinterested (in material trivialities) observer with a liberal vocation exploded with full force.

In the efforts to construct and nurture the "social base" of the reforms, members of the "coalition for values" founded a liberal TV channel called "Re:tv" in order to tap into the frustration about corruption and the perceived slow pace of the reforms, as well as to help consolidate the Right (after its resounding defeat at the hands of the ex-csar in 2001) in preparation for the 2009 general elections (Lavergne 2010). The justifications for this media strongly stress the ingredient of culture in the "social base". GB's Bozhilov's "30%" are impossible to understand without the negative definition of the rest of the population, as the antithetical backdrop against which the "active" segment of the population emerges in (and provides the) contrast. For example, an article celebrating the establishment of that TV channel depicts this opposition in no uncertain terms:

> The principles on which the Re:tv is built are quite different from the principles on which Bulgarian society is based in its *mass* version [..], so to expect a very high popular approval [of the tv channel] will be a pure illusion. But its presence shows something else – in Bulgaria there are circles who dislike and do not want to identify with the *oriental-egalitarian-oligarchic model* of statehood and *socialism* that the Left [..] tries to shove down our throats. And precisely because these circles do not want such identification, they created Re:tv to make room for another discourse, a space for another way of communication and conversation. Re:tv [stands for] *reform*, not reform of television but of *public consciousness* with the idea and the hope that through the mass media this reform could someday – not now, not immediately but at some point – happen and 'format the motherboard' of the masses. In Bulgaria, there

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seems to be always a place for utopias... (Novkov 2008).

So, by calling it "civil class" above I emphasize the strong culturalist layer in the way the liberal expertise articulates class: not as some "oriental-egalitarian" populist seduction of the "masses" but the educated, liberal-minded, active pro-Europe class of citizens with "the right[-wing] vision for the future". This is still a topical issue for the liberal press (e.g. liberal papers such as *Capital* sounded the alarm about a value survey according to which "the majority" back socialist policies (Capital 2017b).

Let us see the effect of these attempts at forging class consciousness on the idea of civil society with the onset of the protests of 2013.

Bürgerliche Gemeinschaft

As stated, CLS's chief economist Georgi Ganev conceives of the summer protest as the revolt of the productive bourgeoisie. Let us see how he defines this social stratum:

> I speak of bourgeoisie in its original meaning of *community* of citizens. The people living in the city, united by values, language, morality, common goals, shared virtues, forum for ideas, the ability of being-together, and yes, somewhere among all these things, the specific capacity to produce and exchange so that they can be economically independent and keep away from poverty. [..] Whether on the street or in social networks, people are together – linguistically, in terms of values, morally, ideationally, in all their diversity and contradictions. They have raised their flag and from now on their social, political, and economic territory can only expand – this is the immanent inevitability of the laws of democracy and market economy (Ganev 2013).

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A crucial vector for differentiating between the two protest waves centers on the twin logics of activity/passivity and (economic) dependence/independence. On this view, the "bourgeoisie" is active, possesses the capacity to produce, and hence is economically independent. The paupers are mired in passivity and dependence. Despite acknowledging the "diversity and contradictions" within it, Ganev depicts the Bulgarian bourgeoisie as fundamentally determined by Sameness (of values, ideas, morality etc.). Furthermore, as Ganev states, the bourgeoisie is not only a class, but also a community (Gemeinschaft): a community of citizens who share values, culture and virtues. Only as an aside we are told that they are economically productive and self-sufficient, values come first. This is how the opposition between class and community, that informs much classical and contemporary sociological theory, is discursively reconciled contra Tonnies (2017), Calhoun (2012). This is a far cry from 1990s articulations of the idea of civil society that root it in the anonymous interdependent urban culture and society as opposed to the personal and intimate relations characteristic of rural community which supposedly come from the twin historical deviations of "totalitarianism" and the Ottoman rule. Liberal professors writing in the late 1990s oppose the tightly-knit "communities" (of peasant stock) to (urban) civil society in no uncertain terms, e.g.(Angelova 1998) and (Znepolski 1999). In short, whereas in the 1990s the theorization of civil society pitted it firmly against face-to-face community, the discourses of 2013 resolve the contradiction between "society" and "community" and depict civil society precisely in communitarian terms. I understand the contraction as an effort to guard the boundaries of "civil society" against the kind of "poaching" or "trespassing" in its territory committed by the "populist" winter

protest of 2013. But it can also be understood as a move away from the universalist and inclusive liberal categories of the early Transition, reflecting the not so expansive social base of the reform consensus.

The upshot is that the reactivation and repetition of the anti-communist civil society tropes in the post-2013 period mark the crumbling of the idea of political equality and inclusive civil society that animated the original anti-communist opposition in the 1990s.

In social theory community is not only opposed to (modern) society but also to class. For example, for Craig Calhoun, class is a form of social solidarity which arises only from the development of "large-scale systems of indirect relationships" (2012: 181); in short class is social integration which transcends locality and personal relationships, a process mediated by capital accumulation. Calhoun insists on the relationality of class, albeit in a non-personal, indirect mode (ibid. 182). Thus, he distinguishes class from community, understood in the old sociological way as the domain for localized, face-to-face and interpersonal relationships (Gemeinschaft). Drawing on Marx, he understands class as the product of the unstoppable integrative and totalizing powers of capital accumulation which creates vast anonymous collectivities tied to one another via market exchange and the division of labor in production. Class is a collective subject that does not (need to) know its constitutive parts to operate as a totality. As Marx says, industrial factory production brought together people into the position of the "collective worker" (Marx 1977).

However, the summer protests of 2013 present us with an intriguing case of class formation in which a class becomes conscious of itself precisely as a *community*: a veritable Bürgerliche Gemeinschaft. This occurs by activists' positing the existence of the so-called ever-shrinking "democratic community", which point to a strong *direct* identification of the activists with each other. In short, if we stay attentive to the content of the protest discourses percolating in the public sphere, we will see that they resolve the contradiction between the indirect relations of class and the direct ones of community, in the practice of construing their political subjectivity.

In addition to be a community, this class self-represents also as a minority (see the Galabov epigraph). Georgi Medarov's somewhat paradoxical notion of "subaltern elite" captures this identity well (Medarov 2016). This may sound like a contradiction in terms, since subaltern means "oppressed" and the oppressed are associated with those who lack power, money, and status. The Summer protesters experience themselves as a very tight minority of very high standing: active, knowledgeable, reasonable, civilized, normal. Simultaneously, to make their case for a genuine opposition to the ruling regime, they rely on a discourse of martyrdom and oppression. Hence, the subaltern elite, squeezed between the "whims of the crowds and the fears of the government" (Capital 2017a).

The civil society of 2013 is not just depicted as a minority, but one whose members happen to know each other, claiming they are a community of peers. Whether or not it is true that

they *all* know each other personally (and most probably it is not true), and notwithstanding their undeniable *objective* dependence on capitalist markets both for production and consumption, I find the insistence on familiarity and the intimacy of class significant and worthy of analysis in its own right. Of course, we should keep in mind that such representations appear most commonly in *mediatized* discourses, which by definition means mediated and not personal relations. But it is still significant that such an understanding of civil society as an intimate, face-to-face community emerged and it merits an explanation, even if its existence is mostly a discursive fact. It is significant for the minimal reason that civil society and public sphere are usually lauded as the terrain which brings together private citizens in their capacities of public beings, tied not by friend or familial relations but by shared interests, goals and animated by a spirit of discussion with strangers.

The term Bürgerliche in the expression Bürgerliche Gemeinschaft comes from protesters' emic definition of their movement as bourgeois, middle-class, liberal, for the rule of law, against populism, pro-European, etc. What about Gemeinschaft (community)? I have come across numerous references to the "civil community" (*grazhdanska obshtnost)* in the protesters' rhetoric. This expresses the idea that people are bound by a common ethos, common identity, and very warm ties. Many times, I attended a protest I could observe the friendships – old and new – that would find their expression in the common acknowledgment that "it's full of old friends here." As one of the protests calls once put it: "It won't be the first time that just a few people attend the protest. Let us gather, say hi
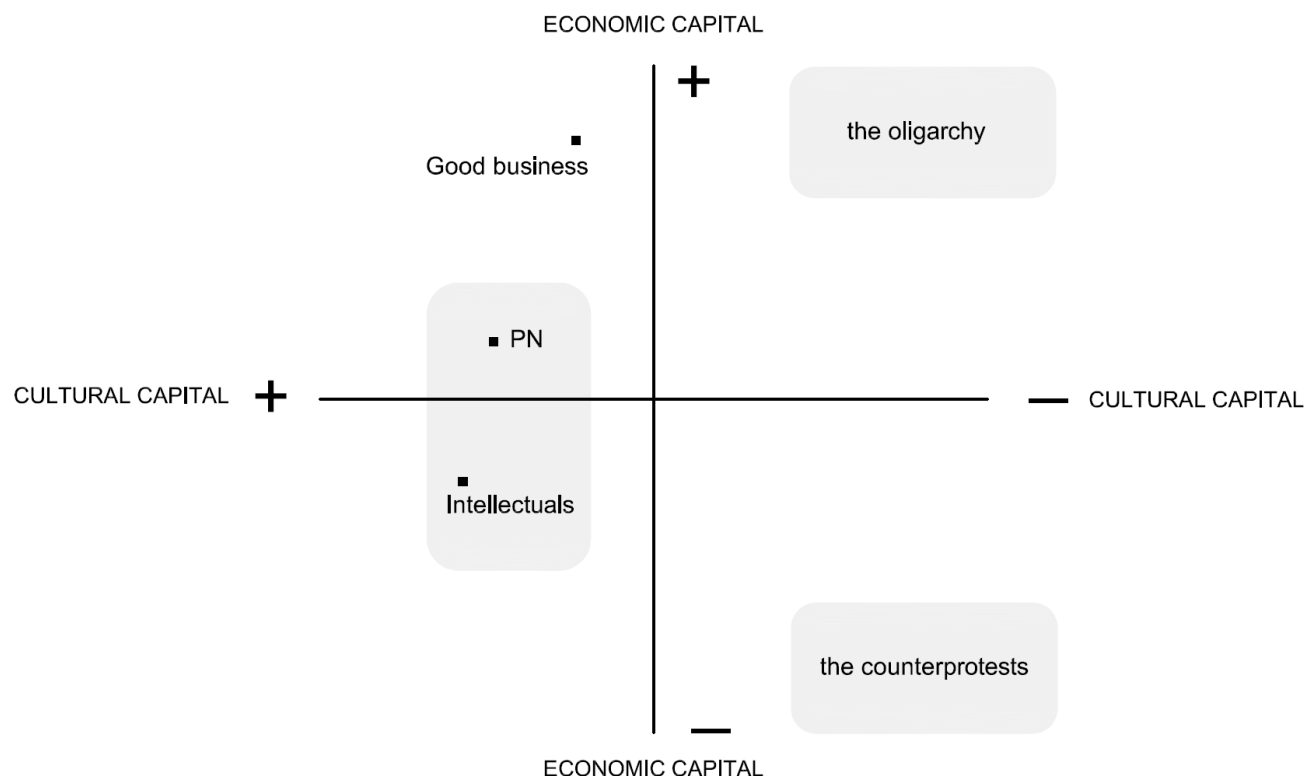
to each other. At least we will show that we are not part of the millions who will be absent tonight," explicating the feeling of small-scale, tightly-knit small scale and face-to-face community.[23]

"One Handful of People"

In the social ontology of the protesters, the social is irremediably split. The split runs vertically as well as horizontally. On the horizontal axis, the social world is divided between a cultural-civilized but oppressed elite (themselves) and the powers that be (the mafia). If we follow Bourdieu's axiom that the allocation of cultural and economic capital determines the hierarchies in most capitalist societies (1998), but integrate in it the self-positionings and representations social actors have of themselves and the groups they oppose, we can represent the summer protest and its adversaries in the following way:

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23 (Няма да е за първи път да се съберем шепа хора на протест. Може да се съберем, да си кажем здрасти и да се разотидем. Поне ще покажем, че не сме от милионите, които ги няма.)

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ECONOMIC CAPITAL

+

the oligarchy

Good business

PN

CULTURAL CAPITAL   +   ————————————————   —   CULTURAL CAPITAL

Intellectuals

the counterprotests

—

ECONOMIC CAPITAL

FIGURE 7 THE SUMMER PROTEST SCHEMATIZED

To repeat, this is not an objectivist map of the structure of social classes in Bulgarian society. It is a map of the discursive representation of this structure, from the point of view of the summer protesters. The lower right quadrant houses people who are (allegedly) poor both in economic and in cultural capital. I have put there the participants in the pro-government rallies (also known as counter-protesters, see Chapter five) as an example of this group of people. It is important to note that their place is a function not so much of objective measurements of their economic and cultural capital, but of the perception about them which the protesters entertain. I am referring specifically to such paradigmatic texts as that of the economist Georgi Ganev, member of the liberal think tank Center for Liberal

Strategies, who presented the battle of 2013 as between the "productive classes" and "the bourgeoisie" versus the "coalition" between oligarchs and the poor who exchange votes for welfare. This phantasmatic aspect of class can only be understood as a "class-for-other" (Bourdieu 1977, Petkov 2011). I tackle the problem in Chapter five in greater detail.

Those rich both in cultural and economic capital occupy the upper left quadrant and comprise the "moral" businessmen who protest for "change", the intellectual elites, Protest Network (PN) – the main civil society activists behind the protests, counting among its rank and file academics, NGO workers, entrepreneurs, "creatives", artists, university students, etc. They are relatively less rich in economic but score "high" on cultural capital. Their "cloud" extends low into the depths of the capital-deprivation quadrant to account for the inclusion of people like the unemployed teacher Rossen among their ranks. On the other side I have relegated the organized crime which the protests opposed as rich in economic but low in cultural capital. With an important caveat: we should not understand the latter to express solely the possession of formal certificates. For example, the leader Genov didn't go to university. Formal education is very important to the protesters but having formal education is not enough to consecrate the possessor of the certificate as a member of their class. For example, the arch enemy Peevski has law degree. In addition to having obtained education, cultural capital expresses the possession of civic competences and upper-class demeanor (explored in Chapter five). Being a corrupt politician or a "bought intellectual" or member of the organized crime should automatically relegate one to the upper right quadrant because even if one has studied in

a university, their "immoral track record" disqualifies them from the community of the cultured. Perhaps a "moral capital" term would express this version of cultural capital more accurately, but I am averse to unnecessary proliferation of para-Bourdieusian capital portfolio concepts. "Moral capitalists" and intellectuals are thus opposed to the discursively *constituted* coalition between "immoral capitalists" and the poor who vote for them. On the vertical axis, the protesters occupy the top end (qua citizens), while the "narod" (the people) - the bottom end. What characterizes the top layer is that it is small (*vis-a-vis* the uncountable swathes of the "*narod*", "the millions" mired in its vulgar, bodily materiality), it carries knowledge, it is "active", economically self-reliant. All this works to define it as citizens. And it is a revolutionary force unlike "the millions" whose political passivity mirrors their economic dependence.

To illustrate, Antonetta Tsoneva, one of the protest leaders and an NGO director, depicts the organization of civil society uprising, turning the phrase critical *mass* into a critical *minority*:

> Talking about a critical mass, historically, an *enlightened, critical and active minority* has always turned around the tables. The power over interpretations, over minds, is more important and far more complex as a phenomenon. In this battle *critical minorities* who have a bright voice have the chance to become a factor to reckon with. This alloy, this *community* – conscious, self-organized, self-willed – will not back down anymore (A. Tsoneva 2016, my emphasis).

Evgenii Daynov, the think tank director, university lecturer, democratization expert and prolific public intellectual I quoted at the beginning of this chapter, similarly argued that "the real citizens [whom the summer protests made visible] are actually a minority. [The problem is that] everybody has the right to vote", instead of just the "real citizens", defined as "individuals possessing free time, education, and disposition to look beyond their personal self-interest" (Daynov 2013b). The anti-materialist determination of the "real citizen" occurs time and again in protest statements but here it rests on a pronounced "leisure class" edge: the citizen has to have disposable time to dedicate to the common good as opposed to their narrow self-interest. The citizen is simultaneously a member of the leisure class and works hard. Daynov then asks what can be done to delimit the universal franchise, citing examples from the US of active voter registration as a mechanism for weeding out "passive" citizens.

Similarly, when saying that the protests approximate something like a "critical mass", Hristo Ivanov, a leader of a party that sprang from the summer protest, co-author of the Charter 2013 and a devoted protester (eventually minister for justice in the second GERB government) hurries to qualify it: "I mean a motivated minority really." He further cites the pioneering example of the environmentalist protests, framing them as "a handful of activists" who "nurtured a culture of protest" and "set an example of how to work for 'abstract' causes such as the preservation of nature" whose benefit is not immediately obvious to the majority. "We have a laboratory example of a *small group* who created a highly contagious virus: that of civic courage," argued Hristov and construed a chain of

equivalence between the environmentalists and the "liberal professions" in stating that the former activated "journalists, scientists and justices" who gave the current movement its momentum (H. Ivanov 2013, my emphasis).

During my interview with Ivan A., a middle-aged man who owns an international trade company, I was asked provocatively if I knew "how many people carried out the French Revolution?". I tried to stay composed but at the end admitted defeat in the very field of which I was supposedly the representative. He had turned the tables on the interviewer. When I admitted I do not know, he thundered victoriously "Exactly 400!"[24] He wanted me to understand that any revolution worthy of the title is emphatically *not* the work of the masses but of an enlightened elite, often misunderstood (if not resisted) by the masses. In fact, speaking of the protests of 2013, he defined them as "the protests of the satiated" (*sitite*), exactly like the BSP-journalist Dareva, only in a positive sense. The *siti* are those who "are active, who possess [property and education], produce, and create added-value". These adjectives are often used to describe business people, and Ivan obviously has described himself and his class in these terms. Yet, this class is as narrow as it is elastic and accepts people who do not own property or run businesses provided they are rich in cultural capital (especially education and liberal political consciousness, that is, if they participate and support the protests) and who profess untarnished moral anti-communism. As well as people from their "community" (network). On the understanding of the

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24   Interview with Ivan G., 12.07.2016

protesters, being a member of the dominant class is uncoupled from property (qua ownership of capital since even the mafia, and especially the mafia, lack no property over capital) and is indexed to education, culture, civility and morality.

We have here the articulation of the small size of what was supposed to be a broad middle (and still is at least in core countries, albeit dwindling); subjectively, this gives them the outlook of another elite or an alternative elite. In short, what underlines the symbolic construction of this Bulgarian civil society and middle class is a sort of aristocratization and ennoblement.

Another characteristic trait through which the protesters express their minoritarian status is through a peculiar discourse of "normality", usually qualified as "a sip" or "an isle" (Daynov 2015b). I have often come across the idea that the protesters are the *only* representatives of "normality": "we are normal people", a few normals in an endless sea of abnormality consisting of "populism", "communist mentality", "dependency", passivity, etc. I take this discourse as indicative of a post-democratic tendency in the protests because here normality is refocused from the ordinary deployment of the word as something that captures the prevailing or as the statistically most popular phenomenon (Canguilhem 1989, Chapter II), into a normative normality inhering only in the embattled "democratic community" (Obretanov 2017, ClubZ 2017). In short, this is a normality entirely divorced from concrete practices which constitute the prevailing and ordinary modes of the given. Thus, the more marginal and singular a phenomenon of their liking

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is, the more "normal" it is, completely trumping the ordinary understanding of "normality" as that which is prevalent, "regular", "common". At the heart of "ordinary" normality there is always an operation of exclusion (Foucault 2003) and polemical negation (Canguilhem 1989). This usually happens vis-a-vis *minorities* departing from the prevailing understanding of what normal or regular is. With the protesters' "normality", we have an exclusion (or non-admission) of the *majority* from a superior minoritarian normalcy. And because it radicalizes the exclusionary logic already inherent in "ordinary normality", this new normality tends to be more normative-essentialist than the ordinary usage of the term alludes to. Everything which departs from this narrow norm is considered abnormal and this happens to be the politics and taste attributed to the majorities: "Communism", "populism", "chalga"[25], and so on. As Bourdieu puts it, "in matters of taste, all determination is negation" (Bourdieu 2000: 56).

So, to reiterate, the "we want a normal/European state" is not a new discourse. The beginning of the transition was already dominated by the trope of "return to European normality" after the 45-year long "deviation" unjustly inflicted on Bulgaria by its incorporation into "Asiatic Communist Barbarism". What is new however, is the

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25 Chalga is the most popular music genre in Bulgaria, drawing on Turkish, Gypsy, Serbian and folk musical themes, but increasingly from Western pop music too. It is universally despised by the cultural bourgeoisie in Bulgaria as the clearest manifestation of low taste and "Oriental" remnants in "the popular mentality" that are antithetical to "European values". See (C. Levy 2001) and (Adriaans 2018) for the upper-class reception of a similar genre in Armenia"

radicalization of the exclusionary dynamic which tied "normality" to the minority and weaponized it against the majorities (the previous standard-bearer for "normal").

Let us attend now to the effects this narrow middle class exercises on the imaginary of citizenship.

Chapter Four

Towards a Neo-Republican, Virtuous Citizenship

"In the face of the growing proletariat, and increase in pauperism, one so readily reproaches egoism, the tyranny of money, hedonism and the accumulation of wealth in the hands of the individual, from out of the desires of the people themselves – without any state intervention – there have emerged associations and brotherhoods that do not value estate, wealth or special calling, but only the competence, ability and effort to be useful to the community."

Eberhart von Groote, President, Art Association of Cologne, 1846

"It is not taxes that make us citizens: citizenship merely obliges a man to contribute to public expenditure in proportion to his means."

Robespierre

Introduction

Every evening the 2013 summer protest would begin its march "tucked" behind a huge green banner proclaiming that this is the rally of the "citizens against the mafia". (Its obverse side sported Havel's famous quip "the power of the powerless".) Articles, Facebook events and discussions, as well as many a conversation during the daily rallies, pontificated on the ways of being a true citizen, almost always in a negative way – i.e. as opposed to the "mafia" or those who scoffed at or shunned the protests. At some point core organizers of the rallies founded a newspaper titled "#Protest" as a platform for voicing the demands. This paper's motto defined it "for the active person". Eventually

some protesters founded a party (now defunct), called it DEOS (after the Austrian neoliberals of NEOS). The acronym stood for Democrats for European Unification and Solidarity, but it also held a strong allusion to the Bulgarian word for action – *deystvie*. I attended the inaugural event of the party, held one warm summer evening in a public park. And I couldn't but notice how every board member presented him- or herself in no uncertain active and activist terms. For example, they infallibly positioned themselves as members of the "liberal professions" – lawyers, doctors, lecturers, businessmen – and everyone, except for a pregnant woman and a freshly graduated student, said that they have two to three children. In short, they were *active citizens* and consciously so*:* both on the productive (economic) and the reproductive (biopolitical) domains. But mostly so politically. Time and again it was reiterated that they establish this party in order to work hard to make Bulgaria a good place for their children, so they do not have to opt for immigration.[26]

The discourse of the active citizen oozed out from every pore of the protest movement. This chapter explores the constitution and significance of the figure of the active citizen. It argues that the "active citizen" constitutes a departure from the Constitutional organization of democratic citizenship, pointing the way towards a post-democratic citizenship regime.

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26 Most conventional politicians in Bulgaria also happen to be parents. However, the typical BSP or
    GERB candidate does not make their parenthood into a virtue.

Democracy and Active Citizenship

Many scholars of social movements contend that protests school people in the virtues of democratic citizenship (Siim, Krasteva, and Saarinen 2019). In her book *Can Democracy be Saved* Donatella della Porta explores the challenges to representative democracy and argues that social movements and social protests offer a key source for revitalizing it (Della Porta 2013). Pierre Rosanvallon (2008) famously argued that social mobilizations constitute a form of counter-democracy: the exercise of citizens' power "beyond the ballot box" (as the cliché goes), as well as the grassroots break on power abuse indispensable to any democracy worthy of the name. In a recent book about protests in Bulgaria, Valentina Georgieva coins the term "propaedeutic of resistance" (Georgieva 2017, Ch.5) which expresses her informants' deep conviction that constant vigilance (and protesting) exercised upon the authorities is what it takes to build democratic subjectivities and a strong civil society. Similarly, in line with Rosanvallon's counter-democracy, the idea of "contestatory democracy" (Krasteva 2016, Krasteva, Staykova, and Otova 2019) comes to capture the exercise of negative sovereignty of citizens when they take to the streets in reaction to missteps of their representatives. This is couched in the activist and academic language of the so-called "active citizenship" which happens to also populate EU Directives (Europäische Kommission 2012).

The left seems convinced in the virtues of active citizenship too, depicting it as a countervailing force against the onslaught of neoliberalism that is hollowing out democratic institutions and citizenship. For example, Wendy Brown (2006) defines neoliberalism as a market logic that radically colonizes more and more social spheres evacuating their non-economic core and replacing it with norms derived from the market. When this occurs in politics (say, by way of "new public management" or when expert-based anti-ideological policy replaces the political), the effect is depoliticization, and the production of socially and politically desensitized self-help subjectivities, substituting citizenship with consumption, and workfare for welfare. All collective political projects are getting eroded and reduced to individualized consumption. Consumption itself becomes the terrain on which political issues are addressed, i.e. individuals choose private schools to escape the worsening conditions in public schools and so on. As Wendy Brown says, in this atmosphere "the model neoliberal citizen is one who strategizes for her or himself among various social, political, and economic options, not one who strives with others to alter or organize these options" (Brown 2005: 43). Proponents of agonistic and radical democracy look nostalgically to the civic republicanism of before, hoping that it can reinvigorate the increasingly hollowed out citizenship of today, as well as counter the radical alienation of individuals in neoliberalism: "With the rise of market society, the classical "active" civic ideal was progressively replaced by a modern "passive" or liberal ideal which crucially weakened/distorted the vitality of the original civic impulse' (Burchell 1995: 541; Mouffe 1992). So, do proposals for "dissident citizenship" and other forms of civic courage (Sparks 1997).

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Most recently "active citizenship" has received an elaborate philosophical and theoretic justification by the so-called Radical citizenship studies (RCS) and the Acts of citizenship theory (Isin and Nielsen 2008).27 It builds on the vast body of empirical and substantive studies on the actual exercise of citizenship, as opposed to studies that focus on formal legal frameworks. A cursory review of the latest contributions of social scientists to Radical citizenship studies reveals an interesting pattern – most of the case studies presented in the *Citizenship Studies* Journal which is one of the richest sources of radical citizenship theory actually deal with *non-citizens* such as migrants or illegalized/illegitimated populations such as sex workers (Andrijasevic 2013), or even the Biblical Abraham (Wells in Isin and Nielsen 2008), and the various strategies of theirs to mitigate exclusion and negotiate their precarious status. Has the citizen, especially the one who is divested of formal rights and belonging, become the new revolutionary subject? Even slavery is taken as an extravagant case in point for the enactment of citizenship (Prokhovnik 2014) thereby upending the habitual way of thinking slavery and citizenship as mutually exclusive. Slaves, migrants, refugees, aliens, outcasts and other marginalized groups seem to be the preferred populations of scholars working on citizenship. Without a doubt, there is a strong advantage to approach an issue from its margins rather than take at face value the official representations thereof such as those peddled by the state. However, the scholarly exaltation of the "citizenship acts of non-citizens", and the

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27 Their approach has been used overwhelmingly for the analysis of defiant political mobilizations for inclusion of marginal social groups, oftentimes lacking any formal citizenship rights or for progressive social movements fighting e.g. for public space (Dolenec, Doolan, and Tomašević 2017) housing (Miraftab and Wills 2005) and integration of the "pariahs" (be them sexual or ethnic minorities, slaves, migrants), etc.

treatment of citizenship as a terrain of radical politics is reminiscent of the elevation of the citizen as a revolutionary subject in the protests of 2013, pointing to the limits of this new type of progressive politics. One way to understand the radicalization of substantive citizenship that RCS brings is that 'traditional substantive criticism of formal citizenship dissects the unequal enjoyment of citizenship rights among formally equal *citizens.* In contrast, RCS divorces its understanding of citizenship from formal citizenship frameworks, abstracts the former from the latter, to the extent that the less formally consecrated as a citizen the subject is, the more she is the subject of interest of RCS. Thus, slaves, stateless persons, refugees and similar populations fighting for inclusion are the primary subjects of the act of citizenship. It is as though citizenship must be preceded (and produced) by a heroic act.28

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28 My Bourdieusian analysis cannot maintain the philosophical exercise of abstracting a metaphysical plane of the Act from its social conditions of possibility. This stems from Bourdieu's understanding of the nature of the act especially in speech acts theory: when a speech act is severed from its sociological conditions of possibility it becomes nothing more than the sum of its wordings, clamor, noise. For example, a soldier could potentially utter a command to his officer to clean the latrines, but this will be nothing more than an insult and not a real command ("An order [..] can only work if it is backed by the order of things", p. 74). A speech act derives its efficacy from the authority of the institution which sanctions it (ibid.)1 What implications can be drawn from this about "acts of citizenship" theory which abstracts citizenship from its institution, power, norms, state sanctions, symbolisms, that is to say, from its sociological conditions, and roots it in the metaphysical plane of some supposed "pure act" divorced of entitlements, practices and authority? From a Bourdieusian perspective, far from a heroic defiance of the stateless refugee or of the oppressed, an act of citizenship is precisely the acts of the powerful to determine through performative utterances who belongs to the community of citizens and who does not. People invested with symbolic capital, such as intellectuals or others with authority enjoy the license to order and re-order the world and the bodies within it symbolically, and thus to determine and consecrate "real" citizens. Of course, even these intellectuals and spokespersons for the 2013 protests are not vested with the efficient authority say, a judge enjoys. If a judge can accomplish an act by merely saying "I find you guilty", the February protesters are not immediately stripped of their citizenship rights when summer protest intellectuals declare them not worthy of the title. But they symbolically reorder the boundaries of citizenship, and just like the working-class struggles to expand them finally resulted in real material gains of citizenship rights for the toiling class, maybe one day this pressure on the

While building on these important contributions, I am nevertheless compelled to introduce some precision. It is my contention that the translation of the market logic into the political domain and its depoliticizing effects not only produce a widespread political *paralysis* but also new forms of collective *action* and *activation*. And these need not be directed against neoliberalism but can sometimes be its very tools. As Nikolas Rose observes, neoliberalism is an activist and activation political rationality (N. Rose 2017). Thus, opposed to the disinterested, self-help citizen-consumer of neoliberalism, desensitized to social injustice Wendy Brown and others inveigh against, stands the active citizen who promotes, rather than opposes, the neoliberal consensus.

As stated, the summer protests of 2013 generously availed themselves of the rhetoric of active citizenship. In this chapter I explore the layers of meaning inhering in the concept, as deployed by protesters, and what kind of civic subjectivities the "propaedeutic of resistance" cultivates (V. Georgieva 2017a). While liberal theorists celebrate active civic engagement, lionize active citizenship to resuscitate "tired democracies" and redress the "democratic deficit", and thus extrapolate democratic robustness from it – the paradigmatic example here belongs to Robert Putnam's 2003 book *Making Democracy Work* – critical scholars have every reason to doubt that strong civil society and activated citizens necessarily enables democratic and equitable citizenship. The citizenship regime

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imaginary of citizenship will contract its boundaries back to where it started: to the educated and the propertied.

befitting the neoliberal, austerity state is conducive to exclusionary and post-democratic civic subjectivities: a Herrenvolk democracy (Losurdo 2014). In this chapter I demonstrate how the protesters articulated such a vision.

In the previous chapter I discussed the symbolic opposition between the winter and the summer protesters of 2013, as belabored by protesting activists and intellectuals. On their view, the chief difference pivots upon the opposition between the protest for material trivialities vs. post-material lofty values. The class subject of these two protest waves is depicted in exactly the reverse way: the more immaterial the political objective, the better off the subject (i.e. middle class). How does the symbolic oppositions of the previous chapter bear on the imaginary of citizenship?

This is the question this chapter answers. It focuses on the modalities of citizenship in neoliberalism through the vantage point of the summer protest imaginary and invocation of the virtues of active citizenship. This means that it does so not from the perspective of how the state defines legitimate belonging to the national community through legislative acts (although this will be briefly accounted for), but from that of the summer of 2013 protest movement which discursively challenged the Constitutional organization of citizenship. More specifically, I discuss what figure of the model citizen protesters operate with. I draw on the distinction by Kymlicka and Norman of "citizenship-as-legal-status" and "citizenship-as-desirable-activity" (Kymlicka and Norman 1994). These two need not coincide:

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The concept of 'good citizen' simply means the form of citizenship that is socially endorsed, promoted and appreciated. Actually, more than one such conception may exist in a particular society or within a certain political space. The plurality may reflect differing ideologies or interests within society, without creating any profound conflict that would cast doubt upon the very existence of the political community (in Ellis 2006: 164).

The very disjunction between the citizen as constitutionally defined on the one hand, and as a source of "desirable activity", on the other shows that citizenship also obeys the rule of the tactical polyvalence of discourses (Foucault). The appropriation of the discourse of the citizen bifurcates the regime of citizenship, resulting in one legal and the other metaphysical citizen, not coincidental with, and sometimes even negating, the legal definition of citizenship. It is the metaphysical citizenship I deal with in this chapter. This is not just a benign philosophical polemic, as Ira *et al* hint at. It can produce effects that do "cast doubt upon the very existence of the political community", if still only discursively. As T.H. Marshall shows *a propos* Britain, citizenship regimes come into existence due to contestation from below which challenge the prevailing organization of citizenship.

In what follows I will show how the discursive departure from established citizenship marks a transition (still at the level of ideas and competing visions) from the abstract-universal, formal, also known as "liberal" regime of citizenship to a metaphysical-substantive one that assumes the contours of a "republican" regime, organizing civic

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belonging via the fulfillment of civic duties and responsibilities, rather than rights (as in the former regime).29

Active Citizenship

Adrian Kearns (1992) traces the mobilization and proliferation of the concept of "active citizenship" in British politics and the public sphere to the Conservative governments and intellectual movements of the period. For example, the New Right challenged the idea of social citizenship by claiming that it nurtures welfare dependency, passivity and puts recipients under bureaucratic tutelage, without improving their life-chances (Kymlicka and Norman 1994: 356). Margaret Thatcher pioneered a modern active citizenship policy in 1988 as part of the neoliberal reforms she was pursuing. Her understanding of active citizenship was unapologetically religious: citizens' sense of duty stems from their authentic religious convictions rather than from government fiat (Kearns 1992: 21). It was also neoliberal by elevating personal responsibility to a supreme social value. The minimization of the state's redistributive role is matched by the activation of citizens and nongovernmental organizations to step in spaces and functions previously the purview of the state. Welfare rights and entitlements gave way to moral and voluntary obligations (rather than duties, such as paying taxes) to assist others (Kearns 1992: 24). This came to gradually replace the "orthodoxy" of T.H. Marshall who considered the liberal welfare

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29   This does not just happen on the level of public imagination alone. Most recently a Malian refugee, better known as the "Spider-man of Paris", was granted French citizenship after he saved a child dangling from the fourth floor by heroically climbing – without any safety gear! – all four floors.

state as the best frame for citizenship, understood as inalienable entitlements of passive citizens (Kymlicka and Norman 1994: 355).

Margaret Abraham (2010) discusses the changes stemming from globalization effected primarily on the roles and responsibilities connected to social citizenship. These are related to changes in the political economy. The state becomes more market-friendly and the drive to wean the "unproductive classes" off social assistance intensifies, manifested in politics as diverse as austerity measures and "civil society promotion" which is supposed to compensate for the gutting of vital social services by "empowering" citizens to take care of themselves. Similarly, Niraja Jayal (2013) highlights three interrelated factors behind the revitalization of active citizenship in recent times, one being the centrality of civil society in neoliberalism. Self-help neoliberalism redefines citizenship as "active", and this merges with the organization of the political economy to make citizens economically independent from state assistance; the relentless attacks on social welfare accused of breeding "social parasitism" are conducive to envisaging a greater role of civil society in domains previously considered a state monopoly. For example, the Big Society doctrine of the British Tories and David Cameron cements the austerity regime by outsourcing as much as possible from state's prerogatives to civil society and private businesses in the name of "local governance", "decentralization" (Lowndes and Pratchett 2012) "empowering the local community" and volunteering (Kisby 2010).

Similarly, according to Jayal, the case of Eastern Europe "[c]ivil society thus offered citizens a space in which they could realize their political selfhood through the exercise of a long-forgotten political efficacy", while in the West the supposed loss of this political efficacy was attributed to the overly protective welfare state which "induced passivity in citizens" that made them "insensitive to their own duties and civic obligations." (2013: 7). Finally, changes at the level of the political economy "delegitimized social citizenship and was accompanied by a curiously celebratory rediscovery of the virtues of civic republicanism, which proved to be remarkably adaptable to the needs of a conservative political agenda." (ibid.) The values of being economically independent, active, and virtuous can be discerned at every level of the discourse of the movement I am studying.

In Britain the "active citizenship" concept had decidedly anti-socialist moorings. Similarly, its career in Eastern Europe was unsurprisingly anticommunist. For example, in *The Digital Citizen,* a book about social media and protests, Krasteva (2013) traces the evolution of

> the communist individual who had to be mobilized [from above], without being a citizen, to the post-communist citizen who dedicates themselves equally to participation, but also to the freedom not to participate, and finally to the digital citizen who experiments with new forms of mobilization (Krasteva 2013b).

Paraphrasing Althusser, we can say that anti-communism interpellates "Communist individuals" into "democratic, active citizens".

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Even though proponents of active citizenship see it as a continuation of the early modern European political tradition, its contemporary resurfacing cannot be explained in isolation from the neoliberal turn and the concomitant erosion of social rights and social citizenship that used to be guaranteed and made possible by the strong welfare states of the post-WWII period. Not only is this a radically new vision of citizenship which envisions the private organizations and associations of citizens as rival and even better providers of the "public good" than the state, but it also breaks with the abstract universal citizenship regime of the post-Revolutionary/modern state. The latter, which posited the abstract equality of citizens, is rapidly being replaced by a discursive determination of citizenship premised on unequally distributed class-based civic *substances.* The neoliberal restoration of upper-class power (Harvey 2011) seems to be redrawing the boundaries of national belonging by explicitly excluding the so-called economically "passive", "welfare-dependent" and deprived of knowledge/cultural capital demographics. This is an *explicit* ejection, as opposed to the operations of modern liberal citizenship which *tacitly* privileged the proverbial white, male property owner while paying lip service to the idea of political equality obtaining across, and cushioning, class inequalities.

Thus, in Bulgaria of 2013, the *de facto* state-led exclusion of working, poor and stigmatized populations from social citizenship through austerity measures and punitive neoliberal social policies such as workfare, is augmented and legitimized by the symbolic exclusion of the same demographics from political citizenship by the riotous middle class, as the discourse about the February protests demonstrates. **Neoliberal active citizenship**

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thus transports and legitimizes the inequalities obtaining between classes onto the terrain of citizenship, which in the past aimed at leveling them by reconciling the antagonistic classes in the idea of the abstract citizenry enjoying political and civic equality before the law and at the ballot box.

The transition to active citizenship has been well-documented on the terrain of social citizenship, more specifically in studies about the neoliberalization of welfare payments and entitlements and the transition from welfare to workfare (Jessop 1993; Jessop 1995; Peck 1998; Clarke 2005). Active citizenship marks the transition from rights-based membership where rights obtain regardless of what one does, to consecration of citizens in which citizenship is conditioned upon the fulfillment of duties and obligations (Lødemel 2001), or more broadly, on what one has *done* to deserve it. The "crafting of the neoliberal state" (Wacquant 2010) depends on evacuating social citizenship and replacing it with a punitive state which manages rising social insecurity with the 1) penal system and 2) the inculcation of "personal responsibility", as opposed to welfare handouts, thereby eroding the one of grounds for democratic citizenship: social citizenship (ibid). I will not dwell on the activation and responsibilization of citizens via government policy but on its counterpart in the ideology of the rising middle class of the summer protests. This ideology imbued abstract citizenship with a specific class substance: that of the responsible, enterprising and "right-thinking" citizen. In doing so, it breaks ranks with the Constitutional sanctioning of the abstract political equality of citizens of any class before

the law and the principle of "one-person-one-vote" (see Hall in (Donald and Hall 1986)

for a detailed discussion on political equality under liberalism).

Making citizenship more "substantive" has animated the diverse grass-roots struggles of

"second class citizens" for real inclusion, from the Civil Rights Movement to the efforts

of post-colonial subjects to be recognized as equals. The substantiation of citizenship has

led some scholars to speak of "cultural citizenship" qua the right to be different but equal

(Rosaldo 1994) or as subject making and negotiating belonging on part of cultural "others"

(Ong et al. 1996). However, we should not conclude from these examples that making

citizenship "substantive", still less "active" always means expanding democracy or

bringing its claims for political equality to bear. The case of the summer protests in

Bulgaria shows a modality of substantive citizenship that does not abrogate but *entrenches*

inequalities. It is the vision of citizenship, mediated by the middle-class ideology

discussed in the previous chapter. It is in turn animated by the strong moralistic component

in the protests ("morality in politics") which inclines protesters to engage in virtuous acts

to produce themselves as citizens.

I call the active civic ideals emanating from the protests a neo-Republican citizenship

regime. The neo-Republican citizenship echoes the classical Republican theory of

citizenship which consecrates citizens based on their commitment to the "common good"

and the virtuous abnegation of their private interest. If modern (liberal) citizenship

ascribes citizenship rights equally (at least in theory) to all members of the nation, the

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neo-Republican citizenship abrogates automatic ascription of citizenship rights and consecrates citizens in accordance to narrowly-defined criteria for excellence, merit, virtue and commitment. Yet, it differs from the classical version of Republicanism in that belonging to the new activist citizenship regime is mediated by conscious references to class, as attested by the examples of the discourse about the "new middle class" and "productive bourgeoisie" in the previous chapter. So, unlike the merit and heroism of the classical Republican ideal of the "citizen-soldier" (Riesenberg 1992), the neo-Republican discourse of the protesters teems with references to "active", "creative", "productive", "virtuous", "European", sometimes explicitly positing the figure of the successful entrepreneur as the model citizen. The neo-Republican citizenship regime is not tied to an ethnic (jus sanguinis) and or spatial (jus soli) vehicle for determination of belonging, but to one that runs along the axis "active" and "passive". In breaking with spatial and ethnic modalities of belonging, it thus offers a third alternative to the "classic" binary of "jus soli" and "jus sanguinis" determinations of citizenship: jus activus.

At its minimum, citizenship expresses the relationship of the individual to the state (Heater 2004: 144; Kofman 1995). Charles Tilly (Tilly 1997) defines citizens as claimants on the state. It is (was?) the primary vehicle of political integration: the citizens "inhere" in and observe the law, while the state is supposed to create conditions for them to "thrive" and "pursue their happiness" (however understood). Since there are neither ahistorical states nor citizenship regimes, we need to make sense of changes happening to the idea of the citizen today. In neoliberalism this means more deregulation, more civil society, and state

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intervention for creating the appropriate conditions for the markets to flourish. Neoliberal or neo-republican citizenship, I argue, is the relation between the citizen and the state apposite for our global post-Communist, neoliberal moment. If neoliberalism has been defined as a "restoration of raw class power" (of the upper class) from a Marxian perspective (Harvey 2007) and as a form of governmentality geared towards the production of responsibilized, enterprising, competitive and self-help subjects from a Foucauldian perspective (Brown 2003, 2005) (Cotoi 2011) (Lemke 2002; Ong et al. 1996) (N. S. Rose 2010; Foucault et al. 1991), the question is, what form of citizenship expresses and organizes better the profound changes in the political economy, the functioning of the state and the constitution of subjects since the neoliberal turn in the late 1970s? Critical scholars have theorized the emergence of "market citizenship" (Ong 2006), the commodification of citizenship (Boatca in Wallerstein, et al 2015) and "pecuniary citizenship" (Boatca in Jonsson and Willén 2017) as the new modes of citizenship befitting the neoliberal state. These terms express the degree to which neoliberal supply-side economics (R. Brenner 2006) produces state-society relations, privileging the entrepreneurial class (of any nationality). Take for example commodification of citizenship in the recent wave of passport sales to rich investors. As the relentless global spread of neoliberalism refashions the state into becoming more business-friendly and hospitable to investment, "the market becomes the primary site for the production, distribution and consumption of citizenship" (Abraham 2010: 52). While I agree with the premises of the critique to "market citizenship" I argue that the changes in the "tissue" of citizenship run deeper than the market relations that otherwise ground them. Namely, the case of the summer protests of 2013 shows the operations of a "neo-Republican" active

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citizenship which, while modeled after, and privileging the upper class, pivots on cultural, in addition to economic capital.

A clash of Citizenship Imaginaries

The notion of the citizenry, which coincides with that of the nation, expresses the political equality of all citizens belonging to a state, regardless of their concrete life circumstances and interests. It is important to emphasize that the political equality of citizens has always been a function of the exclusion of foreigners as well as of "internal outsiders": women, pariahs, minorities, the mad, etc. In as much as every citizenry is bounded, citizenship excludes some (Vincent in Evans 2001: 58). As Brubaker forcefully puts it,

> A nation-state is a nation's state, the state of and for a particular, bounded, sovereign nation to which foreigners, by definition, do not belong. By inventing the national citizen and the legally homogeneous national citizenry, the Revolution simultaneously invented the foreigner. Henceforth citizen and foreigner would be correlative, mutually exclusive, exhaustive categories (Brubaker 2002 [1992]: 46).

If citizenship is defined along ethno-cultural lines (*jus sanguinis*), it is prone to developing racialist vectors of inclusion and exclusion – a foreigner will never be a citizen, no matter how hard she tries to integrate. If it is based on territorial organization, like *jus soli*, it is more prone to universalistic inclusion. The French Republic tries (at least decoratively) to integrate everyone within its borders, regardless of their ethnic or religious background. Potentially, then, in the French Republican tradition of *jus soli*, "the only foreigner [..]

would be the bad citizen (Vincent in Evans 2001: 59). This aligns republicanism with the activist definition of citizenship whereby one becomes a citizen given that one fulfills one's moral *duties* (i.e. rending military service, in the French case; "schools and armies were engines of assimilation", ibid.: 58, which Ira et al in (Ellis 2006: 164 remind us are "disciplinary institutions") and engages in virtuous acts for the common good.

Granted, however organized, the nation is still widely accepted as space in which those that belong to it share in equal measures of rights and responsibilities. For example, Talcott Parsons argued that through citizenship universalistic norms supersede particularistic solidarities and identities, and the attendant privileges that entrenched the hierarchies of the *ancien regime* (Parsons 1971). T.H. Marshall thought that the political equality and the abrogation of privileges that come with modern citizenship can mitigate against the raging inequalities in the private or economic sphere of modern, capitalist societies. This echoes Hegel. The *Rechtsstaat*, Hegel thought, is to reconcile the antagonistic interests of its citizens that rage with full force in the domain of civil society. "Citizenship" supposedly erases the heterogeneity and distinctiveness of the specific individuals it applies to and creates a "nation of similar individuals" (Rosanvallon 2013) who are (in theory) equal before the law and enjoy (in theory) equal political rights ("one person = one vote").

Some knowledge of the formal juridical framework that lays out the rules of citizenship (i.e. in the Constitution) is important in order to obtain an understanding of the formal

criteria and definitions of a given country's citizenship regime. However, the formal approach can remain aloof to appropriations "from below" of the idea of citizenship which differ markedly from the Constitutional arrangement. Or if it acknowledges them, there is a danger in the Constitutionalist perspective to write them off as a *misunderstanding* on part of the social actors, clamoring to offer their own definitions (this seems to be the attitude of public intellectuals who regularly instruct the nation as to the proper meaning of their Constitution). It is my contention that the appropriations of the definition of citizenship, which the summer protest of 2013 is a case of, merit an explanation in their own right. Far from being symptomatic of society's supposed lack of understanding of the Constitution, they might be a symptom of the Constitution's lagging behind the tumultuous social life of the categories it codifies. This is not to say that I work with two supposedly separate levels of the ontological existence of citizenship: one formal, and the other – as it unfolds in actual practice. Rather, by "appropriations" of the liberal signifiers, I designate the practices of *polemical* re-signification of citizenship on a discursive level. As Foucault argued, every discourse obeys the rule of "the tactical polyvalence" meaning that it is "vulnerable" and "open" to appropriation and contestation on its own terms. The Constitution is still valid, regardless of the discursive battles raging around it. Yet it is not an external reality to these antagonisms. It is simultaneously a locus of struggle over the definition of "what really means to be a citizen" and a weapons repository the adversaries reach for.

The state-centered perspective sees bounded wholes of those, usually residing within the state boundaries, who count as citizens, and those beyond them – aliens, foreigners and other non-citizens. For example, Brubaker (1992: x) argues that "every state claims to be the state of, and for, a particular, bounded citizenry, usually conceived as a nation. The modern nation-state is in this sense inherently nationalistic." This is a useful approach when the scholar wants to examine the *official* or juridical organization of citizenship, as enshrined in Constitutions, legislative Acts, and so on. But the approach becomes less useful when one seeks to scrutinize the *practices* of citizenship, especially those surrounding some form of political crises, such as protests and social unrest. The state-centered approach also has the downside of taking at face value what states declare for themselves. This has led Brubaker to state that "[b]irth and residence in France automatically transform second-generation immigrants as citizens." While correct with respect to the legal framework, this claim overlooks the numerous forms of exclusion, including at the institutional level, meted out on such citizens; the very fact that nominal citizens are still called immigrants, albeit "second-generation", testifies to the existence of a less official, subterranean level of exclusion operative together with the official channels for civic incorporation.

In this chapter I want to focus on degrees of citizenship as obtaining *within* the nominally bounded national community. Those inhere in the imagination of intellectuals and politically active citizens and are not juridically enshrined (yet). They became increasingly widespread in the Bulgarian public sphere with the 2013 protest

mobilizations. I consider their existence as a symptom of a situation when an established social fact (i.e. "political equality of citizens") loses its efficacy, or in the words of the sociologist Deyan (Deyanov 2018), becomes "practically untrue" even though it is still the prevailing legal norm.

From Liberal democracy to (Neo)liberal Republicanism

The "model citizen" of the protest inheres in the plains of the political imaginary but citizenship regimes are certainly not immune to pressures from below that run counter to the established regime. As T.H. Marshall's classic study shows *a propos* Britain, citizenship regimes happen to be the result precisely of contestation from below. Particularly in Britain, political pressure, especially from the militant working class, expanded the boundaries of citizenship. In the case of Bulgaria, it took a world war and a Socialist revolution for that to happen. The first Communist-era Constitution of 1948 abolished the monarchy and redefined its subjects as citizens for the first time (Smilov and Jileva in (Bauböck and Perchinig 2009).30 Post-2013 Bulgaria is a probable case where pressure from below might result in narrowing citizenship.

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30 It is not far-fetched to conclude that a heritage of Communism (in its Stalinist variation) enables contemporary anti-communists to subjectivize themselves as "citizens" precisely in their opposition to Communism. Inasmuch as the imagination of being-a-citizen today is premised on a rejection of Communism, it is worthwhile to acknowledge that the Stalinist constitution of 1947 for the first time changed the legal status of Bulgarians from monarchic subjects to citizens (Smilov and Jileva 2009: 218) as it formally abolished the monarchy. Bulgarians became citizens for the first time during "the long night of Communism", in the poetic terms of Georgi Fotev, one of the most influential Bulgarian sociologists of civil society.

Basing his sociological theory of citizenship on the example of Britain, Marshall argued that citizenship rests on three pillars: civil, political and social rights, corresponding to the evolution of citizenship from the 18th to the 20th centuries. Marshall saw an inner and logical necessity to citizenship's gradual expansion, i.e. how can one enjoy solely the protections of the law without also having the right to vote for a legislative that would best protect one's interests? Seems logical but Marshall is rightfully accused of harboring evolutionary-teleological suppositions, namely, that one period somehow unproblematically leads to another, realizing the expansionary movement supposedly immanent to modern citizenship rights. It has also been criticized for overlooking the role of elites (Mann 1987). Teleology obscures the violence of racial-colonial regimes meted out on colonized or enslaved populations, including while 'integrating' and 'modernizing' them. Only recently have Western settler-colonial states began to open chapters of their history that reveal the cruel logics driving the efforts of "integration" into national citizenship i.e. via violent separation of indigenous children from their parents and placing them in boarding schools, subjecting them to neglect, abuse and workhouse-like conditions. This calls for attention to the neglected colonial conditions of citizenship, more generally, which is outside the scope of this thesis (Boatcă and Roth 2016).

Back to the critique of teleology, unfortunately, we need to accept that there is no necessity behind the expansion of rights (at least for national citizens) and that they are the product of struggle. And conversely, their abolition can be brought about by anti-democratic

forces winning the struggle. To show how misplaced any faith in the automatic progress and expansion of rights is, it suffices to take a look at democratic theory from 1980 and appreciate the naivete of the political common sense of the time that oozes from its pages: "The issues of slavery, progressive income tax, trade unionism and social security, for example [..] It is doubtful that any one of them is subject to serious reconsideration now or will be in the near future." (ref.) This was written just as the neoliberal rollback of the achievements of the post-war welfare state was gaining traction. Three decades of neoliberal ravages later have led to decline in unionism, have installed austerity states at the place of the welfare state, have privatized or slashed social security and substituted flat for progressive taxation (in the CEE). So, three out of four items from the list of taken for granted above have been 'reconsidered'. Except slavery. Only slavery hasn't been rehabilitated. Yet.

The roll-back of the welfare state since the 1970s and the concomitant discarding of the social rights from the bundle proves that the three pillars of citizenship are not the immutable characteristic thereof but their presence (and absence) is subject to constant political and social strife over the definition of what counts as "citizenship rights". However, the tripartite definition of Marshall can help us orient ourselves in the process of unraveling of the bundle of rights constituting modern citizenship. It can also illuminate the logic according to which some protests count as legitimate expression of citizen anger and aspirations, whereas others do not.

By way of an example, shortly after the June 2013 protests began, a terrible industrial

tragedy befell a group of miners at the privatized Oranovo mine. An explosion in the mine,

notorious for systematic abuse of workers, killed several miners and injured many. Some

protesters tried to introduce the topic of "Oranovo" into the chain of demands of the

summer protest, by featuring it in slogans or by trying to persuade the organizers to include

a demand for "justice for Oranovo" among the official slogans. These attempts were

rejected by the organizers and did not receive support from fellow-protesters. This led to

a first strong wave of "disappointments" and abandoning of the protests on part of left-

leaning citizens. As Kalina, a left-leaning journalist and a cultural anthropologist

explained to me,

> I went there and spoke to whoever I could about Oranovo, but they scolded
> me to stop with this 'socialist stuff'. For the love of God, what socialist
> stuff!? Are we not all workers? This is not about socialism but about basic
> rights for workers, such as workplace safety.

After failing to reach an agreement about what counts as a legitimate demand of the

protest, Kalina stopped attending (as I was told of others).

The non-admission of social rights[31] into the chain of equivalence of the summer protests,

together with the attacks on the political rights (the franchise) which all citizens enjoy as

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31 In all fairness, they are not fully barred but their partial integration into the chain of demands is
    symptomatic. For example: a few months after the summer protests erupted, Daniel Smilov, one of
    Bulgaria's most renowned liberal experts of populism, and Lea Vajsova, a Sofia University sociologist,

per Constitution (which I referred to in the previous chapter) put the protests firmly into the ground of 18th century "civil rights" pillar of citizenship of Marshall's theory. This is one instance where contemporary liberalism seems to be returning to its origins.[32]

The strong post-material aspect of the demands of the summer protests, rejecting social rights and politics based on class interest, could easily lead us to associate them with the "New Social Movements" which Habermas depicts as breaking with

> areas of material reproduction [as opposed to class politics]; they are no longer channeled through parties and organizations; and they can no longer be alleviated by compensations that conform to the system. Rather, the new conflicts arise in areas of cultural reproduction, social integration, and socialization (J. Habermas 1981: 33).

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produced an edited volume comprising influential interventions and commentaries about the protests by Bulgarian intellectuals (Smilov and Vaĭsova 2013). The volume is split into several thematic sections, thematically covering the diverse social ills the protests addressed. The only reference to "social rights" is the heading "social justice and judiciary reform" and the articles grouped in it unequivocally treat social justice as a function of an efficient judiciary. In the Marshallian framework, in the protesters' scheme social rights have lost their autonomous character and are subsumed under civil rights. This is because anything which smacks remotely of social rights is associated with socialism and is therefore suspicious and barred admission into the chain of equivalence of the protest demands. Moreover, as the previous chapter showed, the protesters framed social rights as social 'privileges' (allegedly demanded by the winter protesters) while the only legitimate rights to fight for are "civil rights". Needless to say, the conversion of (social) "rights" into "privileges" cancels the legitimacy of the struggle for rights.

32 Such "hardening" of liberal-democratic ideology is wrongly perceived as an aberration, i.e. in concepts such as "muscular liberalism" which lead one to think that an otherwise "nice" liberalism is turning disciplinarian and rough. In actual fact, liberalism has always been brutal, especially in its inception. i.e. it was compatible with slavery and work houses, see (Losurdo 2014).

As a point of comparison, and closely related to the contemporary landscape of social protests, Jasper (Jasper 1997: 6-7) differentiates between citizenship and post-citizenship protests. The former was characteristic of the industrial age (and the period before it), organized by social groups who were excluded from full human rights, citizenship and economic protections, such as workers and women. Even when workers were fighting for economic gains, they were simultaneously expanding the contours of citizenship. In contrast, post-citizenship protests belong to groups that are politically, economically and culturally integrated in society and act on behalf of others. Those were moral reformers in the 20th century or what came to be known as "new social movements". Unlike the industrial social movements, the post-citizenship ones are said to be waged over "post-material" aims: such as recognition of previously stigmatized identities (i.e. Jasper lists the LGBT, environmentalist, etc. movements; although it is not fully clear to me why environmentalism should be a "post-material" or identity concern; isn't "nature" the most elementary matter to begin with?). In short, Jasper restates the dichotomy between the "new social movements" which mobilize based on identity and status vs the traditional, class-based mobilizations of the industrial era. (Another example of this dichotomy is Nancy Fraser's (Fraser 2000) "recognition vs redistribution" approach which she tries to overcome.)[33]

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33 Yet the term post-citizenship is untenable and does not do justice to the complex nature of citizenship rights. For example, even when struggling for recognition, such as of same-sex marriage, the post-citizenship protest also works on the boundaries of citizenship in that it integrates previously excluded groups into the very material benefits civic rights have on their bearer (i.e. to inherit the property of one's spouse). We can say that nearly every protest, whatever its concrete aim, has ramifications on citizenship in that it forces the state to recognize and meet demands (whether for distribution or for legalization of socially entrenched practices.

The Bulgarian summer of 2013 overcomes the dichotomy between moral/post-material vs. material/citizenship protests. It was a protest at once anti-material and material, that is to say, explicitly *not* for wages, utilities and welfare handouts which is what the protesters understand by "material protest". Rather, the protest was for immaterial and European values. However, this did not mean it was solely an "identity" protest either: it was a class-based, class-constituting one, and a citizenship protest at least at the level of its discursive frame which sought to redefine the contours of legitimate belonging in the community of citizens along (middle) class lines. And because it excluded various categories of people from legitimate citizenship, we can complement the citizenship and post-citizenship typology of protests of Jasper's with an anti-citizenship aspect (to be discussed at length in the next chapter).

Let me elaborate the Neo-Republican citizenship regime against the backdrop of the current discussion on citizenship. I draw on ideal-types of citizenship regimes in the literature.

Liberal vs. Republican Citizenship

While liberal theory has habituated us to associating citizenship with political equality in democracies, this has not always been the case. According to Peter Riesenberg, there are two distinct historical phases of citizenship. The first phase consisted of "an old elitist

citizenship of virtue"; the second is the modern democratic idea of citizenship which replaced virtue with inclusive national citizenship "centered on the requirement of loyalty" to the state (Heater 2004: 4) and regular voting for one's representatives (Riesenberg 1992: 256). This is also known as the Republican vs liberal citizenship regimes. "Republican" connotes active participation of virtuous citizens, and honoring one's duties, usually in a small-scale context (Heater 2004: 69); liberal – that the state should observe citizens' rights (similar to Isaiah Berlin's "negative liberty") while the citizens are left free to pursue their own private interests (ibid.: 69). The difference should not be absolutized: both regimes put "liberty" at the heart of the analysis, only civic republicanism thinks it can be achieved through public service (Skinner in Mouffe 1992: 221), rather than by pursuit of one's private vices. In the Republican model one becomes citizen if one proves oneself deserving of this honor or based on the attainment/display of some socially respectable substance: property, heroic deed, honor, etc., and by working selflessly for the "public good". To the active/passive dichotomy correspond the properties of "passive bearer of rights", and "citizens actively virtuous in the public arena." (Penny Enslin and Patricia White in Blake 2003: 113). Or citizenship as a status and as practice, respectively (Lister 1997: 6). According to Enslin and White, civic republicans contrast private to public life and hold participation in the latter superior to the former. This has resulted in a bias against women because of their confinement to the less prestigious private sphere (Abraham 2010). Accordingly, no efforts have been spared in making citizenship more inclusive and correcting its deficient universality with "differentiated universalism" (Lister 1997), "transversal dialogue" (Yuval-Davis 1997

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quoted by Abraham et al 2010: 8), "deliberative democracy" (Enslin and White 2003: 115).

There is not one unified and homogeneous set of rules that distinguishes the Republican citizenship regimes. In every polity in the early modern period the regime was different (Quaglia in Ellis 2006). Anna Quaglia tries to develop a definition capturing all the common aspects thusly: "Generally, the elements that distinguished the citizen or the 'man of the town' and the 'foreigner' were owning land, enjoying the usufruct of common lands and holding public offices" (2006: 110). In short, property and participation in public affairs. She argues that in the 18th century citizenship became gradually disconnected from participation in economic life and government and transformed into "an eminently juridical concept" (2006: 111). In contrast, (and in theory!) the liberal model is a "society of abstract equals", to paraphrase Rosanvallon (2013); one citizen equals one vote, irrespective of substantive qualifications or properties. The transition to abstract from substantive citizenship came with the French Revolution and the concomitant building of the centralized bureaucratic state.34 With the French Revolution "[a]n immediate, direct form of state-membership replaced the mediated, indirect forms of membership

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34 The modern revolutions did not keep the dichotomy intact and relied on a combination of the two. The summer protests also synthesize both into active participation within a liberal frame. If to be a "good citizen" means "to feel an allegiance to the state" (Heater 2004: 2), the protesters complicate this precisely by refusing to be obedient and loyal allies of their state; true civic virtue now means that you pull up a heroic fight against the state, not as a generalized opposition to it but from the perspective of a meta-state and a meta-law which the empirically existing and concrete governments and laws are perceived to violate.

characteristic of the ancien regime." (Brubaker 1992: 48). And thus a "general membership status" replaced the special, variegated, privilege-based rights and duties of the previous regime (ibid.: 40). (At least until the constitution of 1791 when property qualifications were introduced enfranchising only "active citizens", see Hobsbawm (Hobsbawm 1995: 64). This means that liberal citizenship aspires to envelope the co-nationals of the country, irrespective of their substantive characteristics (i.e. class, gender), or it is at least formally independent from them. "The definition of citizenship is abstract and formal, not concrete and substantive." (Brubaker.: 40). It means common, not particular, rights and obligations, like in the *ancien regime* when obligations and rights were determined by corporation membership, privileges, vestigial seigneurial rights, and so on.

However, the transition between the two regimes was less clear-cut than Brubaker suggests. It should be noted that the democratization of liberal citizenship was itself a gradual product of constant struggle. Possession of property was the main requirement to be admitted in civil society and in the political community of citizens in "classical liberal theory". (See e.g. Losurdo (2014) on the "Herrenvolk democracy" of slave-owners.) The French Revolution made possible the democratic expansion of citizenship, but it was fraught with tensions with regards to how much democracy is good for the polity. Thus, shortly after the French Revolution, some revolutionaries sought to defend it from "too much democracy", as I outlined in the second chapter. Also, at that time, the distinction between active and passive citizenship was manufactured as a technology of limiting

democracy. The most paradigmatic representative of the effort to delimit political equality was Abbe Sieyers. The universalistic appeal to citizenship (within the national community) and restrictions thereof arose almost simultaneously, for example, through the proliferation of "qualifiers" to designate the inauthentic citizens. In the past it was property: the "suffrage [in American colonies] was pegged to property ownership (Heater 2004: 75, 120, 122). As I will show below, in the imagination of the 2013 summer protesters, it is not property per se, but property of the subject: mostly cultural capital, knowledge and civic competences, civilized demeanor.

In Abbe Sieyers's scheme active denoted political while passive – civil – citizenship. "Active" citizenship presupposed qualifications as a precondition of citizenship (while Robespierre was against): "active citizen = he who paid the equivalent of three days of unskilled work in direct taxes" (Heater 2004: 81-82). Heater explains how the division of citizens into two classes worked: "[o]nly active citizens could vote. Passive citizens – for example, domestic servants or those who pad little or no tax – were denied the right" (1990: 50, quoted in (Dynneson 2001: 181). "Passive citizenship safeguarded everyone's person, property and liberty. Active citizenship was reserved for the adult male who would contribute to the welfare of the state with his body and property" (Riesenberg 1992: 271), echoing expectations of the good citizen in classical Athens (Christ 2006: 1). Riesenberg continues:

> [Sieyes'] analysis is loaded against the poor and the uneducated, against, that is, the mass of French workingmen in his day. Only the relatively wealthy and well educated, those with the time and intelligence for politics,

would function as citizens in postrevolutionary France. So, although the rhetoric of citizenship flourished, the actuality remained quite limited (1992: 271)

Despite these historical gray zones and overlaps, I will keep the clear-cut heuristic distinction between active replication and liberal citizenship regimes for analytical purposes.

To reiterate, the so-called "liberal" regime of citizenship distributes citizenship by ascription (Brubaker 1992: 32). In contrast, the 2013 protests portend a return to virtue/merit-based citizenship, akin to the older Republican type, and today they are doing this in a liberal framework, in the economic sense of the word. Republican citizenship, argues Riesenberg, is

> small-scaled, culturally monolithic, hierarchical, and discriminatory – and also moral, idealistic, spiritual, active, participatory, communitarian and even heroic in that it commanded personal military service from its citizens. [..] In [Republican] citizenship, politics was frequently intense, and one was not really considered a citizen until he was seen to participate in it. (Riesenberg 1992: xviii-xix)

The protests have revived an Aristotelian-inflected way of acquiring virtue, that is to say, by active participation (Riesenberg 1992: xix) (in governing, for Aristotle, in protesting or in business and other middle-class domains, for the protesters). The Aristotelian virtue pertains only to concrete individuals, which differentiates it from the modern citizenry, now subsumed under the abstract "general will" (ibid.: xx). Virtue did not disappear

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entirely from modern citizenship but gets re-coded as the product of industry and economic success rather than military victory. This is the point where the two citizenships of Riesenberg lose their distinct diachronic natures and collapse into the neo-Republican regime where *the heroism of the entrepreneur-protester serves as the primary source of citizenship rights*. What this new citizenship regime takes over from the old is that not origin/descent, but *action* determines who is a citizen (Riesenberg 1992: 44). What it discards from the old is the principle that only property-owners liberated from manual work or any work which aims at securing the physical reproduction of the polis qualify to be citizens (Reisenberg 1992: 45). In fact, to the summer protesters of 2013 the frugal work ethic seems central. In contrast to the morality at the heart of the Platonic and Aristotelian notions of the citizen which bounds together successive generations of citizens of *different 'classes'* (if this term is appropriate at all to apply to ancient society) at the expense of their self-interest, the protesters' morality roots itself directly in the *partial* image of the economically productive and hardworking citizen (negatively defined against the "bad" and lazy anti-citizen on welfare), although here we also encounter the theme of the self-sacrifice, albeit in the domain of work and civic virtue, i.e. protesting after work and *working during protest* (see Chapter three). Yet chiefly, for the summer protests of 2013 knowledge, culture, morality and avowed disinterestedness in the material became chief vectors for civic authenticity, marking the difference of this citizenship from the market and pecuniary citizenships, premised on upper-class power and interests.

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Because the protests relied on a differentiation of citizens as "active" or "passive", their understanding of citizenship is like what Dynneson (2001) calls "civism", or the condition of "actually" acting out one's being-citizen. This gives the neo-Republican citizenship a pronounced performative edge: I act; therefore, I am (a citizen). The upshot is that, while civism is tacit and implicit and thus, practical citizenship, the protesters' civism gets explicated.

Ascriptive citizenship, or the automatic integration of a subject into a national community via the legal codification of the chance circumstances of their birth – be they territorial or descent-related – becomes overwritten by a logic which demands that claims to citizenship must be substantiated and deserved (via one's *active* participation in the community of citizens). This performativity, however, opens the way to excluding "passive" citizens. Not just by the protesters but also by the liberal theory. For example, Heater normatively distinguishes between "citizenship" and "citizens":

> although billions are classified as citizens, only a small proportion [..] can be *truly* said to enjoy citizenship as a status of social dignity and a source of effective rights. And only a small proportion can be said to exercise citizenship as a mode of moral behavior. (quoted by Dynneson 2001: 13, emphasis added)

Riesenberg also seems to have approached the issue with a bias for the Republican citizenship. Namely, he lionizes it for cultivating active citizens who seize every opportunity to acquire and signal virtue by sacrificing their private comforts for the

common good. By contrast, the liberal citizenship becomes passive, captured by the image of the "mass man or woman" (ibid.: xxi) and a "passive citizenry" who "view politics at a distance, beer in hand" (ibid.: xx). While analytically useful, his ideal-type of modalities of citizenship need to be purged from such quasi-Weberian moralistic biases against people who live "of politics" because in the case of the Bulgarian protests, that would mean conferring a patina of scholarly legitimization onto the protesters' own post-democratic classificatory scheme and thereby occluding its political and economic conditions of possibility. In other words, instead of denouncing "passivity" (and related vices such as consumerism) and reproducing the dichotomies ("moral-immoral") operative in the discourses we study, we need to look into the conditions that make business and middle class *asceticism* a political and civic virtue appealing for the protesters, namely neoliberal austerity politics which rolls back the welfare state through the activation of self-responsible citizens.

Let us see, without further ado, how the protesters refocused the figure of the citizen and the boundaries of citizenship.

The Neo-Republican Civic Imagination

In the last days of February 2016 a few newspapers published an anonymous manifesto titled "On the Republic."35 On March 3rd, 2016, the day Bulgaria celebrates its liberation

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35   Here is my translation of the Manifesto:

The Republic is in danger. The enemies of our freedom are not in front of the Republic's gate [an allusion to the revolutionary Comte de Volney] – they are inside it and ravage it with impunity. Being debauched by the government, parliament, parties, courts, prosecution and media-bats; robbed, insulted and ridiculed, today the Republic is humiliated and brought to its knees. The #Who model [mafia, Peevski] does not need it. To cement its dominance, it must eliminate the Republic, and the easiest way is through simulation. Our imitation of a country is not governed by the law, but through extortion, intimidation, seduction and corruption [*pokvara*, a religious term] which nevertheless make use of the levers of ministries, government offices and the courts. The weakening of the Republic and its laws unclogs injustice that poisons the lives of all. Unpunished evil becomes the norm, naked power – the law, impudence – turns into a measure of power. The institutions of the state are taken hostage and act as executive authorities of the Mafia in hidden mockery of statutory law. Mafia takes all it fancies – banks, businesses, public funds, nature. And it replaces Republican order with dark feudal relationships to turn every citizen into a serf of the oligarchy. We and our ancestors were building a pure and holy Republic. We believed that we can live without masters, and in pride, freedom and dignity. But today not a drop of purity and holiness is left; instead of them fear, arbitrariness and humiliation walk streets. T[he Mafia] threaten, extort, beat and kill. From them we can hide neither behind the walls of their homes, nor in the depths of our disgust. Enough retreat already! It is time for citizens to come together to save their Republic and to drive the usurpers of our freedom outside its frontiers. The Republic has fallen into dust and only we, the citizens, by standing up, can help it stand on its feet. We declare: we do not engage in lying, we are not afraid, we won't keep silent, we will resist the arbitrariness and expose corruption [*pokvara*]. We do not obey nor "put up" [with reality]. We stand erect wherever we are; and help those around us to stand up too; We stand for righteousness and truth even in the little things, because we know that every upright citizen is stronger than any mobster. We seek unity and welcome any citizen movement, organization or party which have not placed themselves in dependence and service of organized crime and the oligarchy, and who want to join in the common cause of saving the Republic. The social contract between citizens and the state has been violated and continues to be violated systematically by the institutions subordinated to the *zadkulisie* of power. We do not allow that! We call on the parliamentary represented political parties IMMEDIATELY to meet society's expectations for deep, radical reform of all institutions – especially the judiciary, national security and the overall national administration in order to definitely eradicate the control exercised by the post-communist criminal oligarchy on the institutions of power. If they are unwilling or unable to assume this responsibility before the nation, the currently represented in the representative institutions political parties shall forfeit the right to call themselves parties, or political representatives of the people. And they have to yield their positions to civil and political alternatives capable of carrying out vital to the nation and the Republic reforms. This is neither "right" nor "left" platform. The seeming partisan confrontation is fueled by the #WHO model whose criminal brigades don differently colored ideological outfit in order to avoid identification. If we remain prisoners of the illusion that the mafia can be left or right, we ourselves will quarrel with each other along the "left-right" lines – in the interests of #WHO. Political differences will have a reasonable base only when we recover the Republic. There is good. And there is evil. Once again, it's time for everyone to pick a side. Once again, we will say that freedom is a right we possess by nature. Let every citizen of the Republic join this manifesto. Spread the word. There is neither left, nor right – today there are only citizens against the mafia!

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from the Ottoman empire, a group of four public intellectuals active in the 2013 summer protests publicly declared their fatherhood of the manifesto. And fathers they are – all of them are men: Evgenii Daynov, Ognyan Minchev, Antonii Todorov, and Alexander Kiossev. All of them are also university professors. In addition to that, they double as think tank experts or directors (Minchev, Daynov) of some of the more important policy centers from the 1990s.

The publication of the manifesto, and the revelation of its fathers caused mild euphoria in liberal circles. The manifesto has been signed by over 4000 people, and counting, at the time of writing. Among the official initiating committee of the manifesto (26 persons) there are only 5 women. Most of the faces of this committee are those of the intellectual, policy and business elite which participated and/or endorsed the 2013 summer protest.

The fathers of the manifesto organized a "launch" in a new cafe, a cross between a library and a bar, which is popular with the intellectual elite of the capital. I could not attend but I listened to a radio interview Daynov gave in which he explained the purpose of the manifesto. The occasion was solemn enough – 3rd of March is the most important national holiday with which Bulgarians mark the carving of the Bulgarian state from the crumbling Ottoman empire. In that radio interview Daynov indexed the manifesto to the national-

Accessible from *http://zarepublikata.eu/?do=manifest*

liberation struggle by claiming that they are fighting for "a pure and holy Republic",

invoking a popular quote by Vassil Levski – Bulgaria's most revered national-liberation

hero. He added that it is no coincidence that Levski had said "Republic" instead of

"democracy". The latter, according to Daynov, is a mere set of procedures for determining

who succeeds whom in office, whereas a Republic is something altogether different. It

refers to citizens' *virtues*. If democracy refers to the "empty place of power" (Lefort 1988),

the Republic fills that place with virtuous *substance*. In fact, Daynov used the word

"*palnezh*" which means "filling" (n.) or substance. This *palnezh* is the civil virtue of select

citizens: those who "walk upright" as Daynov mentioned, but which is also a recurring

expression in the manifesto, too. The manifesto is unapologetically moral: "there is no left

and right", proclaim the authors, "only good and evil."

On the occasion of the publication of the "Manifesto for the Republic" prof. Aleksander

Kiossev was invited to the political talk-show *Panorama* on national TV. This is how he

explained the rationale of the *Manifesto:*

> Kiossev: I am a representative of a species that is going extinct. It is called
> the citizen. I am an ordinary citizen. I am not a politician. I must remind
> you of the expression of Hungarian writer Gyorgy Konrad of "anti-
> politics". And I have come here to remind you that the only anti-political
> being is the citizen's. Anti-politics means that there is something different
> from the professional political elites. There are ordinary citizens who have
> rights and responsibilities and those rights are pre-political. As such they
> are condition for every kind of politics. And when the state is not going
> well, citizens bond with other citizens, creating a natural citizens'
> mobilization and in this way the political elites feel threatened and their
> legitimacy questioned.

Host: you want to scare the elites?

Kiossev: yes, and I think we did scare them in 2013. They think the citizens' energy has gone away after the protests, but it hasn't. Each one of the huge number of citizens, *and mind you, not all Bulgarians are citizens*, we must say this, in the soul of each citizen there is energy and possibility for mobilization. The consistent appearance of initiatives testifies to this.

Host: do you want to distinguish between the good and the evil?

Kiossev: Yes. But we do not want to say who is good and who is evil; we want to remind everyone of those basic principles which separate the one from the other. We are here to remind that there are basic directions [*orientiri]* in society: there is north and south, good and evil, morality and anti-morality, public sphere and *zadkulisie* [those "behind the scenes", a synonym for the mafia].

Host: you mentioned that there are Bulgarians who are not citizens. What are they, then?

Kiossev: they will become citizens. There are those who are still dormant. But that doesn't mean there isn't any citizens potential in them.

Host: would they want to be awaken by four professors? [..] And what do you want from the politicians?

Kiossev: we want from them to remember the basic principles laid out by Vassil Levski. These are "pure and sacred republic". When I was observing the crowd commemorating the death of Levski, I was thinking so few of them must remember that the pathos of the Apostle is actually civic [*grazhdanski,* as opposed to ethnic]. He spoke of the sacred republican principle. We want to go back to the fundamental norms and principles that

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stem from the Republican idea. And if we talk about "Republic", it is because the word "democracy" has lost its meaning in Bulgaria.

Host: why?

Kiossev: Because of 25 years of transition. [..] We remind the public of those basic foundational principles related to citizens' mobilizations and civil society without which we cannot move forward. [..] it is true that after 25 years of transition, civil society is still unripe. We must start from the beginning. [..] We must keep repeating simple truths, truths which are not populist.

At some point then-deputy prime minister Donchev, signals he wants the floor by heavy panting and says, "I can explain..." but Kiossev rebukes him: "Probably you can but we don't want to listen to you anymore." Donchev lashes out on Kiossev: "It is really unfair to strip me of my right to call myself citizen. The politician is not an aristocrat. Political office is something temporary. The good politician acts as a citizen, not as a professional aristocrat [sic]" (BNT 2016).

This conversation most clearly captures the distinction between what citizenship literature defines as republican vs. liberal citizenship. That Kiossev refocuses citizenship along republican lines is visible not only because of the title of the manifesto, but because citizenship for him must be earned and deserved by demonstrating virtue, anti-populism and by being active as opposed to dormant/passive. In contrast, the professional politician subscribed to the Constitutional idea of citizenship, according to which every person born in Bulgaria to at least one Bulgarian parent is a citizen, regardless of occupation, class,

merit, possession of moral virtues and other lofty substances (*palnezh*). In the liberal

citizenship, one is not officially obliged to struggle to be consecrated a citizen. In contrast,

in Kiossev's highly restrictive virtue-based understanding of citizenship, not all

Bulgarians are citizens and the citizen is going extinct.

To conclude this section, the case of the summer 2013 protest reveals how the

"integrative" logic of citizenship is coming undone under the pressure from

neoliberalization, and being replaced with a new modality of activist citizenship in which

"the good citizen" starts meaning someone who actively protests in the name of a

(metaphysical) order and a "new morality" as per the summer protests' rhetoric.[36] Having

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36 This departure from the liberal democratic frame does not make the protests necessarily "illiberal". For example, with regards to the imaginary of citizenship, normative liberal theory would not recognize this new conception of citizenship as legitimately liberal. For instance, activist civizenship was scorned by liberal theorists because constant mobilization in the public sphere can undermine private liberties. Ralf Dahrendorf calls it "total citizen" (Dahrendorf 1974), teasing out homologies of active citizenship to the totalitarian state. Vincent thus differentiates liberal and republican regimes in terms of civic (republican, duty-based, activist) and civil citizenship (that emphasizes negative liberty, rights to life and property), respectively (2001: 56-57). The latter is a minimal citizenship, complementing the minimal state desired in classical liberal theory (ibid: 57). If we use Kierkegaard's language, the former is an "ethical" citizenship, in that it subordinates the individual to the well-being of the re/public, the latter is "aesthetic" in that it consecrates the citizen as an individual who pursues their own ends within the juridical structure of the Rechtstaat where the rule of law is supposed to guarantee minimal friction and resolve conflicts arising from the pursuit of self-interests (see Bideleux 2001 Same volume as Vincent. The Edinburgh Companion to Contemporary Liberalism. Mark Evans (ed.) 2001 Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.) The crucial question is how is liberal activist citizenship possible? Regardless of its departure from normative liberal theory, activist citizenship need not be radically opposed to liberalism if we take into account 1) the self-identified liberal politics of the actors involved, or the liberalism of their "causes", and if 2) liberalism is approached with more precision, that is to say, if we see that the defining vector for the legitimacy of "active citizenship" is economic liberalism – entrepreneurship, creativity, its subject - the "productive classes" fighting the oligarchs, etc, rather than the concept of "negative freedom" which animates Dahrendorf's objection to "active citizenship".

claims on the state (especially of material kind) is increasingly considered "bad citizenship". (Except, of course, to be left alone.)

The Moral-Civilized Citizens of an Immoral State

The overt moralistic message of the protesters ("beyond left and right") bears on the ways in which not only citizenship but also civil society is (re)focused as a terrain on which claims and counter-claims are hurled the authorities' way (and the non-participating, passive citizens). From the formal terrain on which diverse social interests are expressed and pursued by way of free associations of the citizens, civil society becomes substantiated as the cultural frame which fences off the fragile civilizational gains of the anti-communist opposition against the corrupting influences of the post-communist populist power elite and its innumerable minions on welfare. In a way, we have a rehabilitation of a quasi-Lockean idea of "civil society against the state", albeit not the political state but the *state of nature*. In fact, in Locke's theory civil society coincides with political society (which is only separated later by Hegel, and still later by the late 1980s and 1990s anti-communist opposition). This "neo-Lockean" civil society which returns to "civil" its relation to the word "civilization" and "civilized" nevertheless differs from Locke's in that the protesters speak of "pre-political truths" qua the "civilizational foundation of politics" (Kiossev, Daynov, and Todorov 2016). The rest is "savagery" [*divashtina*], and "barbarians" (Daynov). In short, this is a civil and civilizing society against the state of nature, embodied by the post-communist chaos and non-civilization.

As protesters repeatedly emphasize, the left-right distinctions will only make sense when

the civilization/normality/good health is restored:

> The clash of civilizations – the cultural revolution – was ripening up even at the time of the first GERB government [2009-2013]. After they finally unmasked themselves as a wild horde which pillages everything on its way, PM Borrisov's clique made it clear to the woke citizens that not all divisions in society can be attributed to the usual "left-right" quarrel; that there are more fundamental distinctions which surpass said quarrel. Namely, the divisions between civilized people and barbarians. It dawned on us that only civilized people can divide into left and right whereas the barbarians must not be allowed into this discussion because they will beat up and rob the discussants. (Daynov 2013a)

To the protest-intellectuals everything is subordinated to culture, acquired through

virtuous self-cultivation and austere self-abnegation. Culture is a function of self-denial

and even hunger (becoming therefore a legitimization of austerity, as I show in the next

chapter.)

In explaining what went wrong with the Republic, Konstantin Pavlov, a blogger,

sociologist, civil society activist, identifies (among other reasons)

> *the lack of citizens*. There is a lack of persons who take interest in the commonwealth and work in its interest. Unfortunately, Bulgarian citizens have always been alienated from their state and the muddy streets, broken sidewalks, bad street lighting and shoddy buildings are just the symptoms of this phenomenon. [..] Once we accept Montesquieu's formula that the basis of democracy is *virtue*, we must conclude that *corrupt morals* are incompatible with a democratic state order. In other words, the democratism [sic] of corrupted people is void, insignificant, pointless,

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superficial, meaningless. It is an artificial objectivity which covers an utter vacuity (Pavlov 2016).

The most pressing problem is thus the lack of real citizens with a virtuous democratic-cultural *substance*, to substitute for those clad in "artificial objectivity".

Naturally, the sudden relevance of early modern theoreticians of civil society and democracy to the protests is mediated by the context wherein it occurs. The return to the classics is "tarnished" with contemporary influences, such as the post-political turn to politics after the demise of the socialist regimes in 1989. Not to mention austerity measures geared to the production of "self-responsible citizens". But here post-politics is given fresh impetus by removing it from the domain of technocratic expertise and NGO structures and rooting it in the heart of the active and virtuous self-abnegating citizenry tasked with the objective of providing the "anthropological", "cultural" and "civilizational" foundations for the exercise of politics and citizenship proper. It is the result of the search for the civil/ized and cultured class to be the social base for the "unpopular" neoliberal reforms, as I explained in the previous chapter.

Another difference is the indexing of "democratism" with morality. Modern, secular rule of law states decide on the law, rather than morality, leaving it in the domains of private conscience or organized religions to determine what counts as good or bad. One of the defining features of the modern secular state has been the (never perfectly implemented)

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secularist ideal to separate state and church and privatize religion, and by extension, morality. In theory, the liberal state is not supposed to legislate on matters related to morality; the state writes the law and expects citizens to abide by it, but the citizens can subscribe to their own moral views provided that they observe the law. This vision of the modern state was articulated most forcefully by Immanuel Kant. Secularism is not the abolition of religion, it is the privatization thereof (Scott 2007). Ideally, in the liberal and pluralistic state there should be space for a plurality of moral ontologies and views. The trend towards the cancellation of the secular framework which forecloses the state's capacity to adjudicate on matters of morality is visible in the ideology of the 2013 summer protest. Rather than upholding the division between rule of law and morality, the protest intellectuals construed a tension between them and resolved it at the expense of the rule of law. In that sense the ideology of the protest movement is a departure from the liberal-democratic rule of law in that the latter is premised on 1) a secular framework that presumes that 2) there is no highest authority above the Law that is of concern to states. By contrast, in the protesters' ideology, morality and the law are not separate domains (private and public, respectively) but morality is deprivatized and promoted to a position that grounds the Law and is a substance of democracy, as per Pavlov. A similar post-secularist trend can be observed in current mutations of migration management towards conservative directions by making naturalization conditional not only upon one's lawful conduct, but also knowledge and "correct" private moral views. The trend is called by

some authors as "illiberal liberalism" (Orgad 2010) and "muscular liberalism" (Basham and Vaughan-Williams 2013)37.

For example, during the 2013 protests, I attended a student discussion on "what is to be done". A student addressed the assembly by saying "It is up to us to validate our public transit tickets, to recycle our garbage". To be honest, at that time I laughed it off as a stark illustration of students' lack of political education and preparedness. Wasn't the whole point to have working institutions and not have everyone virtuously shouldering the responsibility of the authorities? Seems not. Today I am certain that my laughter was indicative solely of the lack of my own ability to understand what it means to be a model/civilized citizen for these protesters. Even though the protest intellectuals sometimes invoke Konrad's 'anti-politics', this is not the anti-politics of the private individual, but the virtuous anti-politics of *public individuals*: each citizen's personal contribution to the "civilizational" make-up of the commonwealth, of the *res publica,* and his or her exercise of active vigilance over the other citizens. It is the political counterpart of the neoliberal self-help citizen in the economy.

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37 These qualifiers betray an essentialist understanding of liberalism on part of the literature. Liberalism has been quite brutal historically and nothing precludes it from returning to some of its roots; the pursuit of happiness and liberty has existed unproblematically with the most oppressive slavery regime in history – the racial chattel slavery in the United States. See Losurdo 2014.

Civic Asceticism, Entrepreneurial Citizenship and the Priestly Discourse of Civil Society

In what follows, I will discuss the protests' refocusing of the principle of abstract citizenship and the filling of its form with very concrete heroic-entrepreneurial content which at once decouples citizenship from its abstract form, and from the democratic national community to which it was traditionally tied. I will tease out some "priestly" aspects of the discourse, stemming from the avowed disinterestedness of the protester. As Bourdieu quips, "the ideology of disinterest, [..] is the professional ideology of clerics of every kind" (1991: 215). Friedrich Nietzsche made a similar argument in his *Genealogy of Morals,* slamming all self-abnegating and ascetic practices as the domain of priests and slavish morality. However, the case here shows that *masters*38 also peddle priestly morality.

The notion of entrepreneurship need not connote the insatiable conspicuous consumer and luxury-wrapped Mr. Moneybags; if anything, it is exactly the opposite now. The ideology of entrepreneurship today and the idea of austere, hard-working and tax-paying middle-class citizens revive the old Protestant capitalist ascesis and work-ethic (ridiculed by Karl Marx with his notion of the "self-abstaining capitalist") and recast it as a civic virtue. This, in turn, trumps the 1990s' democratic idea of an inclusive middle class, permeated by a

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38 The notion of the master is explored in detail in the next chapter.

spirit of affluence and consumption, to be realized via the release of the Party grip on the economy. The desire for the universal affluent middle class understandably mediated the widespread critique of the perennial consumer goods deficits in the socialist economy. Intellectuals in the 1990s were promising a transition to a utopia of Western-style consumer society. Today this narrative is abandoned, the masses' alleged consumerism is repudiated, both by left-wing and right-wing intellectuals and businessmen. For example, the renowned entrepreneur Ivaylo Penchev, who endorsed the summer protests, asserted that the EU is "soaked in Socialism", while the Bulgarian people suffer from an unrealistic sense of entitlement to "good life" which prevents them from engaging in hard-work. (I. Penchev 2014).

This is no less than a historic upending of the old 1990s ideological chain linking together socialism with scarcity and deprivation, on the one hand, and capitalism with abundance and satisfied consumers, on the other. In contrast, today capitalism and austerity stand together within the same ideological chain helped by the endless injunctions by intellectuals and political leaders to "tighten the belt", and by the unending moralization against the proverbial self-indulgent consumer who prefers patronizing the mall and the pop-folk club to fulfilling their civic duty of hard work without consumption, as the priestly discourse of austerity expects. The neo-Republican citizenship is thus the most adequate form for this ideological content since, as in the old days, it exacts sacrifice of one's narrow self-interest and petty comforts at the altar of the public good (see Riesenberg 1992: 239-240). (In contradistinction to classical liberal theory which derives public good

from private vices). Active, creative, austere, self-negating devoted and heroic: thus we may summarize the idea of the good citizen operative in the imagination of the summer protesters and I will illustrate this point with several cases.

Let us first look at how the protesters' newspaper *#Protest* delineates "authentic" away from "inauthentic" entrepreneurship and mobilizes the former in an effort to build an identity for the protests *vis-a-vis* the enemy Peevski. In relation to the case of a Bulgarian IT company sold to a US tech corporation for $250 million, the paper says that "our young, software entrepreneurs are the antithesis of the model of 'a young, successful, 33 years-old man'" (which is how the would-be chief of national security, whose appointment triggered the protests, described himself in an interview) (#Protest 2014: 4) . Further, according to *#Protest*, the authentic and successful entrepreneurship, epitomized by the IT company in question, is an alternative to the "outmoded" institutions of the welfare state.

The ascetic struggle of the "moral" against the "evil" often unfolds at the level of the aesthetics of bodies. Thus, Delyan Peevski, who happens to be overweight, is often depicted as a pig by his critics. They also used the politically-correct term "corpulent" whereas the protesters enjoy an image of being "lean". Nowhere was this captured more poignantly than in an article which appeared on the protests' 17th day. This article, titled "You're screwed! This is an ultra-protest" is the perfect expression of the assemblage of the lean and tax-paying, self-made entrepreneurial, active citizen.

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The author, Boyan Rashev, owner an environmental policy and consulting company, begins by reminding us that

> In the history of Communism there hasn't been a single case of
> Communists giving up their power without blood or a deal. But we offer
> them neither. We just tell them we don't trust them and politely urge them
> to leave the closely-guarded pigsty they have turned the National
> Assembly into. In response, they make appointments, pass laws, throw
> *welfare handouts* at us and ignore us [..] They lie about our motives: they
> depict us as oligarchs who try to prevent the Party from taking their money
> and passing it onto the people. I bet the electorate in Novi Pazar and Polski
> Trambesh [the stereotypical sleepy, provincial towns] fully believes this
> (Rashev 2013).

Then Rashev presents himself and informs his readers that he willingly subordinates his private well-being to the urgency of the protest:

> In addition to be a protesting husband, father, entrepreneur and manager, I
> also have a hobby. It is called ultra-marathon and it means running mind-
> numbing distances on impossible terrains without a break. The protest
> prevented me from participating in [the latest marathon]. (This is
> maddening me – I have been waiting for it for a year.). The marathon
> means that I can withstand exhaustion, thirst, hunger, heat, cold, insomnia,
> escalating pain for a long time and still reach my goal, no matter how far
> and impossible it appears. And the more of the above-mentioned
> difficulties, the stronger my pleasure keep running grows! (ibid.)

(Also, he states that he is a patriot – this is a recurrent theme. "I could have made it in the West, but I decided to stay in Bulgaria".)

Let us see now how he defines the "us" of the protests:

> I rarely skip a protest rally. I look at the people and cannot believe my eyes. [..] I speak to them and it is as if I am speaking to myself. I see myself a thousand times. Visibly affluent dads (and moms) in their 30s with their young kids. Managers and entrepreneurs, artists and professionals, they are all people of the same breed as me, people who don't give up! They are self-confident because they have achieved something. Despite those [pigs] in the pigsty. I also see myself of ten years ago in them. Young people in their early 20s, educated and full of hope. Europe is at their feet – there are no visas and borders. Yet, they want to stay here or [if they live abroad] want to settle back here. They love Bulgaria and want a future here. They want opportunities and look for them here because we create them. [..] We are the generation of the Transition – those who survived and didn't get tempted to immigrate abroad. We remember Communism, but it hasn't deformed our consciousness. (ibid.)

By contrast – "they" (the corrupt elite) are guilty of Christianity's seven cardinal sins: "because knowing only lust, gluttony, greed, sloth, wrath, envy, and pride makes them blind for the pure" (ibid.)

What is "our" power, according to Rashev? Investment strike that the elite underestimates, thinking it can appease the protest with "child benefits" (and welfare handouts from the first quote, which the government did indeed raise at some point). Then the oppositional identity construction continues along these lines:

> We have achieved everything with stubbornness and struggle, while they offer us child benefits. We carry the morality they wrongly believe they have erased from the genes of the Bulgarians. We don't want much from them – just rules and security – and they give us Bolen and Debeleevski [puns on the names of the coalition partner Volen Siderov and Peevski, meaning "sicko" and "fatso", respectively]. We want to love our motherland, our state and they want us to be disgusted at it, to reject it, so they can have it for themselves. We are a nation which demands freedom and democracy, and they consider us a people [*narod*] used to carrying a yoke. We are not paid [to protest], we pay. We invent, we create, we produce, we contribute [to social security]. The whole state and everybody who received anything from it [in terms of wages and welfare], lives thanks

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to us. We have the right to a veto and we must use it. Every month I wire the state coffers more than 10,000 BGN. What will happen if I stop paying it, until our demand[s are] met? (This is not against the law. There will be interest on that payment which I will gladly pay up. But not to them...). I don't think they will celebrate the 9th of September [the day when the Communists took power in 1944] (ibid.)

Statements such as "We pay the bills of the state" express the self-aggrandized image many a Bulgarian entrepreneur have of their role in the economy. In fact, the Bulgarian state coffers get over 50% of their revenue from indirect taxation, such as VAT, which is levied on consumption. VAT was jacked up when the corporate and income tax of 10% was introduced in 2007, in order to compensate for the reduction of revenue in the fisc. Coupled with the regressive nature of the social security contributions, the Bulgarian taxation regime has firmly shifted the burden of the maintenance of the state onto the poor and the working class, thereby relieving entrepreneurs from facing obligations adequate to their economic power (Kassabov, Atanasov, and Grigorova 2018). Nevertheless, this has not dented in the slightest the idea that is it their class that is bankrolling the state (and everyone else).

To conclude this section, the protests clearly reach out for the 1990s anti-communism but unlike that early version of anti-communism, it is directed not only to the BSP elite (which had repudiated the Communist Party and the regime already in 1990) but also to the "passive" and "non-entrepreneurial" submissive masses on welfare. Further, unlike the 1990s anti-communist protests which successfully built a contrast between the privileged lives of the Party *nomenklatura* and the poor and materially deprived people, today's anti-

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communist opposition is not poor but explicitly well-off yet lean, austere and self-limiting. While it was not an embarrassment to depict the first waves of anti-communist protests in terms of material deprivation and poverty, today those very characteristics are taken to deny mobilizations such as the winter protests of 2013 the status of "authentic civil society". And in contrast to the original anti-communism, which voiced vocal criticism to the party elites from the point of view of a betrayed equality, the post-2013 anti-communism has dropped the vestiges of equality and speaks on behalf of inequality.

Contrary to the pronouncements and prognostic of liberal theorists that active citizenship makes society more democratic, the acerbic anti-majority sentiment makes the post-2013 version of "active citizenship" anti-democratic despite the efforts of its proponents to insert it in the democratic political lineage that started around 1989.

Neoliberal Active and Good-will Citizenship

Elisaveta Belobradova is a social entrepreneur with thousands of followers on Facebook. She is the co-founder of a web-magazine dedicated to motherhood and child-rearing and of an internet market-place which trucks in handicrafts of mothers of disabled children. This project is called "I am looking for a second job" and is explicitly framed as a social enterprise that tries to wrestle disabled kids' mothers from "welfare dependency" to make them independent economic actors. Belobradova was a regular protester but rose to (social media) prominence after suffering head injury during the 40th day of the protests when

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protesters blocked ruling-coalition MPs well into the wee hours amid violent clashes with the police.
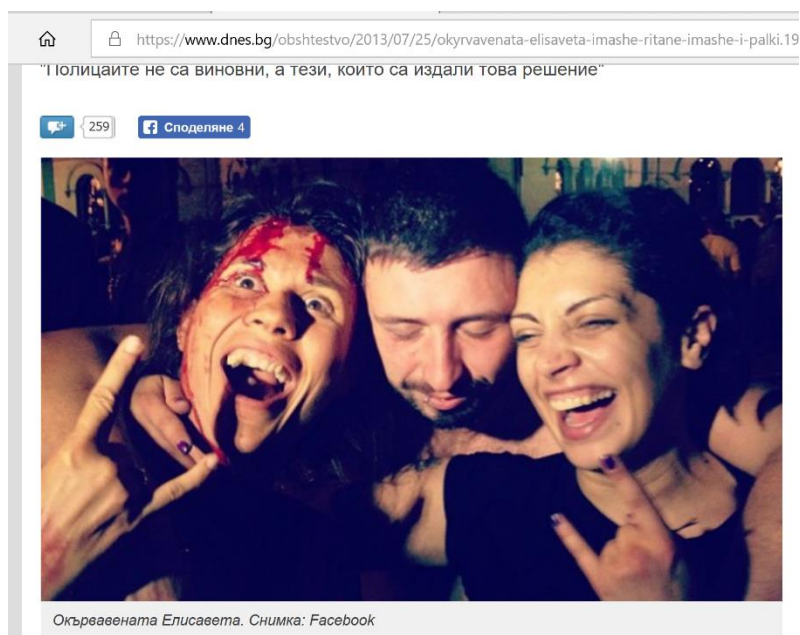
FIGURE 8 SCREENGRAB OF THE WOUNDED ELISAVETA.

10 days after the launch of the self-help handicraft market-place project, The Bulgarian National Television produced an intriguing portrait about it (BNT 2017). On camera, Belobradova states unapologetically that she is

> a bit extreme in thinking that people have to be responsible for themselves. [In contrast, the prevailing] mentality in Bulgaria is one of waiting for the state to help us. [Our project] is not your typical charity but a business model which gives women the opportunity to work, to make money and to support themselves.

In line with the middle-class post-materialist inclinations, Belobradova states that they initiated this "business model" not out of business considerations or in pursuit of profit but out of a deeply-felt solidarity with the mothers who are forced to quit their jobs and dedicate themselves to caring for their disabled children. According to her, in the times before 1944 (the Communist revolution) the "culture" of helping each other was much more widespread. Communism had destroyed it, but slowly Bulgarian society is regaining it, and everything will fall in its place once the majority of people start acting out of good will for the benefit of others. In line with the post-materialistic ideology of the protest, she argues that this is a culture independent from levels of income ("even if your salary is 200 BGN you can still donate 1.50 BGN.")

Belobradova asserts that the motor behind the project is the imperative to do "good for society, not only for oneself" and admitting that, as a working mother of three kids, she prefers to rest in front of the TV rather than engage in social causes, yet *noblesse oblige* is compelling her to act. Her civil society assumes the form of an aristocratic society in which care for the poor and the unfortunate is dispensed not by the state but comes from the good will of charitable individuals who feel compelled by their own nobility (as opposed to the state bureaucracy) to help people lift themselves by the bootstraps. This differs from the "classic" aristocracy in that the latter was primarily defined by its productive passivity – the "leisure class" does not work (Veblen 1979) but is still active in politics, war and philanthropy. Active, not productive. Whereas Belobradova and the likes of hers espouse a very strong work ethic, and never miss the chance to intone about

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the value of hard work and self-responsibility. After all, she believes work, and not state support, is the only way open mothers of disabled children to secure decent lives for themselves and their kids. Despite these differences, Belobradova's usage of the expression *noblesse oblige* betrays a self-understanding as a form of aristocracy: a civic aristocracy of the active citizens.

In a similar vein, as one of the activists from the 2013 protest (who is also a celebrity vet among her fellow-protesters and middle class citizenry) argued that the would-be recipient of charity knows best what he or she needs, and because of that, they can put forward their case before the would-be donors and benefactors "warmly, interestingly and provocatively, if needed (Peeva 2017). She articulated her vision of social solidarity in the following manner: "if a grandmother needs to have her house repaired, I will donate money, construction contractors will donate materials, everyone will help in whatever way they can." The state as a legitimate authority that can compensate a victim of floods or fires, is jarringly absent from this vision of private-sector solidarity with the poor.

The activation of the civil society of benefactors to fill the void from the rolling back of the welfare state finds its counterpart in the activation of the beneficiaries. They are expected to present their cases "interestingly" and be active to the degree of provocation; in other words, to be competitive and to prove themselves deserving of help.

This is the counterpart of state-dispensed workfare, operative in the domain of civil society where those dispensing paternalistic care are noble citizens moved by compassion and by the entrepreneurship and creativity of the deserving beneficiaries. In that sense, we need to make more precise the picture that emerged from the previous chapter, namely one of disregard and contempt for the poor professed by the middle-class protesters. Neoliberals do not hold *all* poor or welfare dependent populations in contempt. Only those framed as passive.

It becomes clear from the above examples that neoliberalism is very farm from the left-wing caricature of the victory of egotism and greed above altruism and solidarity. It is the self-organized solidarity beyond the institutional grip and oversight of the nation-state. State-organized social solidarity (i.e. through progressive taxation financing the welfare system) is illegitimate because it appears imposed from above. Whereas the only legitimate form of social solidarity is when the NGOs, citizens or business organize it (i.e. with corporate social responsibility or voluntary initiatives). The relentless attacks on the social welfare system and what amounts to the same thing, the social citizenship in Marshall's model, is wrongly taken to indicate an ostensible hostility of neoliberal capitalism to social solidarity. This is patiently wrong. The near-total disappearance of social welfare politics in neoliberalism masks its transformation into social *anti-politics*: charity drives (which depoliticize the sources of inequality and destitution), social entrepreneurship, and grassroots citizens' initiatives. (Naturally, here the "roots" of the "grass" are quite tall: the driving forces of these initiatives often happen to be "successful"

people where success is understood in economic and business parameters, as well as the educated middle class.)

In short, we need to take seriously this strong moral charge in neoliberalism and neoliberal citizenship rather than respond to neoliberalism with moralizations of the sort that it "destroys society" and crushes morality under the egotistic drives unleashed by competition (which leads us to accept Thatcher's premises that "there is no society", only with a negative evaluation.) And I use the word "moral" in the double sense of the judgment of good and evil, as well as in "morale": that which brings a collective together and lends it social cohesion.

Conclusion

Normally, citizenship expresses the dimension of political equality ("one man – one vote", equality before the rule of law) which no amount of idiosyncratic particularities (i.e. class) should in theory be allowed to compromise. Modern citizenship is the principle which is supposed to transcend particularities. As such it must remain abstract, formal and empty, that is to say, ideally independent of contingent personal properties – man or woman, able-bodied or disabled, rich or poor, etc. This type of citizenship, even if it did not initially include everybody, at least has the congenital potentiality of enveloping everybody, due to the universalistic potentiality of the discourse of rights, of which citizenship is an instance (where there are only rulers and subjects, there can be no citizens). I stress the term *potentiality*. As an entire tradition of feminist and post-colonial critique has shown,

modern citizenship is less abstract than its pundits claim, and the implicit supposition of modern citizenship has been systematically revealed: that the abstract citizen privileges the proverbial concrete white male property owner. However, feminist critique was only able to illuminate these hidden shortcomings because it measured citizenship against its own criteria and standards; namely, that nominally at least, all citizens enjoy equal rights and are equal before the law. Or, to paraphrase Olympe de Gouge, the tribune is the truth of the scaffold.

Thus, modern citizenship is very different from the ancient and early modern ideas of citizenship which were very restrictive (i.e. based on property or inherited privilege). With regards to the ancient world, Riesenberg (1992) argues that it is "small-scaled, culturally monolithic, hierarchical, and discriminatory – and also moral, idealistic, spiritual, active, participatory, communitarian, and even heroic in that it commanded personal military service from its citizens." (quoted by Dynneson 2001: 11). The revolutionary tremors of the 18th and 19th century midwifed democratic citizenship, which, at the level of its concept (and less so of practice) emancipated itself from economic determination and strove to embrace all members of a given national community. Abstract modern citizenship is decoupled from heroism; neither military, nor economic prowess is a prerequisite for belonging, and the physically and economically weak enjoy the same rights as the others (so long as they were born and bred in the country or allowed to inherit the nationality of their parents, as *jus soli* and *jus sanguinis* citizenship doctrines hold respectively).

The protesters, in their otherwise honorable struggle against the mafia and the criminal political elite, rely on what, for a lack of the better word, can be called a neo-Republican understanding of citizenship. Republican citizenship, as elaborated by philosophers in early modern Europe, conceives citizenship after the model of the Greek polis. If modern liberal citizenship ascribes citizenship rights to all members of the nation, neo-Republican citizenship abrogates automatic ascription of citizenship rights and consecrates citizens in accordance to narrowly-defined criteria indexed to excellence, merit and commitment.

What structures legitimate belonging to civil society and the community of citizens in the new version of citizenship, as elaborated by the protesters? Obviously, how successfully one can claim the predicate of "creative", "active" or "entrepreneurial" for oneself. Or how rich in cultural capital and *taste* one appears to be. By no means does this mean that one really must be an entrepreneur in order to be legitimately recognized as such. Rather than neatly expressing one's *real* and *objective* position in the social field (or class), social categories reflexively constitute their field and subjects. Otherwise we cannot explain why so many non-entrepreneurs identified with the protests, devoted time and effort to them and were reciprocally identified by the protests as "their own".

Why entrepreneurs and creative class? Even though the protests' civic Republicanism might have dealt a blow to the liberal conception of citizenship, it is not illiberal. Their demands for a *real* separation between the political and economic spheres, against welfare

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handouts, for more Europeanization, for European judiciary reforms, for media freedom, for sound pro-business policy, for the constitution of a *real* liberal political party to represent them – all these point to their liberalism. The protests' discourse must be seen against the background of (neo)liberal economic and political reforms (i.e. austerity) which get justified as a struggle of the "active citizens" against "social parasitism" and related residues from the Communist period that thwart Bulgaria's post-1989 "return to Europe". The political economy of European-style austerity measures and fiscal discipline provides the immediate background against which the image of the entrepreneur secreted from state institutions and becomes somewhat socially acceptable.

Republican citizenship is premised on the active participation of the citizen in the political affairs of the state. The citizen is not a citizen, if not active. By contrast, liberal citizenship is firmly tied with inalienable rights, regardless of one's activity or passivity. These rights are to be safeguarded by so-called "negative liberty" (see Berlin 1969), and what is expected from the citizen is regular voting in elections instead of permanent mobilization, associated with revolutionary activities. On the liberal dissidents' understanding of this matter, civil society is the realm freed from the constant political mobilization of the state; is it the ultimate check on the state and therefore the most efficient force capable of counter-balancing any "totalitarian" impulses thereof. Bulgarian liberal intellectuals and policy-makers never tire of emphasizing the role of civil society as a "corrective" (*korektiv)* of the state, always vigilant and responsive to clues that the state is overstepping its limits. Simultaneously free from, but watchful of the state, the liberal understanding of

civil society has an immanent vigilantist element to it. When mobilized by the anti-government protesters of 2013, the "corrective" theory of civil society easily morphed into a participatory-Republican one of active citizens, mediated by their activist and entrepreneurial ethic. The activist bias is so strong that the non-participating citizens were quickly branded "passive" and "uncitizens" (discussed in the next chapter).

It is by now a truism to say that citizenship is a "contested notion". What all approaches discussed thus far share is an agreement that citizenship is sufficiently flexible to sometimes yield up to struggles, waged by the excluded, for more inclusion. Women, LGBT, migrants, ex-colonial subjects and other such groups' gradual (but still far from complete) obtaining of (nominal) citizenship rights attest to the notion's practical 'contestability' and malleability. Citizenship does not merely express the relationship between the state and civil society or the state and its citizens but is fundamentally a *polemical* category wherein wars for inclusion are fought and resisted. Its boundaries are contested not only by people who are excluded, but equally by those who are included in it. This makes it a technology of "subjectification" (Ong et al. 1996). And I do not mean simply the unwillingness of national citizens to recognize recent (and not so recent) migrants as fellow citizens. This exclusion can also happen to people who *already* are citizens but are not recognized as such for a variety of reasons, not least because neoliberal market ideology redraws the boundary of legitimate belonging by imbuing some with civil worth and denying it to others, based on their (apparent or actual) contribution to the national economy or stock of knowledge and cultural capital. In other words, market

citizenship is not exhausted by the practice of states selling passports to foreign investors or re-tailoring their sovereignty to allow for differentiated taxation regime that benefit the global bourgeoisie (Ong 2006). It is also visible in the above-described discursive re-articulation of citizenship along lines of activity and passivity, morality and vice.

It also inheres in visions about decommunization that elevate the position of the "productive class" as the only rightfully deserving of the status of the citizen, while all the rest – paupers, people on welfare, ethnic minorities – are symbolically excluded from it. This proves feminist scholarship's point that to be a formal member of the national community does not overlap with how that membership is enacted in practice but gives it a new twist: national political membership is fundamentally unstable not only with regards to aspiring would-be members but also for established ones. For example, it can be symbolically and explicitly revoked by fellow citizens at any time. This is accomplished by the refocusing of citizenship from an abstract right into a substantive duty, premised on, recognized and extended thanks to virtuous acts in the public sphere. To this end, the process demolishes the social pillar of the Marshallian scheme of citizenship. In Bulgaria's case, the pressure on the social aspect of citizenship has a dual source: state-mandated austerity measures and the popular mobilization from below such as that in 2013. And this post-material active citizenship of virtue excludes the rest of citizens. This spells necessary correction to Marshall's (class) theory of citizenship: we do not start at a pre-determined class which struggles to shift the boundaries of citizenship; but it shifts them in the very act of performatively constituting itself as a class.

Rogers Brubaker (1992) defended formalism in sociology in the study of citizenship against substantivist approaches which show the limits of the claims to inclusion in practice. My study disputes it in order to defend the more inclusive formalism of citizenship. The Bulgarian summer protests restrict the *formal* and *abstract* 'universality' of citizenship by basing it on a bundle of *substantivist* criteria. The substantiation of formal citizenship is the stuff of the next chapter which deals with case studies indicative of the methods employed for disqualifying other citizens from legitimately claiming and acting out a citizen's/civic identity. So, after we have seen what substance makes up the model citizen, let us see what happens to those who are perceived to be lacking it.

Chapter Five

Quantity vs Quality: Citizens and Anti-citizens in the Bulgarian Protests of 2013[39]

> "[the Jewry] constantly provokes the revolt of the weak against the strong, of bestiality against intelligence, of quantity against quality." Adolf Hitler (in Losurdo 2015)

Introduction

In the previous chapter I discussed how the rise of "active" and "substantive" citizenship is premised on the symbolic evacuation of social citizenship. This chapter introduces an aspect of substantive citizenship that hinges on possession of cultural capital. It shows how the middle class abrogates political equality and narrows citizenship by refocusing it as a function of cultural capital. I develop this by reference to a specific set of events in the "long 2013": the so-called counter-protests.

The counter-protests were pro-government rallies, called by the government as a reaction to the anti-governmental or summer protests of 2013. Because of this, the summer protesters repeatedly emphasized in interviews and media reports that those pro-government rallies were not authentic expressions of civil society. Once again, as was the

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39 Chunks of this chapter have been published in (J. Tsoneva 2017).

case with the negative definitions of the February protests, the enmity between the summer protest and the authorities bifurcated into an antagonism not only against the government, but also against another protest. Here I focus on the next chapter of the triangulation of the social antagonism ("government vs summer protest vs counter-protest") and the effect it has had on the discursive constitution of civic identities via technologies of belonging that run along aesthetic, epistemic and ethnic lines.

The summer protesters produced new definitions of the citizen and pit it to what I call the "anti-citizen" of the counter-protest. In the same way that one may talk of "anti-value" to refer to the limits to self-valorizing value (Harvey 2017). I will use the notion of "anti-citizen" to tease out the figure of the formal citizen who is nevertheless symbolically expunged from citizenship. "Limits" here is to be understood strictly in transcendental sense, namely as conditions of possibility. Claims to superior knowledge and culture on the part of the summer protesters were used to question the very civic competences, and what amounts to the same thing, the citizenship status of the counter-protesters ("anti-citizens").

The figure of the anti-citizen complicates the classic dyad in citizenship theory that distinguishes between citizens (those who are "in"), and non-citizens (those who are "out", i.e. foreigners). The "anti-citizens" are formally citizens of the polity but discursively excluded or symbolically stripped of citizenship due to their alleged lack of knowledge and misguided political positions. The anti-citizen is like what Marx

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(1977:141) called the "class of civil society which is not a class of civil society" and what Ranciere called "the part of no part" (Rancière 1999). The 2013 Summer protests established cultured demeanor and knowledge as a foundation upon which civil society – and along it, the citizen – can thrive.

This chapter marks my theoretical contribution to Ernesto Laclau's theory of populism/political identification in two ways. First, it complicates the "us vs them" logic of populism by putting the logic of triangulation of the conflict in sharp relief. And secondly, I show how the operations of the equivalential chain are affected by what Bourdieu calls racial "visions and divisions" and the class habitus of the participants. I will show how the chain engages in something akin to "boundary work" to maintain its internal order and limit its porousness. In other words, the chain of equivalence does not just articulate together disparate demands and people indiscriminately, but does so obeying rules from the social world, i.e. repeating the logics that infallibly exclude the Roma, the peasants, the uneducated, and so forth.

Citizens, Anti-Citizens and the "Two Bulgarias"

The discourse of the anti-citizen marks a turning point in the evolution of programmatic democratic thinking in the country. In the 1990s the Transition was mostly imagined as a phase of democratization of *institutions* drawn from the traditional liberal playbook*:* non-violent competition between political parties through open elections, rule of law, separation of powers, all of which eventually earning Bulgaria EU-accession. Nearly

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thirty years later, Bulgaria is an EU-member, liberal democratic institutions are in place, yet the anti-communist opposition is not entirely happy, as expectations from the Transition have not been met. From a temporal inconvenience, the transition has become permanent.

In political science the departures from the Western democratic standard on part of newly democratized states has led to a proliferation of qualifiers, or what Collier and Levitski called "democracy with adjectives" (Collier and Levitsky 1997). A popular qualifier, both in the literature and in mediatized discussions, is the notion of "facade democracy". It captures the "roll-back" of democratization of previously lauded "consolidated democracies" in CEE. Rupnik and Zielonka (2013) famously castigated the narrow formalist approach to democracy in political science which defined democracy only as the presence of formal institutions (courts, parliaments, separation of powers, etc.) as inadequate to explain the "democratic regression" that is plaguing much of Central and Eastern Europe today. Arguing that "informal institutions" can be just as important in "shaping as well as eroding" democracy, they call for an approach for studying the informal institutions, practices and structures supporting the formal ones. To this end, they argue that social anthropologists are better equipped than political scientists for the task (2013: 13). On this view, instead of developing the necessary "informal" cultural and civic institutions to buttress and consolidate the formal ones in the new democracies, the CEE saw the development and entrenchment of "negative informal" institutions such as oligarchic nepotistic and corruption networks. In turn, these subverted the transfer of

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formal democratic institutions in the processes of European integration of former Communist countries, already vulnerable to populism and authoritarianism due to "reform fatigue" (Rupnik and Zielonka 2013: 3). As Attila Agh explains, the formal institutional set up can only work "if the proper informal—mobilizing and protecting—"civil rights" institutions and patterns of civic political culture are created in the further EU adjustment process" (Ágh 2016: 277). This spans from loyalty to parties to taking into accounts "geographical and cultural divisions" in the country, such as the existence of the "two Hungaries" and "two Polands" (Rupnik and Zielonka 2013: 13).

Echoing this, the *Democracy Index* argues that, "[A]lthough formal democracy is in place in the region, much of the substance of democracy, including political culture based on trust, is absent" (quoted by Agh 2016: 278). In short, "facade democracy" expresses a situation in which liberal-democratic institutions are in place, yet they lacked liberal-democratic "substance".

The notion of "facade democracy" has left the academic field and has become very popular in Bulgarian public discussions. For example, when asked to explain what the summer protests are about, Ivo Prokopiev, the founder of the liberal *Dnevnik* and *Capital* papers and a member of the Global Bulgaria initiative I dwelled on in Chapter three, argues that they protest Bulgaria's 'facade democracy'. He defines it as a simulacrum of the democratic process in which, behind the rotation of parties and elections, the same

oligarchic elite always manages to stay on top and steal public resources (Prokopiev 2013).

However, the deficit of cultural democratic substance is not perceived as stemming only from the nepotistic elites. Oftentimes, the *demos* is also cast as affected by this deficit. As a result, pundits shift their attention away from democratic *institutions* onto democratic *subjectivities.* If the institutional set-up is in place but not working well, something must be wrong with the constituencies that delegate power to dysfunctional and corrupt apparatchiks. This informs intellectual and expert exorcisms of electoral majorities' "immaturity' since the 1990s, normally coinciding with electoral victories of the BSP. The 2001 elections which put the ex-czar in power, elicited especially strong reactions against the so-called popular mentality on part of the experts (Lavergne 2010: 186). By way of an example, after the elections Evgenii Daynov's think tank Center for Social Practices produced an urgent report and round-table, sponsored by the Open Society Foundation in Sofia. The report claimed that the election results signal the withdrawal from "autonomous individuality" into "a culture of powerlessness and dependency" (2002: 2 quoted in Stoyanova 2018: 84), and "plebeian envy", in short, into a "rejection of freedom in return for handouts" (ibid.) The report claims that civil society needs "clearly defined individuals. The individual as such develops until the age of 15 and hence most people in Bulgaria are not individuals – they have reached their 15th year during communism" (ibid.). In that respect, the 2013 summer protests mark the "maturation" of Bulgarian society. As I mentioned in Chapter three, Daynov called them a "Cultural

revolution" that would finally produce real citizens. Confusing the Latin etymology of the word "polite" (from Latin "*polire*", to polish) with the ancient Greek for citizen (*politēs*, which comes from *pólis),* Daynov opines that "citizen" literally means "he who is polite" (or cultured) and attributes this definition to Aristotle (Daynov 2017). In contrast, Aristotle defines "the citizen pure and simple" not at the level of their manners but as somebody who has "the right to participate in judicial functions and in office" (Aristotle 1981: 1274b), also (Johnson 1984). Despite the skewed representation of Aristotle, this definition exerts performative effect in that it is productive of civic identities. The indexing of citizenship to "politeness" refocuses civil society and citizenship as a domain of cultured demeanor and upper-class habitus.

This search for "civic subjectivities" (in their positive and negative modalities) explains the ease with which the ire directed at the "Communist" elite targets also "the demos", resulting in an impulse to improve the democratic order by way of elevating, educating or excluding, if need be, deficient voters. And this happen to be most of the population, as philosopher and theologian Kalin Yanakiev asserted, when he bluntly stated that the events of the summer of 2013 represent "the protests of the Bulgarian quality against the Bulgarian quantity" (Offnews 2013f). This marks a radicalization against electoral majorities on part of the civil society experts and intellectuals from their earlier ruminations on the topic, i.e. about the 2001 elections.

To go back to the 2013 protests, some commentators asserted that there is not one but two Bulgarias. By extension "the two Romanias", see i.e. (Năstase 2014), two Polands (Rupnik and Zielonka) for a symptomatic, non-reflexive application of the term. In Bulgaria this discourse became very salient with the summer protests of 2013, but its roots go deeper. [40] The discourse's versatile repertoire of bywords about class and class distinctions makes it easy to mobilize by public opinion-makers both during protests and in the staid phases of social confrontation.

This is how some commentators explained the confrontation of the two Bulgarias during the counter-protests[41]:

> It is obvious that in Bulgaria two beginnings fight each other: the first is of the mass, post-socialist Bulgarian and the other of the less mass, modern Bulgarian [of the protests]. Today we witness the star moment of the mass Bulgarian (Daynov 2015a).

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[40] It is beyond the scope of this chapter to offer a genealogical reconstruction of the discourse which is an offshoot of the symbolic division of the country along the urban-rural axis, the putative "Balkan" or "Oriental" culture in the countryside vs the "European" mentalities in cities, the "forward" and the "backward", and so on (see Isin 2002 on the distinction between "European" and "Oriental" identities operative in the production of occidental citizenship). "Rural" vs "urban" and "modern" vs "oriental" symbolic divisions similarly underscore the recent protests in Armenia over the acquisition and destruction of Yerevan's Cover Market by an enterprising MP (see (Adriaans 2017). Similarly, the Yerevan protesters mobilized the "imaginary threat of "oriental" Yerevan [..] to produce a cross-generational self-reference of urban middle classes as "civic Yerevan" (ibid.: 150) in the process of an intense confrontation with the "oligarch's constituencies", as Adriaans calls the counter-protesters who supported the renovation of the market because they were promised jobs and economic development.

[41] The first of the so-called counter-protests of 2013 convened in the center of Sofia towards the end of June. Then there was a march in August 2013 and one in November of the same year.

Award-winning literary critic and university professor Boyko Penchev provided one of the clearest visions about the "two Bulgarias" dichotomy *a propos* the protests. According to him, while the first Bulgaria understands justice as "full fridges for everyone", the second Bulgaria defines justice as "to each according to their contribution", thereby putting the old Communist dictum[42] in a neoliberal, self-responsibility frame. The first Bulgaria, he continues, expects the politicians to distribute wealth while the second creates it and only demands from the politicians to secure the rule of law so that they "won't lose their motivation to create" (B. Penchev 2014). The first Bulgaria believes every populist politician who promises welfare handouts; for the second, the ideal politician is like a judge imposing the rule of law rather than playing the role of a "warehouse gatekeeper". The second Bulgaria also believes in personal responsibility whereas the first Bulgaria blames capitalism for its low wages. The attitude to capitalism is in fact crucial: the second Bulgaria "reasons that if capitalism works in Belgium but not in Bulgaria", it must be because of the way it was implemented in the country by the Communists and the secret services (ibid.).

Echoing the anti-materialist frames of 2013, the public intellectual and journalist Tony Nikolov, editor-in-chief of the conservative magazine *Kultura*, opined that the two Bulgarias are less marked by material inequality than by an inequality in the ability to understand and appreciate freedom:

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42 "From each according to their abilities, to each according to their needs." (Marx, Engels, and Stedman Jones 2002)

These two Bulgarias do not know how to speak to each other not because they speak a different tongue or enjoy different material conditions. They differ in their sense of freedom. The first Bulgaria belongs to those who worry about their future, let's call it the free Bulgaria. The other is the feudalized and humiliated Bulgaria, the Bulgaria of the people bussed into protests and counter-protests. The counter-Bulgaria of unfreedom, governed with the medieval methods of coercion (Nikolov 2014).

We can render this dichotomy as an opposition between the "vulgar materialism" of the masses ("full fridges for everyone") versus the lofty struggle for the "rule of law" and the common good of the value-producing classes in society; between the "lazy masses" expecting the welfare state to take care of them vs. the hard-working, austere, self-reliant, and self-responsible creators of "added value". In the final analysis, between a communism that still has not departed and an authentic capitalism that is yet to arrive. Again, we have a spiritual definition of a class of people defined in terms of sensibilities and dispositions to appreciate freedom, as opposed to the poor who protested their inflated utility bills in February or let themselves be bussed around the country. So far, this looks the same operation as the one that created the wedge between the winter and the summer protest (discussed in Chapter three).

As Laclau belabored to show, political identity is a chain of equivalence composed of a plurality of non-commensurable and distinct elements whose coherence is ensured and stabilized by an antagonism to a mutual enemy. In short, every "I" is an un-selfsame assemblage of elements held together by a non-I. Translating this into the imaginaries of

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citizenship, the next sections look more closely into how discourses surrounding the counter-protests constitute the normal citizenry of the authentic citizens against the "anti-citizen". I treat those utterances as technologies for determination of the boundaries of citizenship and civil society.

Defining the Anti-Citizen

The discourses about the counter-protests present us with several determinate criteria for the delineation of the citizen from the anti-citizen. These criteria appear as dyadic oppositions. One such opposition runs along the axis of "spontaneous vs. organized." Thus, while the authentic civil society protest was said to be "spontaneous" in the sense of unmediated voluntary gathering of citizens on the street, the counter-protester was recognized as "involuntary" and "organized" from above ("people bussed into the capital"). One way the anti-government protesters and sympathetic media could discern this was by the presence of buses.

Bus-spotting became a salient activity, propelling the interpretative efforts of the protesters to unmask the lack of authenticity of the counter-protesters. For example, Protest Network, the informal leaders of the Summer protests of 2013, warned their followers that "the buses are coming". Unlike the citizens who arrive by bike, private cars or on foot, the counter-protest makes a *conspicuous* and thus *suspicious* announcement.

Atanas Tchobanov, a civic activist who runs the Bulgarian version of Wikileaks, was alarmed that the buses who drove the counter-protest participants had parked on disabled badge holders' spots yet were not fined. Tchobanov speculated that the police were complicit with the counter-protests. The news outlet Offnews echoed his concerned and reproduced his investigation (Offnews 2013b).

It should be noted that the large pro-democracy protests from the early 1990s in Bulgaria were also "organized" by the anti-communist opposition and unions, and participants from outside Sofia were bussed in. Yet, in no way did this engender a sense of inauthenticity. We can treat the rejection of "top-down organization" animating the 2013 summer protests as symptomatic for the crisis of representation that has affected liberal democracy. Democratic institutions (especially collective organizations such as political parties or trade unions) seem less able to exert symbolic and representative authority, as revealed by falling electoral turnouts and party/union memberships. Representation's legitimacy falters, affecting the ability of such institutions to mobilize constituencies, visible in the protesters' exclusion of the counter-protesters from the sphere of "authentic protest" because of the way in which they arrived in Sofia to express their support for the government. On the protesters' understanding, the bus is the negation of authentic civic activity, supposedly driven by spontaneous self-organization. This is nowhere manifested more clearly than in this headline with very suggestive quotation marks: "Buses drove in 'self-organized' people to the counter-protest." (Offnews 2013a). Today, any top-down organization smacks of Communist-era manifestations [*manifestatsii*], as the main

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organizer of the summer protests Assen Genov asserted. Genov assimilated the counter-protests to Communism because they remind him of the "servile sycophancy to those in power". The latter "waved their hands and received directed congratulations through tasteless, cliched [and identical] posters" (Genov 2013a).

Not only does the counter-protesters' mode of transport convey a "top-down organization" (as opposed to individual civic spontaneity), but their banners were said to reek of inauthenticity, too. For example, the private Bulgarian TV channel bTV finds it noteworthy that "the participants in the [counter-protest] carried brand new flags of Bulgaria as well as identical banners with identical messages which were industrially-rather than hand-made" (bTV 2013). In contrast, protesters and sympathetic media repeatedly emphasized that the banners of the summer protest are handmade, individual, creative, witty and well thought out. The question of creativity resurfaced in many other angles throughout the protests, spurring even a definition of the citizen along these lines (discussed below).

Creativity in the production of slogans became a signature of anti-governmental protests. It was discussed and celebrated by the intellectual world through countless media endorsements, book publications, and even articles in social science journals (Evtimova 2014; M. Georgieva, 2014). It was dignified and immortalized in a book form: *Protest: Slogans and Echoes*, a volume dedicated to preserving the memory of the slogans, of their diversity and of their creativity (Shemtov and Troianov 2013). In contrast, the

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"untalented", "uncreative" and "tasteless" (Yanakiev 2013) counter-protests do not merit the effort at committing them to memory, still less to print.

As one of the reviews of *Protest* said, "the slogans unmistakably testify to the artistic energy of the street" (Igov 2014). Another review of the book in the weekly *Capital*, Bulgaria's foremost liberal paper, stated that the slogans were diverse but "the common ground between them is their wittiness and the articulation of principled positions, rather than insults" (Mousseva 2013). Emphasis on civility breezily brushed over the brutality of many slogans in the allegedly polite demonstrations. One of the common ones, resurrected from the 1997 anti-communist protests and hurled at the 2013 government, was "red scum", and figured in *Protest: Slogans and Echoes*. Minimizing the slogan's violence Igov claims: "This is [only one] of many slogans, some of them very witty, smart and expressive" (Igov 2014). Meanwhile, aggressive slogans heard in the demos such as "Whores!", "You are Turks," or "only skinning removes the lard from the pig and the power from the Communist" [*slanina ot prase I vlast ot komunist se svaliat s drane*] were left out of these publications.

So were banners and collages with homophobic images alleging that the government and mafia nexus is a gay thing:

FIGURE 9 COLLAGE ABOUT THE LEADERS OF THE RULING COALITION. SOURCE: FACEBOOK

FIGURE 10 PLACARD DEPICTING "THE NEW POLITICAL ELITE"

Facial and Racial Vision and Division

Just like *a propos* the winter protests ("those disfigured faces!"), differences in outward appearance between protesters and counter-protesters loomed large in national media.

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Pundits often racialized the manifest poverty and unkempt looks of the counter-protesters. For example, a website, which set up operations as an official news outlet for the protests, described counter-protesters as "strong guys with Turkish features, each holding a plastic cup with mint liquor... we hear Turkish language among the Bulgarian words" (quoted by Nikolova 2014a: 51).

Another large pro-government rally (or counter-protest) was described by the protester outlet Noresharski.com as attended by "red molluscs, mangali [an extremely offensive racist slur for Roma] and Turks" (quoted by Nikolova 2014a: 63). Further example of racialization is found in the website http://klisheta.com/protest/ created by an anti-government protester as a table with the most widespread talking points of the government in one column, and counter-arguments in another column, to be used by the summer protesters. It features a quiz with pictures through which the knowledgeable observer could test their ability to tell a protester from a counter-protester. To score 100%, one only needs to designate all the pictures of men and women with darker complexion and/or poorer teeth[43] and clothes as "counter-protester".

A most telling expression of the pervasive racial profiling happened when Assen Genov, one of the leaders of the protests, an online entrepreneur and a foundation co-founder with

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[43] In a similar vein, the Romanian philosopher Liiceanu is scandalized by the counter-protesters in his country, calling them an embarrassment to Europe because of their poor teeth (Mihailescu 2017).

a long record of reputable civic activism, chased a group of Roma from the counter-protest and recorded everything on camera (Blitz 2013).44

The reduction of the counter-protesters to "Roma" and "Turks" was also enforced by media sympathetic to the protests with online galleries of pictures as well as with video interviews from these rallies featuring mostly Roma and visibly poor people (Offnews 2013c). For example, the news website *Offnews* shared one of its dispatches from the counter-protests with the following introduction: "Faces and voices from the counter-protests. Most of the faces are dark[45], while most voices: inarticulate". The article calculates that "40% of the participants are Roma and Turks" (Offnews 2013d). The author of the piece does not take the counter-protest seriously, calls it "comical" and proceeds to interview participants about their reasons for attending. At some point his questions make a man visibly uncomfortable so he switches to another participant whom he describes as "dark-skinned" and "visibly looking like a [member of the Roma] minority" (Offnews 2013d).

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44 These examples point to a degree of organic relationship to the media these protesters enjoy. The media is not an externality or a neutral ground on which the antagonism to the government and the counter protest unfolds, but often it is the protesters themselves. Literally, the creative class as a self-conscious middle class. The consciousness (making) of the "middle class" involves representing oneself as a creative class.

45 *Murgavi*, a pejorative synonym for "dark skin complexion" used frequently to describe the Roma.

In another example, a journalist admitted to racially profiling his interviewees: "we go to one of the few counter-protesters with lighter skin and ask him "why are you here? Why do you protest?" The man, visibly intimidated to speak in public, responds that there are more competent people to answer this question. The journalist interprets the hesitation as "top-down organization" and proceeds to ask who paid, questioning the motivations of the participants (Offnews 2013d).

The same outlet also relied on dispatches from the counter-protests produced by "citizen-journalists" (i.e. OFFnews 2013d). In a display of extreme symbolic violence, a video shot by an anti-government protester and social entrepreneur Krasimira Hajiivanova (the business partner of Elisaveta Belobradova, discussed in the previous chapter) shows her asking from behind the camera two young Roma men from the city of Plovdiv if they were paid to protest. The men deny receiving any payment but Hajiivanova concludes "Right, all clear. You got 20 leva each". Then she asks if they were given water and food and they confirm. Finally, Hajiivanova inquires about their reasons to attend the protest. The hesitation to respond on part of the counter-protesters prompts her to answer instead of them: "you don't know why you're here". She gives them baits of fake answers only to explicate fully what she knew all along: they do not know why they are protesting; they have been organized "from above", and they were paid, mirroring from "below" the corruption reigning from above. (Offnews 2013d).

In short, "minority appearance" in the protest or public space signals the presence of an anti-citizen. Inasmuch the citizen is imagined by the protesters informed, protesting for the right things, educated, economically independent, evidently with light complexion too, those who oppose the summer protests are sanctioned as anti-citizens.

The Constitutive Inner Other of the Protest

A telling incident occurred on the 40th day of the protests during the evening siege on the MPs. A Roma boy was racially profiled, and protesters chased him in order to capture him. Having no banner or any other identifiable political position, his "Roma looks" marked and betrayed him as non-belonging to the protest. His presence was taken as the pro-government protest violating the symbolic boundaries between the two protests. The incident was captured by several citizen-produced YouTube videos which showed a young boy walking around the protest alone. The watchful citizens called the boy "murgavelko", meaning "darkie" (it is a racial slur used against the Roma) and a "provocateur". The kid attracted the attention of the main private TV channel and it made a special report about "murgavelko" case, featuring footage of the boy running around. The journalists managed to corner the boy and attempted to interrogate him about his supposed provocations, but the boy just looked scared and cried. After this, more

spontaneous (unsuccessful) manhunts were organized and filmed by concerned citizens trying to hunt down the dark-skinned boy.

At the beginning of the protests, the writer Georgi Gospodinov who called the summer protesters "beautiful", urged them "to develop an immunity against [..] foreign bodies and must exclude them instantly." (Gospodinov 2013). The Roma "provocateur" chase was one such instance of the protest chain of equivalence's "immunity" kicking in, but "race" is not the only determinant for belonging. The

internal policing of "suspicious" protesters, that is to say, the "Others within" the chain also targets "deviant" individuals who carried slogans that were perceived as "diverging" from the "real" demands of the protest.

Rakia провокатор

FIGURE 11 SCREENGRAB FROM THE YOUTUBE VIDEO OF THE CHASE.

The important thing is that the chased boy was *inside* the protest. The chase demonstrates that the protest, grasped as a "chain of equivalence" uniting disparate people and demands, and suppressing their heterogeneity via the antagonism to a common enemy, maintains its internal coherence by "purging" elements from inside itself deemed non-belonging. The encounter with seemingly non-belonging "elements" activates the class and aesthetic sense which organizes the expulsions. Whereas the counter-protests are physically, spatially and even "racially" distant and distinct from the protest, and hence easy to identify, this is less so with respect to the "provocateurs". This stems from the ambivalent position they occupy: at once part of the protest and no part. They are *in* the protest but not *of* the protest. They are present but do not belong to the protest. Their presence brings polluting danger and the possibility for violence. They are the enemy within which prompts the chain of equivalence to "shed" some of its links, to contract, as it were, and thus enter a mode of self-purification and loosening. Any "element" inside the chain can end up in a subject position of a "provocateur" and is exposed to the risk of being discarded. Yet, this foreign element is just as indispensable for the constitution of the protest's identity as the antagonistic Other lying beyond the frontier of difference; in our case – the Other of the government and its constituencies from the counter-protest.

From the Knowledge Economy to the Knowledge Citizenry

In addition to racialized and class appearance (and ultimately – belonging), knowledge and reason become prerequisites for the exercise of true citizenship. By extension, those who are (perceived to be) lacking in these capacities are considered incapable of

exercising proper citizenship. Thus, corresponding to the rise of the knowledge economy there emerges the *knowledge citizenry.*

In fact, one of the central themes of the 2013 summer protests had been the figure of the "informed citizen". It is strongly connected to the ideal of "active citizens". For example, the newspaper of the summer protest took up the familiar argument from the 1990s and 2000s that the protest constitutes the birth pangs of civil society but, in line with the post-materialist ethos of the protests, it understood it as a function of a "woke civic consciousness" (#Protest 2013: 1) (as opposed to institutional setup, i.e. NGOs). The paper argues that people who are "well-read, open-minded, knowledgeable about their rights, pay their taxes and are determined to sacrifice their money and time to defend their freedom and rights" are not easily governed and manipulated, unlike "the quiet, resigned, cowed, uneducated, and self-unconfident". The op-ed links poverty and submission in a causal connection and pits them against "the enlightened citizens".

Knowledge became especially topical during the "counter-protests", when big private as well as public media outlets, favorable to the summer protests, broadcast dispatches from the counter-protests with interviews with participants. These interviews sported quiz-like questions such as "who is the current prime minister?", "do you know why you are here?" to confirm the already hardening suspicions on part of the summer protesters: that the counter-protesters are paid, organized from above, hence inauthentic, "passive citizens".

And this was allegedly attested to by the "fact" that some of the interviewees gave 'mistaken' answers to these questions.

In short, knowledge (or the perceived lack thereof) became one of the vehicles which expressed the mounting social polarization, and the primary vehicle which mediated the differentiation between "active" and "passive" citizens. Specifically, this was about knowledge of three broad but interrelated subjects: the functioning of democratic state, the market economy, and the truth about "the communist past". The first two aspects broadly coincide with the idea of "civic education" which has been gaining momentum in Bulgaria since accession to EU. The third is part of the domestic debate on the legacy of Communism.

Active citizen	Passive citizen
Knowledge	Ignorance
Spontaneous/self-organized	Mobilized (from above)
Responsibility	Dependency (i.e. welfare)
Anti-Communist	"Communist" (by ascription, not by conviction)

TABLE 3 ACTIVE VS PASSIVE CITIZEN.

In short, "minority", "toothless" and unkempt looks is not the only characteristic that debases and turns one into an [abnormal] anti-citizen, but also the perceived lack of knowledge. And knowledge is not an idiosyncratic civic virtue, found only in the Bulgarian context. The Romanian anti-corruption protesters of 2015-2016 produced similar representations:

This picture, taken by the Romanian photographer Silvana Armat (and reproduced with permission from the author), is part of a series of images she documented the protests with, entitled "protest through culture" (*Protest prin cultura*). Her albums abound with

people engaging in a silent book-reading protest, with the occasional Kindle reader. Classics of anti-communist literature such as Solzhenitsyn's *The Gulag Archipelago* can be spotted. The message is unequivocal: this is the protest of the educated middle class rising to finally rid the country from the remnants of Communism.

In the light of this, one way of understanding the changing role of knowledge to produce citizenry is to grasp it as a movement from tacit to explicit inculcation of democratic values.

It is a truism to say that nations produce their citizenry with the help of education. Modern citizenship is hardly imaginable without education. It does not just enable voters to read, fill out and cast their ballot or deal with state institutions, it also has a more inchoate integrative effect on citizenship. While (theories of) citizenship pre-existed the democratic revolutions, with the latter it acquired an expansive dimension which was mediated by education (Dynneson 2001: 19): every member of the nation could be integrated into the national community with popular education inculcating the shared values and belief necessary for that inclusion (or inculcating moral formation, also known as "civism", ibid.: 24). As de Tocqueville showed, tying democracy to citizenship meant transforming a particular right to independence into a general such right (Dynneson 2001: 20). Such universalization should not be taken for granted: the original targets of civic education

were the elites.46 "Civism" (or the unwritten rules of what it means to be a "good citizen") "has become associated with the process of a formalized, often state-sponsored education and has become associated with the nation-state and the formation of the democratic citizen." (Dynneson 2001: 7). The role of education (be it public agitation or more centralized forms) for the creation of a putatively unified national citizenry cannot be overstressed. In Europe, towards the end of the large empires, the national liberation struggles of all subjugated nations rested in part on the actions of the enlightened "bildungsbuergertum" (knowledge bourgeoisie) to forge the new national consciousness

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46 Derek Heater distinguishes between liberal and Aristotelian civil education: the former equips the pupils with an apparatus for independent thinking, the latter makes it a loyal appendage to the state (2004: 138). First examples of "civic education" targeted the upper classes with the express intention to teach them how to rule (Riesenberg 1992: 242-243, quoted by Dynneson 2001: 166). As Heater states, this was the case with the British educational system in the 19th century which is split between state and private schools, targeting the dominating and dominant classes, respectively (where the former learn how to be industrious, and the latter study the Classics, see Heater 2004: 136, Dynneson 2001: 248). Locke also reserved this education for the upper classes. He thought that moral instruction is indispensable to their sense civique. (In contrast, lower class children should be taken from their parents and put in workhouses to prepare for a life of endless work, Dynneson 2001: 170). By contrast, Rousseau held that a system of public education was the most efficient way to prepare a person for citizenship and it has to be available to all: whether rich or poor (Dynneson 2001: 187). The curricula of this education as imagined by Rousseau was to forge in the pupil an appreciation of equality, fraternity and competition (ibid.). But he also held that the state existed for the individual, not vice versa. His democracy was based on the belief in the "good nature" of the "common man" who, with the help of education, could realize his or her natural potential while suppressing his or her base natural impulses all the while developing the capacity for critical and independent thinking. The Kantian pedagogy was similar, albeit it tied the individual not to the utopian small-scale state of Rousseau's but to the cosmopolity, and universal citizenship, respectively. With Napoleon these revolutionary ideals for education were upended as education was centralized and made nationalistic, modeled after the Prussian example. (Dynesson 2001: 187-188). In an effort to curb the "dangerous excesses" of democracy (especially the Terror), European elites put education in the service of making citizens who had to be patriotic, docile and supportive of their government. With the rise of the modern nation-state and the need to strengthen the relationship of the newly created citizens to their states, the school thus became the proverbial Ideological State Apparatus (see Althusser year). The British Foster Act of 1870 established a connection between suffrage and education: "those who cast a ballot must be capable of casting it intelligently." (Dynneson 2001: 248)

in imperial subjects. As Ira, et al argue *a propos* the Czech case, the emergent nation had to be at once liberal and national. This cannot be unless "the citizens [..] acquire a portion of 'right' knowledge and virtues" (2006: 168). In all emergent European nation-states legal Acts decreeing the transformation of subjects into citizens were put into place, enfranchising the population but those were not enough (Stefan Purici in Ellis 2006: 119). The educational system was an efficient way of inculcating civic norms and values in newly created nations. Ernest Gellner (Gellner 1983) famously argued that what distinguishes the modern state is the monopoly on education, and education is the most central ingredient in the production of nationalism. There is an inherent connection between ideology, education and citizenship and that has been theorized by Marxists such as Louis Althusser for whom education was the most important ideological state apparatus to produce docile citizenry and reproduce the capitalist order. Education is taken to play crucial role in the formation of critical and informed citizens in democracy (Dewey 1997). In short, education has long been understood as fundamentally linked with citizenship (including social citizenship) and its formal equality (Liu 2006) both by apologists and critics. This is taken for granted and debates usually revolve around what would the most adequate education for citizens be, civic education and the concrete steps that should be taken to enforce a vision of citizenship "as equality" (Ruitenberg 2015; Zembylas 2015).

Every modern national political project needs a sound anthropological foundation of its regime and the modern school system is an essential mechanism for the constitution of subjects that are competent and docile enough to function unproblematically in their

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respective national order. The school does not just instill proper values but tacitly socializes pupils into citizens by making them disciplined subjects. Durkheim was one of the first theoreticians of modernity to perceive the effect of the school system to instill a sense of duty in the child which the intimate and affective relations permeating the family he thought incapable of instilling:

> In fact, there is a whole system of rules in the school that predetermines the child's conduct. He must come to class regularly, he must arrive at a specific time and with the appropriate bearing and attitude. He must not disrupt things in class. He must have learned his lessons, done his homework, and have done so reasonably well, etc. There are, therefore, a host of obligations that the child is required to shoulder. Together they constitute the discipline of the School. It is through the practice of school discipline that we can inculcate the spirit of discipline in the child. (1961 [1925]: 148, quoted in (Margolis 2001: 6).

Durkheim's sociology sprang a variety of works in the same functionalist vein – Jackson's *The Hidden Curriculum* being one of the most influential – which emphasize the two levels upon which the socialization of the child flows. The conscious level of mastering actual knowledge taught at school and the unconscious level which socializes the child into being a good and obedient member of society and to accept social hierarchies and inequalities (see Margolis et al 2001, Introduction). Structural-functionalist sociology has long dwelt on the mechanisms through which the "hidden curriculum" helps produce "responsible" and "committed" citizens. For example, in his "classic" essay "The School Class as a Social System" Talcott Parsons argues that

> a person in a relatively humble occupation may be a "solid citizen" in the sense of commitment to honest work in that occupation, without an intensive and sophisticated concern with the implementation of society's

higher-level values. (Parsons 1959)

Granted, education produces citizens by inculcating the necessary knowledge, values and practical skills needed for the functioning of the subject as a member of bourgeois capitalist society. What the "long 2013" bears witness to, is the reversal of this relation. Whereas in the past all citizens had to be schooled to be proper citizens and the education system helped produce "solid citizens", the discourses scrutinized here signal the departure from this nominally inclusive logic. They express a movement from *"the citizens are educated" to "the educated are the citizens"*.

Currently we have the transformation of this *hidden* (Jackson, Magnolis) into *manifest* curricula and the increased hopes placed on the education system to deliver populism- and corruption-resistant active citizens "armed" with correct knowledge about Europe and democracy. As part of these efforts, most recently a couple of Bulgarian kindergartens have become the site of a pilot project to instruct toddlers about the evils of corruption, (Dimitrova 2018). The upshot is, if the "hidden curriculum" (Jackson, 1968) produced citizens-in-themselves by virtue of immersing everybody in the mass school system that nurtures discipline, acceptance of social hierarchy, adaptation to the crowded environment and unequal power relations in the classroom, preparing the pupils for modern adult life, the "manifest curriculum" aims at producing *citizens-for-themselves* who acquire not only "reasonable knowledge" of how to function in modern democracy, but also the explicit "reasoning knowledge" of it (Bourdieu). And this happens against the backdrop of the sea

of unenlightened, populism-prone and vulnerable to vote-selling corrupt oriental anti-citizens whose exercise of the basic political right in citizenship – vote-casting – emerges as a continuous problem that holds back the Europeanization project by putting "the wrong" elites in power.

Although formally Bulgarian citizens, the counter-protesters, especially those who bore detectable "racially different" marks, were cast outside legitimate citizenry because of the perception of them as "organized from above", or because they did not demonstrate knowledge, had representative spokespersons, and were allegedly even paid to rally behind the government (without solid proof). In short, as simultaneously in- and outside legitimate citizenship, they are anti-citizens. While even illiterate people can be citizens and still have voting rights, the protester discourses point to epistemic understanding of the conditions for citizenship which tie this right to knowledge. The summer protests explicate the old link between citizenship competencies and education in novel ways: while modern nation-building educates its citizens (by inculcating in them appropriate values, by disciplining them and instilling in them a sense of their place or a patriotic loyalty for their country), the summer protest reverses the relation and consecrates as citizens *only* the educated. This paved the way for the restriction of political rights that could be observed a few years later through the introduction of e-voting technology.

E-xorcising the Uneducated

Intellectual ruminations about the "Two Bulgarias" often frame the division in terms of "free citizens" and "unfree subjects". The trope of the "submissive" and "feudal" (anti-)citizen, cowed into voting for the "mafia" was especially salient during the summer protests but lost none of its importance in the post-2013 electoral cycles. In 2017 Bulgaria prepared for early parliamentary elections. This time around the Central Electoral Commission was facing an uphill battle to introduce machine voting throughout the entire country in just two months. Pressure came from a new liberal-right political party of New Republic, uniting remnants of the 1990s anti-communist opposition and one of the several parties who claimed to represent the "real spirit" of the 2013 summer protests.

One of the justifications for machine voting was that "machines will delimit the controlled vote of the minorities [Turks and Roma], because [to use the machine] people have to be educated and to be able to read" (Angelov 2017). New Republic implored voters to use the machines (as paper ballots will also be available alongside) because "the aim is to make clear which party depends on fair elections, and which one – on controlled and bought vote" (ibid.) (Dnevnik 2017). In their electoral program they openly announced that they will work for the introduction of "partial educational voting qualifications" even though it is unconstitutional (Initsiativi za Bulgaria 2017).

For the 2014 elections, the liberal newspaper *Dnevnik*, which endorsed the summer protests of 2013, produced a video explainer of how to deal with the so-called "bought vote" (a shorthand for the market of votes). The video implores people to go out and vote because the larger number of "free" votes are cast, the more expensive it becomes for organized crime to maintain its reserves of "bought votes". From a competition between political parties, voting became a battlefield in which free citizens must outnumber "unfree" ones.

The way the warring parties are depicted in the explainer is worth dwelling on. On the one hand, the coalition between "the oligarchy and the poor" (Ganev 2013) is represented by black figures arranged in a pyramid on top of which sits the oligarch Peevski. According to the narrative, with each election, he builds an ever greater "pyramid of corruption and dependencies with the votes of hundreds of thousands of controlled Bulgarians". On the other hand, is the good voter, depicted as a white, smiling figure that waves and happily casts its free vote. The fact that in the most widespread representations of the struggle against the mafia, minorities double as "passive" and "controlled" gives the color palette of the video a sinister overtone.
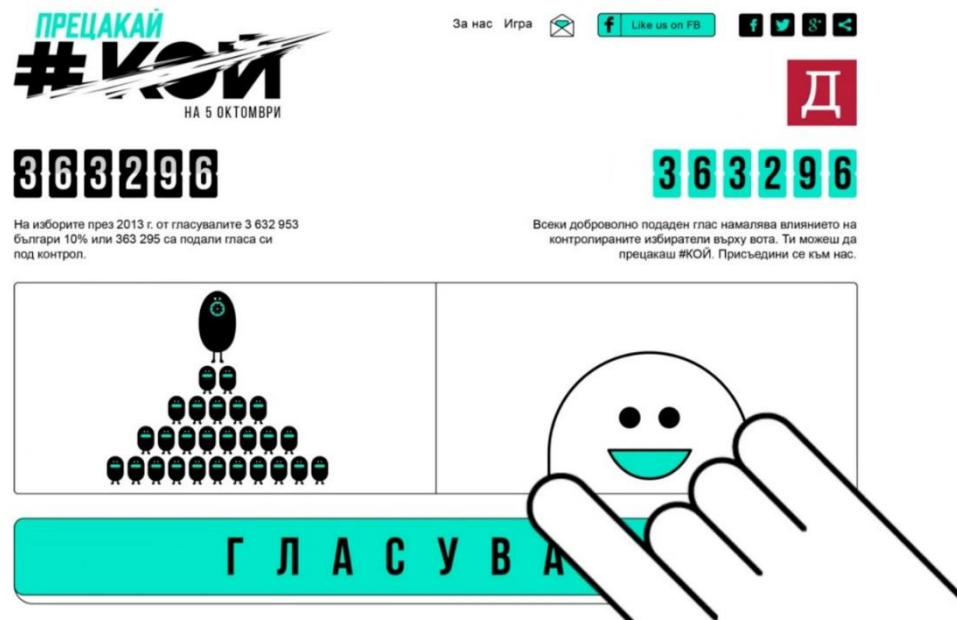
Прецакай #КОЙ

FIGURE 13 "VOTE!". SCREENGRAB BY THE AUTHOR.

Further in the video we are told that 10% of the turnout in 2013 cast a "controlled vote" (the percent roughly coincides with the percentage of citizens of Turkish and Roma descent) so at least 10% "free" votes are needed to make the "voter fraud" machine prohibitively expensive. While the numbers coincide, the video represents the "free" 10% in the singular, as a happy *individual* vis-a-vis the *mass* of controlled, gloomy black citizens to the left. At this stage, ironically, ethnic minorities turn into majorities.

The last few seconds of the video show the accumulation of a mass of white free citizens in a horizontal, rather than pyramidal way as the unfree anti-citizens, suggesting that the

citizens are networked, horizontally organized and free, as opposed to the hierarchical subjection of the "controlled vote" of the anti-citizens (see the previous screenshot). Apart from the racial coding, the economistic rationale behind the campaign also needs a mention. It suggests that "free voting" is valuable because it makes the unfree voters very expensive for the oligarchy.
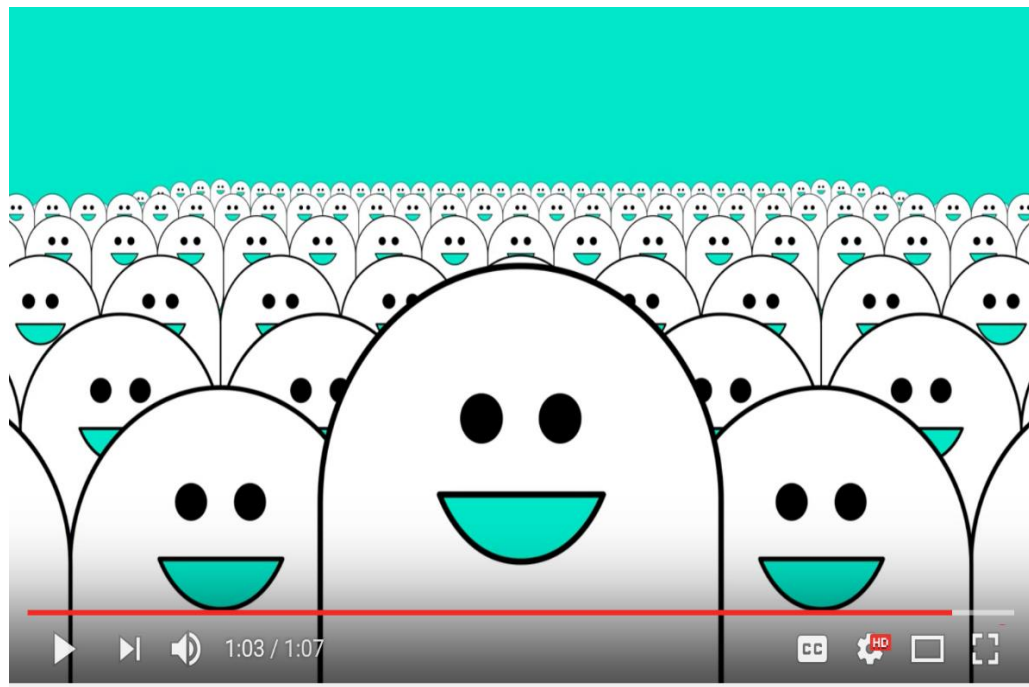
Прецакай #КОЙ

FIGURE 14 HAPPY FREE VOTERS
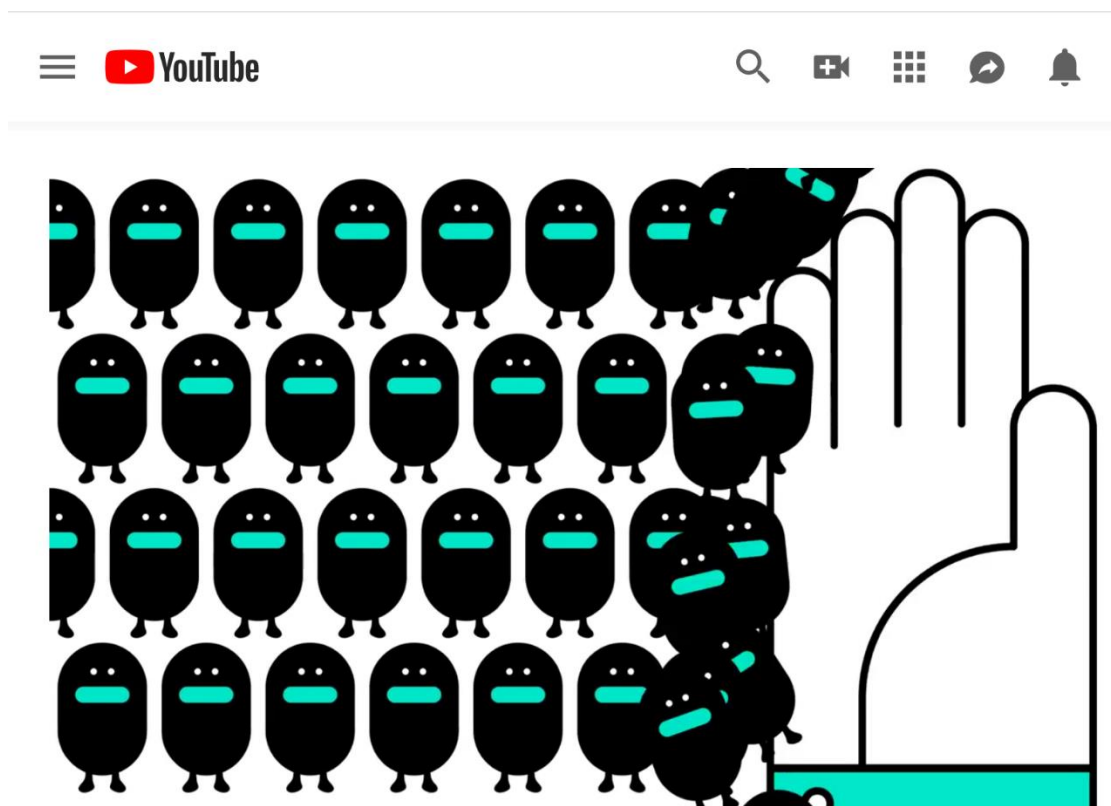
Прецакай #КОЙ

FIGURE 15 HAPPY FREE CITIZEN WIPING OUT THE CORRUPTED MASS OF ANTI-CITIZENS. SCREENGRAB BY THE AUTHOR

Media cast voting as a heroic and commendable activity, in line with the civic republicanism of the protests. For example, in the run-up of the 2014 parliamentary elections, a picture of a Bulgarian ship engineer working and living in Japan became trending hot in social networks. He is holding an expensive plane ticket to travel 1000 km to the nearest Bulgarian consulate in Tokyo to cast his vote. A liberal media outlet which sprang in response to the 2013 summer protests republished the picture and commended

the man as a model voter because, by his own admission, he sacrificed a lot of money and his only free day during the week to fulfill his civic duty (ClubZ 2014):
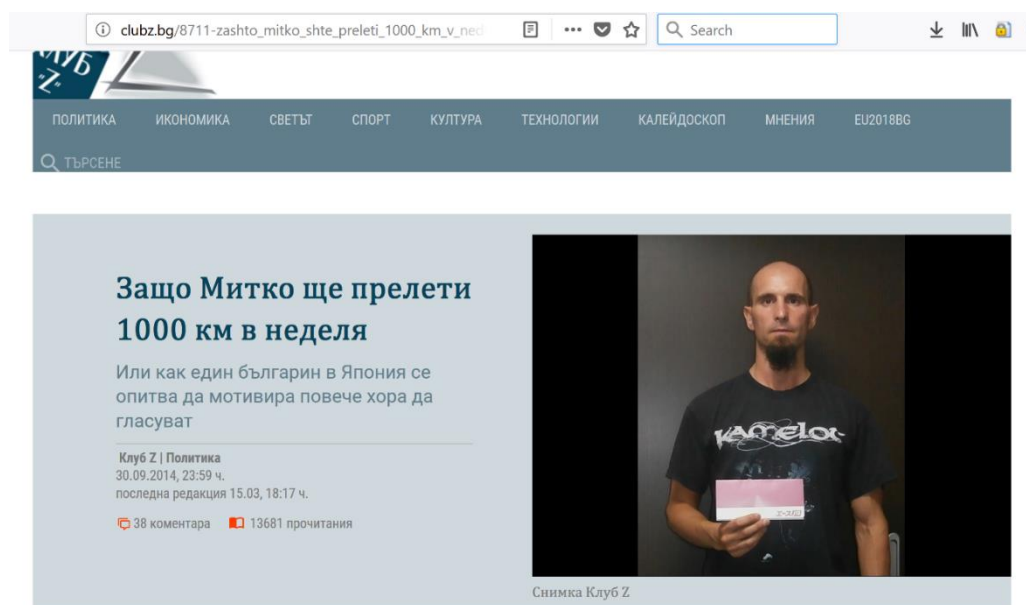
The picture became a part of the wider campaign of summer protest activists to mobilize more people to vote to counter the "controlled vote" of the submissive, uneducated and manipulated anti-citizens.

To conclude this section, "education" has become the chief prerequisite for the exercise of citizenship rights, making a transition from the logic of "the citizens are (unequally) educated" to "only the educated are citizens". However, education has to be understood in the double sense, as being in possession of formal qualifications and knowledge, as

well as possessing good manners which are the result of "proper upbringing". As we know from virtually all contexts, even in countries with mandatory and universal education systems, not everybody is formally fully schooled, still less in that second meaning of informal acquisition of the proper class habitus which is by definition unequal. Let us attend to a few examples of how the class habitus structures and activates the ways anti-citizens are perceived.

Corporeal Vision and Division

The Bulgarian protests of 2013 became known and distinguished themselves from the twin enemy of "the mafia" and the "anti-citizens" through their creative and artistic potential. They came to be known as the protests of "the smart and the beautiful," after the famous novelist Georgi Gospodinov's influential essay "The protester is beautiful" (2013). A white piano together with the distinctive hand-made posters and a real ballerina "embellished" the area in front of Parliament, while citizens expressed their distaste of Communism with unique hand-made costumes and signs in the early days of the summer protest.

A host of performance acts further reinforced the "creative middle class" character of the protests. For example, the protesters built a symbolic "Berlin wall" out of carton boxes whose subsequent destruction came to express their firm pro-European geopolitical and "civilizational" orientation.

But as much as activist-intellectuals try to maintain the separation between the low and lofty orders of aesthetic dimensions of the protests, the "lowly" reasserts itself in the final analysis. The only means available to activist-intellectuals to judge how far (or not) the population has progressed on its cultural elevation, is crudely material. For example, much like the amplification of the significance of "racial" otherness of the Roma, this happens through the objectification of sexed bodies for the purposes of discerning who belongs to civil society.

Consider for example an essay by prof. Kalin Yanakiev – who established the opposition between the "quantity and the quality" I referred to earlier – titled "On the aesthetics of the protests". Yanakiev compares the aesthetic qualities of the protests and counter-protests and more specifically, the day (14 July 2013) when a young female summer protester dressed up as "Liberty" from Delacroix's painting "Liberty leading the people":
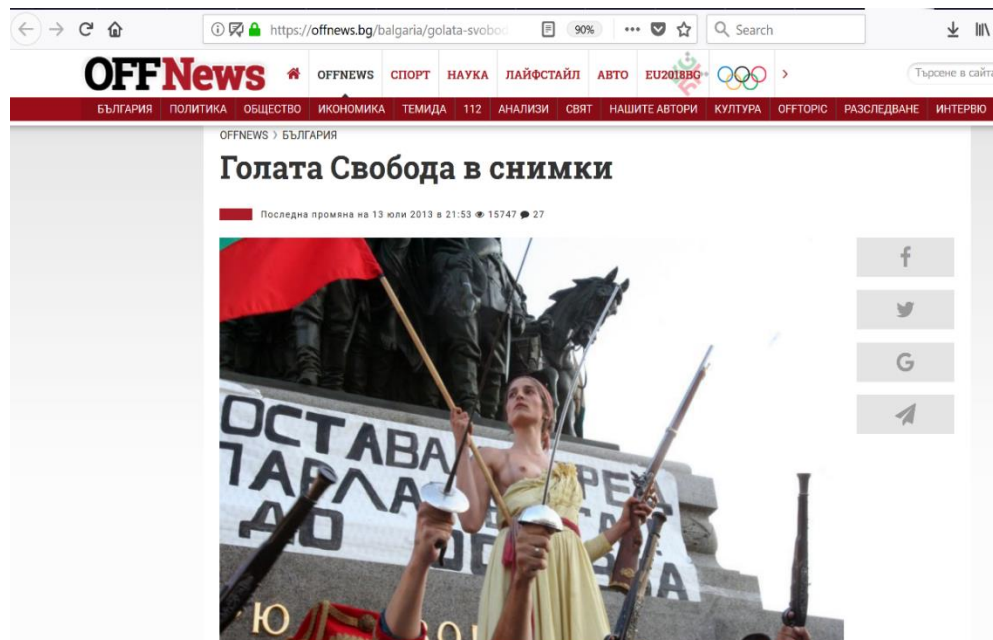
FIGURE 17 "THE NAKED LIBERTY IN PICTURES". SCREENSHOT FROM OFFNEWS.COM

The same day, a woman ironized the "Liberty" impersonator and also appeared bare-breasted at the "counter-protest":

This is how prof. Yanakiev interprets both performances in his essay rich in sexist, ageist and fat-shaming invective:

> [A] most grotesque contrast [emerged] when a voluptuous, fat and vulgar, middle-aged woman showed her breast to the venerable government supporters with which she tried to rebuke the euphoric-celebratory and simultaneously sparkling, joyful-ironic reenactment of the famous painting of Delacroix which a group of [anti-government] protesters reproduced not coincidentally on this day[47], and with an obvious "wink" to the French ambassador [who endorsed the protests]. Why the counter-protester fury

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47 The day in question was 14 July 2013. For all of Yanakiev's university titles and cultural erudition, he seems not to know that the painting refers to the July Revolution 41 years after 1789.

had to execute the striptease in question, what "joke" could have been in it, nobody understood. The only thing that became clear is that the counter-protest is in a grotesque way completely lacking even a modicum of a sense for "performance", a sense for the artistic enlivening of the open public space, and a sense of humor (Yanakiev 2013).

For all the emphasis on the immaterial, spiritual and lofty qualities of the protest for European values, it takes a quick look at the shape of a woman's breast to determine who belongs to which side of the divide. In the final analysis, the material appearance, in its most vulgar modality (i.e. "sagging" or "pointy" breasts, "fat" or "thin" bodies) reasserts itself in order to stabilize the division between the citizens and the anti-citizens:

> For example, look how charmingly (and yes – beautifully, almost erotically) the maidens [of the protest] wrap their bodies with the national flag. The flag is almost blossoming on their bodies. Now compare with the *standardized* size, the threatening [aggression] of the flags, waved like *partisan sticks* by most of the "counter-protesters". (ibid.; emphasis added).

It is not any aggression but a "standardized Communist" one:

> despite the fact that the [anti-government] protesters are in their tens of thousands, we don't see the "mass person" [*chovekat-masa*] raging in them. It is not "the people" [*narod*] manifesting, but many, many faces. In contrast, the counter-protests seem to consist of the descendants of those who, 70 years ago [the beginning of Socialism], called the writers, officers, university lecturers awaiting their trials in the so-called People's Tribunal, "fascists" [..].

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Nothing signals individuality more poignantly than the face. On this view, while the counter-protesters form a gray mass, the summer protest is the sum of the colorful individual faces that compose it, without ever losing their individuality. The counter-protest dilutes its individual elements into an undifferentiated mass. The chain of equivalence of the summer protest, in contrast, affirms the individuality of its constitutive sets. A simple table can illustrate more clearly the binary oppositions the professor operates with:

Protest	Counter-protest
Liberal	Communist
Individual faces	Mass-person, the narod
Creative	Imitative
Knowledgeable	Ignorant
Beautiful	Ugly
Erotic	Vulgar, pornographic
Spontaneous	Directed
Disinterested	Invested in things crude and material
Polite	Rude, angry, hateful
Citizens	Anti-citizens

TABLE 4 CITIZENS VS ANTI-CITIZENS

To the erotic beauty of the protest Yanakiev pits the threatening ugliness of the counter-protests:

> Now compare the faces of the [summer] protesters [..]. No matter what angry and radical answers [they] give, they are still smiling, they treat the interviewers amicably and look them in the eye. In contrast, the counter-protesters are rude with the reporters, and look desperately for their "leader" standing close behind them, who hastens to take the floor from them and shoots up the message drafted [by someone above] for the day (Yanakiev 2013).

Beauty goes hand in hand with knowledge about the protests' objectives and demands. In contrast, ugliness comes with rudeness, dependency on someone higher up the hierarchy to give the "correct answers", and a lack of knowledge about what the counter-protesters are doing there. Even the anger is different, the difference stemming from the authentic citizenship the protesters enjoy by virtue of their knowledge and culture:

> The [counter-protesters] are singularly angry, when they are in a larger group, or hate organically – when they are on their own – those who are "paid by the West", because the latter are witty and have colorful faces, in short, are diverse because *they are citizens* (ibid.; emphasis added).

We can thus speak of the bodies of the citizenry and the anti-citizenry. One of the bodies is the beautiful, playfully erotic body, inhabited by the spirit (of the well-read, self-conscious, cultured, beautiful, rigorous protester) to a point of disembodiment. The other body is overtaken by its 'materiality' and is thus spiritless: it is the ugly, twisted, crooked,

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hungry, racialized, materialist and pornographic body of the counter-protester shamelessly flaunting her saggy breasts.

The summer protesters cast their opponents as lacking in creative ability, knowledge, especially of how the political system functions, how it is different from, and superior to Communism and so on. But they also articulate a lack of good upbringing in the sense of manners and bodily demeanor. Culture and the embodied habits define the differences between the classes. The question of bodily control is a crucial vector of distinction between the upper and the lower classes. The upper-class demeanor is premised on a fundamental erasure of the body and on suppression of its more primitive workings (burping, eating, farting, etc.). Being bourgeois is thus premised on a *disembodiment* whereas the working class has "too much" of a body. The working-class is too visibly embodied whereas the bourgeois tires to achieve more cerebral and purified, and thus disembodied status. As Bourdieu (2000) has shown *vis-a-vis* food, the bourgeois attitude to food erases its function as something that is supposed to fill the stomach and supply one with energy; the bourgeois does not stuff himself, he tastes and experiences flavors and textures like he would experience a work of art. As Roland Barthes argued, food is a system of signification that obeys protocols of oppositions ("bitter-sweet") (Counihan 2012), reflecting (back on) social and class oppositions, and so are bodies: lean-fat, erotic-vulgar, etc.

In *Une Classe Objet*, Bourdieu teases out the effects this disembodiment has on the bourgeois perception. He writes about the bourgeois who walks the picturesque countryside where the landscape becomes a mere décor. He perceives landscapes without the peasants, (agri)culture without the cultivators (it's more poetic in French: "paysage sans paysans, culture sans cultivateurs"), and also "structured structures without the labor that is structuring them, finality without an end, a work of art" (1977: 3-4). In that sense the bourgeois perception has a deadening quality to it upon the objects it perceives: it mortifies the objects and the world it perceives because it erases the working bodies that have structured the world and the objects to be perceived. Marx calls this phenomenon "the fetishism of commodities" in which objects start to relate to each other like subjects as the labor that has produced them is eliminated from view and experience.

The lack of the ability to keep the body in strict boundaries surfaces in many quotes: from the vulgar display of breasts to the identification of people who do not belong to the protest by way of registering their built-up bodies. One time I asked a university professor how he knew a protester from a counter-protester from a provocateur and he answered that whereas in the counter-protest they are "mostly Gypsies" (betrayed by their skin color and unkempt appearance), the provocateurs are "fit guys in tight black t-shirts". They are signaled by their bodies whereas the middle class emphasizes its cerebral disembodiment.

The figure of the "ugly" and angry counter-protester with dark skin, built-up body, speaking dialect Turkish or Roma, possesses threatening qualities. Especially so if he

leaves the confines of his protest and joins the anti-government rally with "nefarious" intentions. One of the most expressive representations of the counter-protester as a villain was the article of the Sofia University-based sociologist Milena Yakimova. She says they have perpetrated "the rape of Sofia" (the capital city). Not only had the counter-protesters raped Sofia, but unknowingly, they had also been raped by the ruling coalition.

> I am not sure if our compatriots from the Turkish ethnicity understood what happened that day, but they were raped.48 I am not surprised that they are silent, they are *de facto* prisoners of their own political party [the DPS]. Polls demonstrate that they are completely resistant to [alternative] media messages, while nobody knows how the elections unfold in remote rural areas. [They are unfree] and their freedom is taken away not from the [Bulgarian] majority but from their own party. Sofians are opinionated people, receptive to media messages yet they were also raped [on the day of the counter-protest] [..]. This is how when they rape you and you don't resist, your rapists think that you have asked for, and conceded to the act (Yakimova 2013).

Assuming the contradictory position of raped rapist at once, the counter-protests are simultaneously "impenetrable" to "proper" news and media analysis (unlike the summer protesters, whose receptivity however did not save them from being raped either). Their party's control over them is total.

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48 Because they were made to protest for the ruling coalition, senior partner of which was the BSP which is the heir to the Communist Party (BCP). In the late 1980s, the BCP perpetrated forced re-christening and then expulsions from Bulgaria into Turkey hundreds of thousands of Bulgarian Turks. During the counter-protest in 2013 the leaders of the DPS, which represents the Turksih and Roma minorities, and the BSP embraced and melodramatically "forgave" each other for the atrocities in the 1980s.

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Such figures of extreme mor(t)al danger, as allegedly embodied by the counter-protest, co-exist with images of passive and victimized people. The modulation from terror to pity is best exemplified by the article by an anti-government protester written in the form of a compassionate epistle to an imaginary counter-protester.

"I Protest for You"

The letter appeared at the peak of the confrontation between the protests and the counter-protests in 2013. It was published in the *#Protest* paper, the official media outlet of the protesters. Written in a condescending, compassionate yet orientalizing style, the letter begins with a cumulative romantic image of the "outsider-peasant": "Hello Ayse, Ivan from that Rhodope mountain village, Mehmed and Babo Radke" (Ralcheva 2013, quoted by Nikolova 2014). Ayse and Mehmed are "typical" names of Turks, as imagined by non-Turks. "Babo" means "grandmother" and is a polite way of addressing elderly women in rural settings.

Radina Ralcheva, author of the letter, apologized for not having visited her imaginary peasant addressee recently and excuses herself for her lack of time: "this is how it is in the city. We never have time for the important things." Then she elaborates further her romantic-conservative vision about the simple, rural life: "The city absorbs people in

stress and makes them lose touch with the ordinary, yet important things. [..] Here, in the city, nothing grows except for egotism and greed."

She then proceeds to explicate what "baba Radka" might be thinking: "You think we have it easy and glamorous around here while you go about your daily problems: the harvest, the husbandry, the pension, the job – if you have one (!), the bread." This is the reason "baba Radka" and "Mehmed" might not have properly understood what the protests are about. Ralcheva applies herself to the task of explaining to her:

> I've been protesting for two months now. I want those who lie to me and you to go away. Maybe you've heard about the [summer] protests. They are protests for morality in politics. Morality is something very simple: to shake hands with someone or to look them in eye [..]. Morality means telling the truth instead of lies. [..] That's why I will continue marching every day. I will go for both of us. I do not know you, but don't you worry about this, you can count on me because you are like me. You are my people [*narod*].

Ralcheva imagines a division of labor and responsibilities in which the villagers feed her while she protests for them:

> You would give me food and shelter if I ended up in your village... and I would fight for our common struggle for a better state in which we can both live a decent life. Believe me. I believe you. Even if they bring you by bus to downtown Sofia and [force you] scream at me, force you to hit me, you and I are One.

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This division of labor is flexible. Sometimes Ralcheva places herself in the dependent position, in a child-like situation in which she expects to be fed and sheltered. Then the roles are reversed and Ralcheva self-appoints as the responsible adult taking case for the gullible villager. She knows better what is best for the country, even when "baba Radka" is of a different opinion and might be willing to communicate it violently. After all, it is not even her opinion as she has been forced to attend a counter-protest and forced-fed government propaganda. She may be forgiven.

Apart from that, the letter is a rare moment of invoking nation in a truly intersectional manner. It reeks of orientalization, romanticism, country-city divisions, race, class, gender but it nonetheless invokes the mystic body and one-ness of the people against the governmental enemy. In contrast, another prominent protester, LGBT activist, blogger and member of a small conservative party, Magdalina Guenova reintroduces the divisions within the national body and writes about the counter protests as "the sad truth that has come to Sofia from places forgotten by us". Then she defines them as "bought, dependent, deceived, and cowed votes" whose puppet-masters "decide the elections" instead of "us, the citizens" (quoted by Nikolova 2014a: 47).

These interventions, even while they assume the form of an imagined conversation with a counter-protester, are not based on actual conversations with them, but extrapolate interpretation by turning the behavior or outward appearance of the counter-protesters as texts who do not know the truth about themselves. The whole analysis, therefore, relies

on implicit sense, mediated by the class habitus of the writers, or the whole set of implicit, pre-discursive presuppositions that order sense perception, and especially so class perception. More specifically, it is all those incorporated signs which make it known immediately to the perceiver the class appurtenance of those whom she observes, betrayed by the state of their teeth, their clothes, their accent. This sense is akin to what Garfinkel called "background expectancies" with the difference that those get objectified in the writing, owing no doubt to the political-theoretic competences of the writers trying to make sense of the counter-protest by verbalizing their sense, and communicating it to like-minded publics.

The rare occasion of a confrontation between the two types of protesters, proved the counter-protester as less gullible that imagined. During a pro-government rally, an anti-government protester waved a 2-lev banknote (around 1 EUR) and shouted at the crowd that their presence costs that much. A woman from the rally retorted that this is how much the leader of the Right-wing opposition GERB (and three times PM) Boyko Borissov must have paid him.

What bearing any of this has on the imaginaries of citizenship? Let's hear prof. Yanakiev again:

> Naturally, the most basic difference is in the fact that the participants in the Sofia protests are citizens (and I don't put any association with the place of origin or occupation in this term). *And the citizen, by essence of his* [sic]

mentality, is spectacular, witty, artistic. It is no coincidence that the revolutions of the past 30 years are "velvet" revolutions – that is to say, revolutions of the moral-aesthetic order, of the logos [*slovesnostta*], and this is especially important – of the readiness to prevail through self-sacrifice and not via raw power (Yanakiev 2013, emphasis added).

Yanakiev articulates the opposition in Aristotelian politics between "logical" and "phonic" animals: between those who have logos, and those who have only voice that helps them express barely intelligible cries of pain or pleasure and are therefore outside of the political community (Rancière 1999: 22). We can call Yanakiev's ruminations a "creativity theory of citizenship" because the properties and titles of citizenship derive from "creativity" instead of being automatically assigned to just about anyone at birth, as per Constitution. This is the creative class reclaiming monopoly of citizenship, redefined along republican lines ("self-sacrifice"). As the professor emphasizes, he takes citizenship not as contingent upon one's place of residence of occupation but as an innate substance which is moreover unevenly distributed: the mentality of the individual who is immutably creative regardless of whether he engages in a particular creative activity. Since it does not derive from activity or practice, this is an essentialist understanding of citizenship. It is citizenship as substance.

From the Captured State to the Captive Electorate

Why democracy would function better if the demos is "incised" becomes very clear in the following commentary by Polina Paunova, a journalist and an unflinching supporter and participant in the 2013 summer protests:

> 90% of Bulgarians think education and healthcare should be free. 86% want a guaranteed basic income. A common opinion has it that the state should provide jobs to whoever wants to work. The diagnosis: nearly thirty years after the start of the Transition to democracy, no turnabout in the values in the mentality of the majorities has occurred (Paunova 2017).

The masses are straightforwardly accused of having "socialistic values", chief among them the expectation that the state is obliged to take care of them as opposed to assuming personal responsibility for themselves. Also, Paunova laments that success, the rule of law, freedom and private property and not popular values. She sees in this the reason both for the deficiencies of the state and the deficiencies in the electorate which she responsibilizes for these failings:

> For three decades the Bulgarians have not been able to *adapt* to the democratic changes. A large part does not understand how the state works. Even worse, they do not want to understand. That's why the average Bulgarian does not see the nexus between personal success, freedom and the rule of law. Because of this basic lack, he [*sic*] remains illiterate and as a result becomes close-minded and suspicious towards difference (ibid, emphasis added).

Notice the expectation that citizens must adapt to democracy instead of directing it through electoral and non-electoral means available to them (through the range of participatory means be them protests, deliberation, public sphere discussions, petitions, founding advocacy and pressure groups). It presumes a degree of passivity in the electorate (while at the same time chastising it precisely for passivity), or rather, the only

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agency allowed to it is the ability to adapt to and follow "the democratic changes" rather than being the source for them, as per most democratic theories (even the most restrictive ones).

At the end, Paunova argues the "electorate is captured. It is held hostage to its own unwillingness to be free. And this is how it reproduces itself on government positions" (ibid.) This is reminiscent of the idea of "state capture" in political science which normally finds the culprit in the ex-Communist elites who managed to convert and thus reproduce their power in post-socialism. But Paunova's vision goes further than that, finding the *raison d'etre* for this elite in the "captured electorate" voting corrupt elites in power because they are dependent on them.

As Stavrakakis observes, "[d]emonization of populism (and 'the people') furthers de-democratization, leading to what Rancière depicted as 'to govern without people' or 'to govern without politics'" (2014: 510). And these discourses make patently clear that neoliberal technologies of governance, producing self-help, self-responsible individuals, exert de-democratization pressures by excluding "communistic" majorities that have supposedly failed to adapt to "democratic values" and to take their lives in their own hands. This gives rise not only of "post-politics" (by now a traditional staple food for radical critique of neoliberalism) but expresses the radical social disintegration to which the exclusion of the democratic majorities (who happen to coincide with the working-class) from political participation led (see Buden 2016).

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Theoretical Implications

I argue that the opposition between the protests and counter-protests is best understood as a class antagonism between the middle class and the mass of peasants, Roma, Turks, the uneducated, the passive anti-citizens, unfolding on the terrains of civil society and citizenship. One way to make sense of this is by drawing on Ernesto Laclau's understanding of the nature of "populism" and "the political" mediating the antagonistic constitution of identities. The political, worthy of this name, is only so when the social splits in two – a popular subject rises against the powers that be, thereby delimiting the normal politics of "administration", satisfying different demands differentially. (Laclau's distinctions between politics and administration is analogical to Ranciere's (2006) opposition between la politique and le politique.)

Despite the widespread scholarly assimilation of populism and nationalism (visible in the "national-populism" misnomer dear to some political scientists), the Laclauian populist antagonistic bifurcation points to the limit of the official discourse of the nation. Nothing underpins the idea of modern nation more fundamentally than the notion of unity. Despite its internal pluralism and even antagonisms, the discourse of the nation insists on its One-ness; the nation is the One embodied. It is a One in which the three Hegelian categories of the particular, the singular and the universal co-exist in an uneasy dialectic. *Vis-à-vis* other nations, and insofar as it asserts its distinction from them, the bounded nation is particularistic – *this* language, *this particular* religion or an assemblage of customs

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distinguish and delineate it from the rest. *Vis-à-vis* its internal pluralism and multiplicities, the nation is a singularity: "despite our class, geographic and cultural differences, we are One and Indivisible" (at least in the Republican versions thereof). It is also the site of a doubly limited universalism – limited by its own boundaries, on the one hand, and by the imperatives of capital accumulation, on the other. This universalism underpins modern citizenship through which the state supposedly recognizes all its citizens – and only them – as equal before the law and exacts their loyalty. (In practice various exclusions afflict minorities, working populations, and different "superfluous" – from the point of view of capital – populations such as refugees).

As stated, the One of "normal political times" is equivalent to "administration": the state neutralizes demands from below by administering them. The populist moment occurs when unfulfilled demands articulate together in what Laclau calls a "chain of equivalence" and go beyond a point of satisfaction and neutralization by the authorities, splitting the social in Two: a political antagonism of "us vs them" ensues.

There is, however, a *third* element in the social antagonism of the Two we need to consider. "The long 2013" of protests did not direct its ire solely against the oligarchic government but drew yet another fault line within the national One. Thus, the "middle class" (or "the citizens") rose both against "the people" (of the February protest plus the counter-protest later) *and* the government. This discursive triangulation of the enmity brings the idea of civil society close to the way in which Montesquieu, long before the

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birth of anything remotely identifiable as a modern nation, theorized the social order in the French monarchy. Weaponizing "civil society" as an expression of the separation of powers most adept at checking absolutist power, Montesquieu grounded it firmly with the estate of the aristocracy, and its elaborate systems of mores and manners (see Richter 1998, Ehrenberg 1999). In our case, in describing their battle as the "citizens" or "civil society", defined as possessing superior knowledge, culture and aesthetic sense, against the twin enemy of the post-communist political elite and their gullible constituencies, the protesters mint a theory of civil society in which the virtuous, cultured, and knowledgeable ersatz-aristocracy of citizens rises to safeguard freedom, morality and European values against encroachments from corrupt elites and "welfare-dependent populations".

How does this triple fault-line affect Laclau's theory of populism? Despite his unwillingness to consider determinate ontic elements that make up the chain of equivalence, an examination of the ideological content of the chain yields substantial implications for its form. The Two of "us versus them" turns into a Three, and *eo ipso*, accentuates some of the limits of the formalist framework of Laclau's theory (more on this, see Stavrakakis 2004). In the case at hand, the antagonism of "the us versus them" should be disaggregated into the "middle class" *Citizens* versus the *Masses* (of colored, ugly and uneducated anti-citizens) versus the *Mafia*.

In addition, the Roma-chase highlights yet another "ontic" dimension of class-, and race-sense delimiting belonging to "civil society" and affecting the operation of the chain of

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equivalences. This vigilantism, glossed as the "inner Other of the protest", marks a further theoretical contribution to Discourse Theory in showing how determinate *ontic* substances, such as "race" and class, insert themselves and disrupt the chain by forcing it to engage in purges, akin to "boundary work". In the end, we can rehabilitate a neglected aspect of de Tocqueville's theory of civil society *qua* democratic surveillance, or of "civil society" as a generalized police rationality. Usually civil society theory calls Tocquevillian any understanding of civil society as free associations of individuals who pursue their interests. There is much in Tocqueville's *Democracy in America* to warrant such an appellation but there is also another, much underexplored understanding of civil society, which de Tocqueville puts forward in this book. In *Democracy in America,* de Tocqueville argues that law enforcement is more underdeveloped than in Europe yet more efficient. The reason is that it is a responsibility of citizens:

> In America the means which the authorities have at their disposal for the discovery of crimes and the arrest of criminals are few. The State police does not exist, and passports are unknown. The criminal police of the United States cannot be compared to that of France; the magistrates and public prosecutors are not numerous, and the examinations of prisoners are rapid and oral. Nevertheless, in no country does crime more rarely elude punishment. The reason is, that everyone conceives himself to be interested in furnishing evidence of the act committed, and in stopping the delinquent. During my stay in the United States I witnessed the spontaneous formation of committees for the pursuit and prosecution of a man who had committed a great crime in a certain county. In Europe a criminal is an unhappy being who is struggling for his life against the ministers of justice, whilst the population is merely a spectator of the conflict; in America he is looked upon as an enemy of the human race, and the whole of mankind is against him (Tocqueville 1990, Ch. 5)

Tocqueville advances a theory of civil society which, contra the liberal opposition between state and society, violence and deliberation, and a century and a half before the emergence of governmentality studies, posits police rationality as the common point reducing the tension between these polarities. On this understanding, we can define civil society as the democratization of the state police's rationality. Civil society, understood as the site for the deployment of order-enforcing vigilance, therefore overcomes the opposition between pre-political state violence and democratic politics. Differently put, between the non-representative "deep state" structures and their violent arms and the deliberative, dialogic, peaceful democratic "facade" of the modern state, embodied by civil society.

Conclusion: Liberal vs Authoritarian Post-Democracy

Pierre Bourdieu (1984) suggests that an indirect, apolitical form of domination inheres in distinction. The normative considerations translated in aesthetic terms of the intellectuals demonstrate that domination through taste can be directly political or harnessed for political ends, such as the symbolic roll-back of political equality in modern citizenship and its replacement by a more conservative-aristocratic understanding of political membership as an exclusive category, as the deployment of aesthetic categories for the purposes of defining the identity and citizenship status of the different protests demonstrates.

Contrary to scholarly pronouncements that "[t]he value of civil society lies in that it provides a space for alternative views, debate, and dissent" (Amarasuriya 2015: 55) the summer protesters who claim to act and speak on behalf of "civil society" deny the right of pro-government protesters to hold legitimate political opinions because of the way they look ("minority-looking", "poor", "uncreative"), because of their ethnicity, because of the nature in which their rally was organized ("bussed in", "socialist-era manifestation"), and simply because they support – allegedly by being paid or forced to attend the rallies – a government that suffered a radical loss of legitimacy in the eyes of the protesters. "Civil society" for its self-appointed legitimate representatives becomes less of a space for voicing "alternative views, debate, and dissent" than a space for the articulation of a "single" social interest whose only legitimate expression is provided by themselves.

As the case shows, civil society can become the exclusive space for people with knowledge and culture, members of "the middle class", in short, for the executors of the new "cultural revolution" tasked with finalizing the incomplete Transition to Western-style democracy and the free market. In that sense, it deploys a version of civil society as the domain of "gentlemanly" culture, morals and manners, supplemented by beauty – by definition unevenly spread – which alone confer the right to speak in public. This upends the nominally inclusive Habermasian public sphere which pretends to not care about social class and demands that everyone be treated as equal for the duration of the deliberation. My notion of the anti-citizen captures "civil society" not as a neutral ground

for deliberation but as a side in the tripartite discursive split of society into the elites, the crowds and the cultured middle classes.

I have shown how aesthetic considerations about bodies, knowledge and class (in both senses of the term, as in social class and as attainment of a level of refinement and quality) played a role in the constitution of the identity of the anti-government protesters as a "middle class" vis-a-vis their twin enemies of the governing elites and their gullible constituencies. In doing so, they have radically narrowed the scope of legitimate belonging to civil society and the community of citizens.

The discourses scrutinized are still in the domain of the imaginary, and no-one in Bulgaria has been stripped of citizenship yet for failing to demonstrate civic competence in a newspaper interview, or for taking the bus to attend a protest. However, these exclusionary discourses are symptomatic and pose a danger for democracy should they gain a wider traction. They signal a departure from the more egalitarian visions which animated the early 1990s transition to democracy that pitted the whole of society against the Communist *elite*. In contrast, the 2013 revival of the anti-communist opposition entertains self-congratulating visions of itself as the "Bulgarian quality" versus the Bulgarian "quantity" (= the communistic *masses*), lending it decidedly elitist and post-democratic character.

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The discourses show how the middle class reproduce the fear of mob rule, reviving the aristocratic illiberalism of classical liberal as well as conservative "crowd psychology" theories (in political sense only as antidemocratic, economic liberalism).

As Chantal Mouffe (2009) has shown convincingly, the link between liberalism and democracy in liberal democracy is not congenital but a contingent connection that is full of tensions. The tension between liberal constitutionalism and human rights, on the one hand, and the democratic principle of popular sovereignty, on the other, checks the closure tendency of the latter, and the non-democratic exercise of power of the former. Throughout its history, liberalism has not always been democratic. It has even been openly hostile to democracy because of the opportunity it gives to the unpropertied classes to challenge social inequalities and the property rights of the elites. As Macpherson argues, the early democratic utopias were always radically egalitarian and foregrounded the abolition of private property, making democracy inimical to the liberal regime, founded on private property rights. Liberalism did democratize eventually, under relentless pressure from below. Liberal thinkers developed elaborate ways of integrating (some form of) democracy in liberalism, i.e. via complicated differentiation of voting weight based on property or educational qualifications. For example, John Stuart Mill envisaged suffrage strictly proportional to education titles so that the enlightened stay on top, dispensing paternalistic government upon the ignorant masses. Property is the nodal point which unites the conservative fears of the crowds' destructive effects on the "natural order" and

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the private property rights sacred to liberals, threatened by "too much" democracy. Property and propriety go hand in hand.

Representative democracy as a technology of governing, is a compromise reconciling the tensions between property rights and democratic sovereignty, the only form of democracy suitable for class societies, as Macpherson argues.

But this compromise is growing increasingly fragile.

Many scholars, including mainstream political scientists, have registered the unraveling of the assemblage between liberalism and democracy. For example, liberal political scientists see the main source of tension in the populist wave, understood as a modern form of demagoguery catering to the irrational fears and desires of the masses for national autarky and closure. Some political scientists take a more balanced view and demonstrate how populism can renew liberal democracy, at least its more palatable version, called "soft" populism (Smilov and Krastev, n.d.). Still, people like Krastev urge restraint of the more radical forms of democracy such as direct democracy and referendums, designating them as a "mortal danger to the EU" (Krastev 2016b). Speaking of referendums, the Brexit referendum and the Trump election created their own genre of liberal disenchantment with democracy. Authoritarian leaders such as Viktor Orban own the moral panic and articulate it into an explicit positive political doctrine, proclaiming the arrival of the so-called "illiberal democracy" as a decisive break with the liberal centrist consensus from the 1990s and early 2000s. Liberals accept the framing and urge strengthening of the liberal

constitutional apparatus, and supra-national disciplining, as a way of reigning in the illiberal democracy.

On its part, the Left sees the erosion of the compromise stemming not from the democracy but from the liberal-capitalist side of the equation. For example, Slavoj Žižek points to China as an illustration that capitalism is emancipating itself from its democratic frames and thrives even better under authoritarian one-party rule (his notorious "capitalism with Asian values" statement) (Žižek 2009). Critical scholars such as Wendy Brown and Colin Crouch detail the de-democratization effects of neoliberalism through the technocratization of politics, and the rise of post-democracy, respectively. Anti-populism can also be perceived as a source of destabilization of the fragile nexus between liberalism and democracy (Stavrakakis et al. 2018), Medarov (Medarov 2017), tilting the balance of power towards the liberal side. In line with these arguments, the exorcism of populism reproduces the classic aristocratic-elitist fear of the "mob rule" as an embodiment of the passionate, effeminate, unreasoned, chaotic and totalitarian dangers to civilized society of democracy.

In line with this, the reactions to the counter-protests on part of the summer protests are a case of unraveling of the liberal-democracy not from authoritarian (i.e. in Orban's Hungary) but from liberal pressures, by way of excluding the illiberal, uneducated and populistic majorities from the confines of citizenship and civil society.

In the next chapter, I detail the effects of this citizenship imaginary on nationalism.

Chapter Six

A Nation of Masters? Assembling New Role Models for the Nation

Men make their own history, but they do not make it as they please; they do not make it under self-selected circumstances, but under circumstances existing already, given and transmitted from the past. The tradition of all dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brains of the living. And just as they seem to be occupied with revolutionizing themselves and things, creating something that did not exist before, precisely in such epochs of revolutionary crisis they anxiously conjure up the spirits of the past to their service, borrowing from them names, battle slogans, and costumes in order to present this new scene in world history in time-honored disguise and borrowed language. Thus, Luther put on the mask of the Apostle Paul, the Revolution of 1789-1814 draped itself alternately in the guise of the Roman Republic and the Roman Empire, and the Revolution of 1848 knew nothing better to do than to parody, now 1789, now the revolutionary tradition of 1793-95.

Karl Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, Ch. 1

"We are in a new historical epoch, similar to the National Revival of the 19th century."

Evgenii Daynov, political scientist, civil society activist, musician and author

Introduction

In this final chapter I look at the appropriation of the Bulgarian Revival during the two waves protests and at the effects the "Cultural revolution" of 2013 exercised on contemporary Bulgarian nationalism. "Revival" refers to the emergence of the Bulgarian national consciousness, the struggles for religious autonomy and national liberation from Ottoman rule in the 19th century (Vezenkov and Marinov in Daskalov and Marinov 2013).

It is the most emotionally charged period of Bulgarian history, a rich and malleable repository of figures, ideas, themes and as such subject to diverse appropriations, revisionism and interrogation. In short, it commands an undying respect and relevance for Bulgarian public and political life. It also obeys Michel Foucault's rule of "tactical polyvalence of discourses", outlined in the second chapter.

A crucial ingredient in the Revival was the discourse of slavery. Revival intellectuals, national-liberation fighters ("activists" in today's parlance), and poets roused the imagination of their public with images of slavery. The Ottoman empire was repeatedly cast as a ruthless slave-owner holding its boot mercilessly upon Bulgarian slaves' throats. Modern Bulgarian literature, which was the primary vehicle for developing and spreading national consciousness, was replete with slave metaphors.

In 2013 the Revival once again became a Revolutionary ideology. Both protest waves drew on the rich symbolic repository of the Revival with important differences between them. While the winter protest of 2013 espoused a "low-brow" Revival nationalism, the summer protest articulated an elite nationalism. The winter protest spoke on behalf of the oppressed and emaciated Bulgarians, slaving away for their Ottoman masters (referred to as the Janissary corps). The summer Revival was cast as the revolt of a "master" class, suggesting a fantasy of what may be called a "nation of masters". The summer protest's "neo-Revival" discards the crucial metaphor of "slavery" for an upper-class revolutionary subject. The reason being that "slavery" is a disempowering remnant which hinders the

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development of the entrepreneurial Spirit by inculcating passivity and anti-entrepreneurial values in the minds of the majorities. Somewhat paradoxically, to this end, the activists and intellectuals of the summer of 2013 resuscitate a late-Socialist class optic that rehabilitated the historical role of the Bulgarian bourgeoisie and refocus it as a model for the nation.

This chapter examines the modalities of the Revival, and its retooling for a new age. I call the resulting new national discourse "cosmopolitan nationalism" and show how it articulates Revival-inflected identities with an enthusiastic embrace of the neoliberal entrepreneurial class whose reach is global. Unlike "standard-issue" nationalism which construes national homogeneity out of antagonistic social classes against other nations, the "master" national narrative of the 2013 summer protest does so in opposition to co-nationals considered "passive", "slovenly" and "slavish". It therefore transforms nationalism from a force of integration that normally dampens class conflict into *a terrain for antagonistic constitution of class consciousness.*

The chapter begins with a brief analysis of the logics of collective memory of the Revival, as construed through historians' narratives. I map the dialectical transformation of the revolutionary tale of the Revival into a nationalist narrative, especially as the former became state ideology post-Independence. In focus in this chapter is also the shifts between materialist and anti-materialist views of the Revival through distinct historical periods, including since 2013. This historiographic and memorial dimension is key to

understanding and explaining the recurrent discursive opposition between "materialist" and "anti-materialist" goals discussed in Chapters three and five. In the second half of the chapter I discuss in depth examples of the protest Revivals. My aim throughout the chapter is to trace the effects of class and class relations on imaginaries of national identity and on the performance of citizenship.

History and Invention of the 'Revival'

The "Revival" refers to the beginnings of Bulgarian modernization and "national awakening" in the late 18th and 19th centuries. It is the century which preceded the founding of the modern Bulgarian state (1878) and, depending on one's perspective, it encompassed campaigns as diverse as the battle for religious autonomy, for education in Bulgarian language, as well as the revolutionary struggle for independent statehood. Bulgarian nationalist discourse has constructed a teleology according to which the first struggles for the establishment of educational and religious autonomy in the Ottoman empire necessarily culminated in the national-liberation struggle in the second half of the 19th century and the eventual "restoration" of Bulgarian statehood after five centuries of Ottoman rule (Hristov 2010).

The Revival is a founding myth of the Bulgarian nation. As such, it functions also as a

repository for protest identities and frames of political struggle.[49] The concept of Revival was mostly elaborated a posteriori, and contemporaries seldom used the term (Hranova 2011). The first significant use of the term was by Yuriy Venelin, a Ukranian historian of Bulgaria, in the 1830s (Hranova 2010, Daskalov 2004). Its first occurrence in Bulgarian language was in 1842, in a pamphlet written and published in Russia by the Bulgarian merchant Vasil Aprilov who was familiar with Venelin's work (2004: 11-12).

Historian Rumen Daskalov's *The Making of a Nation in the Balkans* (2004) is probably the most comprehensive study of approaches to the Revival. I rely heavily on Daskalov's findings to tease out the differences and similarities between earlier and contemporary Revivalist discursive constructs of the nation, and especially how the 2013 summer protest movement inherits and draws on 'ingredients' of the Revival, while deploying them in different ways.

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49 The 2013 calls for a "New Revival" are not the first injunction to a return to the period's virtues. In the 1930 and 1940, a period of Right dictatorships and numerous fascist grassroots organizations, calls for a "new Revival" were similarly issued. Then came the repressive assimilation of the Turks and Pomaks in the 1980s under the name of the "Revival process". After 1989 Revival imaginaries informed the 1997 "democratic revolution" (Ragaru 2010), the 2001 return of the exiled populist-king Simeon II as a prime-minister, and the 2013 anti-austerity and anti-communist protests, to name just a few.   In that sense the Revival obeys the logic of a myth: as an enduring narrativization of "the first stages" and irrespective of whether or not it refers to actual events, is treated as an "everlasting" explanation for thing past, present and future (Lévi-Strauss 1955: 430). Levi-Strauss calls the myth a "double structure" which is at once historical and ahistorical. (ibid.) In the hands of the 2013 protesters (both from the winter and summer cycles of protests, albeit in different modalities), the Revival turns into such a myth qua a commentary on the past (the perceived role of the "bourgeoisie" driving the historical beginning of European modernity in Bulgaria), the present (the started but aborted resumption of said modernity after 1989 due to persistent obstacles generated by the not fully departed Communism), and future ("we will get there eventually by the efforts of the new middle class").

Notwithstanding scholarly disagreements over the temporal boundaries of the Revival, its proximity or distance to European historical developments, its determinations and motors/carriers, there is a broad consensus that the Revival was a founding moment for the modern Bulgarian nation. It is also uncontroversial to consider that the period covers the century preceding the official date of the founding of the autonomous Bulgarian state in 1878 (Daskalov 2004: 1).

Daskalov detects an oscillation between "objective" and "subjective" factors in the theoretical elaborations of the make-up of the nation. The period before 1944 saw a combination of objectivist and subjectivist traits, although the spiritual exaltation of the nation dominates (ibid. 16). At that time, a German-inflected understanding of the nation as a distinct cultural sphere, separate and opposed to neighboring nations, predominated which resulted in scholarly attention to the popular songs and customs collected during the Revival. Stalinism brought about a more objectivist understanding of the nation based on territory, language, common customs, etc.; but one that was also class-based: the "good" people's patriotism vs "bad" bourgeois nationalism (ibid.: 19). Stalinism rooted the theory of national development in a framework of the transition from feudalism to capitalism whereby historians considered the role of the nascent commercial bourgeoisie as crucial.[50] After 1956, de-stalinization brought about a degree of rehabilitation of

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50 The view of the Revival as the period of European capitalist modernization that supposedly helped Bulgaria shed the feudal Ottoman fetters, which was most strongly propagated by Communist

interwar nationalist thought and paradigms (see Gruev in Ivanova 2014). Subjectivist and non-materialist national traits were again emphasized, specifically the presence and growth of national consciousness (Daskalov 2004: 20-21). Class analysis persisted in the works of prominent historians such as Strashimir Dimitrov (director of the national history museum in the 1970s and a head of committee of the infamous "Revival Process" which re-christened and expelled hundreds of thousands of Bulgarian Turks in the 1970s and 1980s, see Gruev and Kalionski 2008) who traced national consciousness back to the activism of 19th Century bourgeois intelligentsia (Daskalov 2004: 22).

Daskalov identifies three 'Revivals': an acute-nationalist one (mostly from the Interwar period); a liberal-democratic one; and a revolutionary-communist one (Daskalov in Koleva 2010: 38). Hranova corroborates this by pointing out the tension between right-wing and left-wing conceptions of the Revival (2010: 48). Contention between the two views rested primarily on alternative foci on "education vs. revolution" (Hranova in Koleva 2010: 52-3). In Hranova's view, the Right-wing Revival began with Ivan Shishmanov, one of Bulgaria's most prominent interwar-period historians. Shishmanov modeled his understanding of the Revival on a Western European historical script, arguing that it was the belated Bulgarian analogue of the Italian Renaissance. Shishmanov thereby positioned the country firmly into the cultural and "civilizational" orbit of Western

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historians, has been challenged by post-socialist historians and scholars (although they too share in the understanding that this was the period when "modernity" began, without making use of terms such as capitalism or feudalism, Daskalov 2004: 90).

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Europe, imagined in strong opposition to the Ottoman empire despite the fact that what we know as the Revival, came about in the context of wide-ranging reforms of and *within* the Ottoman empire (Vezenkov 2006). According to Shishmanov, the engine that propelled both historical periods is the "social and economically developed citizenry" (quoted in Hranova 2011: 60). Shishmanov's Revival, and more broadly, the Right-wing Revival, according to Hranova, is cyclical and travels backwards, whereas the Left-wing Revival is teleological and revolutionary (Hranova 2010: 48-51). The Right-wing Revival stresses the achievements of the intellectuals, the priests and the teachers of the period, while the Left-wing Revival shifts the parameters of the actors and events: from teachers to masses and revolutionaries. For example, it integrates the hitherto excluded (abortive) April Uprising of 1876. Such was the approach to the Revival of the "father" of Bulgarian socialism Dimitar Blagoev (ibid.)

Class in the Revival Literature

Traditional historical analyses of the Revival are not very explicit about the latter's class underpinnings. One needs to turn to Communist and state-socialist historiographers for more systematic clues about class relations. Marxist history offered a narrative of transition from feudalism to capitalism, based on Western European trajectories, and applied uncritically to the Ottoman empire. Modernity and "Europe" reached Bulgaria from the East rather than from the West, however; they were brokered by the Ottoman Empire's own modernization and Europeanization efforts – the so-called Tanzimat reforms, as well as by the strong cultural, commercial and education ties with Russia

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(Todorova 2011). Despite its obvious limits, I revisit Marxist scholarship because for many decades it remained the dominant way of interpreting the class structure of the Revival and we can clearly see traces of it in the discourses of the self-styled new Revivalists today. The sole purpose of the literature review below is to outline the historiographic battle that underpins current middle-class consciousness as it articulates its visions of the Revival.

One does not typically associate State Socialism with "free" scholarly debates. This is far from the reality. Socialism produced intense, lively debates specifically about class bases of historical facts. Scholars vexed each other over questions such as how is a bourgeois revolution possible in the absence of a well-developed bourgeoisie? What role did the bourgeoisie play in the cultural uplifting of the Bulgarian nation, if any? What were the motors of said uplifting? Ideational or materialist (stemming from capitalism)? Such were some of the questions through which scholars scrutinized the effects of "class" and "capitalism" in the late 19th century. My aim is not to reconstruct the debates in their entirety. Rather, I am looking for clues about class dynamics at work in the 2013 revival of the Revival, inherited from these old historiographical debates. While I acknowledge their complexity, I turn to the literature to give the reader at least a cursory understanding of the paradigms with which scholars made sense of the Revival in order to appreciate the differences and continuities in the contemporary political mobilization of the period in question.

The founder of Bulgarian socialism Dimitar Blagoev posited the existence of three classes in the Bulgarian provinces of the Ottoman empire: the bourgeoisie, the rural landowners, and the peasants. In his view, the intelligentsia was not a class, but a "social layer" (Daskalov 2004: 112). He argued that the Revival was led by the new bourgeois class that emerged in the period of economic modernization and growth after the 1820s (Daskalov 2004: 58-9). Another early and influential class analysis of the Revival came from Krastyu Rakovsky in 1910, who went on to build a diplomatic and political career in the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic. Rakovsky identified the estate of "urban bourgeoisie" comprising the so-called *esnafi* (shop stewards and craftsmen), tax collectors, and tradesmen as the driving force of the Revival (Daskalov 2004: 109). In the 1940s and 1950s the prominent economic historian Jacques Natan argued that the national liberation in 1878 was the climax of the bourgeois struggle against feudalism and set the country on a modern, European bourgeois-democratic development (Daskalov 2004: 62). Applying analysis derived from the struggles between the bourgeoisie and the aristocracy in the West, historian Boyan Penev spoke of class struggle between the "middle estate" (*esnafi,* the urban bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie*)* and the "upper estate" (*chorbadzhii,* a quasi-feudal aristocracy) as the motor propelling forward the national Revival and the spread of democratic ideas (ibid. 110). Georgi Bakalov, a Communist Party intellectual, operated a similar transfer of Western categories of analysis, speaking of "third estate" to refer to the nascent Bulgarian urban bourgeoisie whom he considered the progenitor of the revolutionary intelligentsia (ibid: 113). The historian Jacques Natan also identified the urban bourgeoisie as the main progressive force behind the dissolution of the Ottoman "feudal" vestiges, embodied by the pro-Turkish *chorbadzhii* (ibid: 113).

In short, left-wing historians agreed on the progressive role of the esnafi class for the modern, educational, religious and economic uplifting of the emergent Bulgarian nation. Like conservative historians, they offered a narrative of the Revival driven by "modernization", inspired by Western revolutionary models (i.e. "bourgeois revolution"). The only point of divergence concerned the engine of the Revival: material interests took precedence over spiritual-nationalist and idealistic factors. Both camps stressed the central role of the "bourgeoisie" in national awakening.

After 1944, however, the Revival bourgeoisie acquired a less commendable, and even outright negative reputation (Deyanova 2010). By 1953 vitriolic criticisms had replaced the positive attitude to the progressive bourgeoisie, reflecting, according to Daskalov, the retrospective projection of the Communists in power of their contemporary struggles with the bourgeois class (2004: 118). Gradually the historical revisionism which accompanied the course of deepening destalinization in the 1960s, overcame this negative attitude, rehabilitating the "progressive bourgeoisie" (ibid: 119). It also worked to integrate a more "patriotic" "all-Bulgarian" approach as opposed to the "narrow" class perspective of the hitherto dominant historical materialism.

This process began in earnest in the mid-1960s when historian Goran Todorov inveighed against the damages of "national nihilism" to historical science (Koleva and Elenkov in Mishkova 2006: 41). In the late 1970s this revisionism reached an apogee (see also

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Hranova 2010: 55). For example, one of the chief figures in Bulgarian post-Stalinist revisionist historiography, Nikolay Genchev, rehabilitated the Right-bank Revival writing from the Interwar period by endorsing its focus on "cultural-spiritual" revival as opposed to the materialist analyses that came to predominate after 1944 (Genchev 2010 [1988]: 25). He also rehabilitated the anti-revolutionary politics of the pre-1944 historiographers, i.e. by criticizing the April Uprising of 1876 for having wagered the struggle for independence and imperiled the full liberation of the country (meaning within its "ethnic" borders, thus including Macedonia, parts of Greece, Serbia, etc.) which presumably (and more problematically, *desirably*) could have been achieved through other means. [51] Genchev also waged an unapologetic attack against what he perceived as big flaws in Bulgarian post-war historiography: its "negationism" of the bourgeoisie, its "national nihilism", and its privileging the political rather than the "cultural-spiritual" motors of the Revival (2010 [1988]: 14-38). Contemporary deployments of the Revival as an elite "bourgeois" modernization project have inherited the positive reevaluation of the "bourgeoisie" from this period, during which the Socialist regime underwent a simultaneous process of economic liberalization and a cultural-nationalist turn.

On a side note, Genchev's 'dissidence' was rooted in the wider post-1956 conjuncture when de-stalinization mediated the turn to nationalism, making possible the rehabilitation

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51 The (social life of the) Uprising takes upon itself yet another layer of meanings after 2013. The summer protest synthesis combines appreciation for the Uprising with the Right-bank vision of the Revival.

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of Interwar ideas and authors (Gruev 2014). For example, Genchev charged at the Ottoman Empire using blatant racist epithets and this arrogance made him very popular because it was widely read allegorically as an attack on the "Soviet empire" (Vezenkov 2006: 88). Yet a cultural and political autonomization and de-linking from the Soviets was also a state policy, most directly embodied by the Party's General Secretary's daughter and minister for culture Lyudmila Zhivkova. Genchev's discourse was thus part of a panoply of anti-Soviet nationalist discourses, some of which became part of official state policy (at least in some state departments). Dissidence is thus better understood not as a complete break from state ideology but as its appropriation and radicalization (as I show in Chapter X in my discussion of the first popular protest eruptions in 1989).

I want to stress that I present just a fraction of the work the historiographers from the Post-Stalinist period produced. This fraction expresses an inchoate rightist and dissident tendency, embodied by Genchev. However, while he was a popular figure, he does not exhaust the field. As Zhivka Valiavicharska argues in her forthcoming work, many Post-Stalinist historians kept their loyalty to the revolutionary heritage but integrated it with the growing nationalism of the regime. The aim was to divorce Bulgarian socialism from the USSR and the October revolution and to root it in a national revolutionary tradition, argues Valiavicharska.

Whatever tribulations the bourgeoisie went through in these accounts, most authors acknowledged that the peasantry, motivated by the Agrarian question of land distribution,

together with the "progressive" commercial bourgeoisie, played a crucial role in the revolutionary struggle thereby lending the national-liberation struggles a pronounced *mass* character. The earlier generation of Marxist scholars considered the peasant class the most oppressed, and thus the most revolutionary, led by its "revolutionary peasant intelligentsia" (Daskalov 2004: 130). It was a democratic revolution. In contrast, will I show below how this popular-democratic aspect of the Revival is shed off in the repetition of its themes by the 2013 summer protesters.

The historian Alexander Vezenkov rejects a separate Marxist interpretation of the Revival (2006: 122). He argues that despite the Marxian vocabulary, the Bulgarian Marxist scholarship had not parted with a fundamental *nationalistic* bias which informs an understanding of the Revival as a *determinate period* in Bulgarian history with its separate and specific cultural and material forms (such as "the Revival house", "the Revival dress" and so on, celebrated by nationalists). Instead, save for the appearance of an inchoate national consciousness, Vezenkov claims there was nothing unique to the so-called Revival, warranting its elevation into a major historical phase, and that it should be studied only within the context of the modernization reforms of the Ottoman empire that had triggered it. Therefore, for him there exists only one approach and it is the nationalist one that has turned the local manifestation of the Tanzimat reforms into a special Bulgarian *period,* abstracted from its immediate Ottoman context. His approach is paradigmatic example of contemporary anti-nationalist scholarship which treats all things nationalist as indistinct from each other, and thus refuses to see fault lines *within* the very supposedly

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'selfsame' nationalist discourse itself. But as I endeavor to show below, there are fault-lines within the nationalist discourse, and the 2013 protesters articulated a very noble version thereof by borrowing from the same symbolic pool of the Revival like the winter protests.

In 2013 the Revival once again became a Revolutionary ideology. The winter protest of 2013 drew heavily on the Revival but so did the summer protest. In summer, however, it was not a revolution of and on behalf of the oppressed "slaves" but of a "master" class, as I show below.

The Protest Revivals

In winter of 2013 hundreds of thousands of people marched in sizable cities and small towns alike demanding nationalization of the private energy providers. Within a couple of weeks, the utility bills protests morphed into a protest against the political system since 1989, calling for a "revision" of the Transition [*reviziya na Prehoda]* and a thorough revision of the privatization of the economy. Some commentators immediately assimilated the protests to the Arab Spring, or to the Occupy movement, and spoke of a "Bulgarian revolution" or a "Bulgarian spring" (Offnews 2013e). The protesters saw themselves less as an example of these new global protest movements but as a continuation of the 19th century national-liberation struggle.

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The seaside city of Varna saw some of the largest marches. There, to the grievances about bills was added a generalized discontent with the city mayor and the (shady) business conglomerate TIM, one of the largest corporations in the country with activities in diverse sectors, from the national air carrier (privatized and liquidated in 1999) to chemicals and tourism. TIM was embroiled in a number of corruption scandals, most notably the illicit privatization of Varna's waterfront park. Protesters perceived the then-mayor of Varna as a puppet of TIM.

One chilly morning in Varna, Plamen Goranov, a young protestor and one of TIM's most vocal critics, issued an ultimatum for the mayor to resign, threatening to immolate himself in public if the mayor didn't step down. The mayor Kiril Yordanov did not yield up and Plamen executed his threat. His body burned severely, and he didn't survive. On 03.03.2013, date at which he passed, was also the anniversary of Bulgaria's liberation. Plamen Goranov was not the first to self-immolate but his self-sacrifice became the enduring symbol of the protest.

FIGURE 19 AN ANONYMOUS PLAMEN GORANOV OBITUARY.
SOURCE: FACEBOOK

There were many other cases of public self-immolations. As no official statistics on self-immolations exist, Martin Marinos, co-author of an award-winning documentary about Plamen[52], estimates 20 cases, based on media reports (private communication). In most cases the authorities tried to present them as acts of "psychologically labile individuals." Relatives often come forward to dispute the claim. For example, the mother of the first victim of self-immolation, the 26-year-old Trayan Marechkov from Veliko Tarnovo, told the media that her son was not insane but was protesting the dire social, economic and political situation in the country (Standartnews 2013).

Some commentators disputed the place of Plamen Goranov's sacrifice in the wider chain of winter protests that engulfed the country. For example, Ivan Bedrov, a liberal journalist who became a dedicated supporter and participant of the summer protest later that year, argued that Plamen stood up against corruption and lack of transparency and rule of law. Bedrov's intervention was a way to "domesticate" the protests by inserting them in a liberal framework. To this end, he instructed the protesters that

> now the most important thing is for people to insist on transparent governance and rule of law. The people of Varna understood this. This makes the protests in Varna very different to those in Sofia. Whereas Varna wants rules and lawfulness, Sofia raises some exotic and outright contradictory demands [nationalization] (Bedrov 2013).

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52 https://vimeo.com/129381629

The protests in Varna certainly denounced the corruption and the collusion between the city administration and TIM. But they did not stop there. They also attacked privatization, poverty and the entire transition. For example, they set the temporal framework of the crisis at 1989-2013 as opposed to 1944-2013 which was the temporality of the crisis the summer protests addressed itself to. The articulation between liberal and nationalist demands made the winter protests' ideology a bit ambivalent. Bedrov would not have ventured an intervention had the assemblage of "liberal" (anti-corruption) and "nationalist" topoi not constructed contradictions and porousness in the protest making it possible for him to attempt to wedge inside the protest chain of equivalences to tilt it in a more desirable (i.e. "liberal") direction. Another commentator, a lawyer, warned that pitching the demand to recall MPs who fail to fulfill their duties was a feature present in the Communist Constitution (Kashamov 2013).

Meanwhile, the citizens of Varna created an impromptu monument to Plamen by placing pieces of rocks and pavement in front of the city council:

FIGURE 20 "THIS IS IVAN VAZOV'S GRAMADA! BURN, MOTHERLAND!"
SOURCE: FACEBOOK

The ensemble was known as the "Varna *gramada*". *Gramada* means a pile of stones. A protester had written that this is Vazov's *gramada*. Ivan Vazov (d. 1921) is one of Bulgaria's most revered national poets and novelists. He is a towering literary figure and his works are mandatory in literature classes throughout pupils' entire school life. The poem in question tells the story of a young village couple towards the end of the Ottoman rule in Bulgaria. He is poor, while she is the daughter of the village mayor. Her father is extremely rich and enjoys connections with the Ottoman "establishment". He refuses to "marry down" his daughter, and the young lovers decide to run away. The father catches them and gives the girl to a rich Turkish governor, whereas the boy is banished from the village. The father spreads rumors that the boy is a *haidutin* – part-thief, part-national liberation activist. The boy's poor mother dies heartbroken. Meanwhile the village experiences severe drought and the inhabitants are convinced that the father's unjustified wrath has brought it about. They curse him, and the priest tosses the first stone of what

will soon become a giant *gramada* at the entry of the village. Eventually it all ends well: the Russians win the war with the Ottoman empire, Bulgaria gains freedom, the cursed mayor runs away, and the boy returns as a head of a *haiduti* gang (the father's lie turns out to be a self-fulfilling prophecy), together with the girl whom he had abducted from her Turkish husband. He decides to spare the life of the mayor, whose greatest punishment would be to see his daughter and her lover happy together.

This was not the only resource from the repertoire of the 19th century national-liberation struggle that the winter protests utilized. A common motif was to call the private energy companies (together with the political establishment) "janissaries" [*enichari*], after the Ottoman empire's special armed corps. Janissaries were personal slaves to the Sultan, typically drawn from among Christian subjects of the empire. Protesters also made liberal use of Vasil Levski and Hristo Botev's portraits, Bulgaria's two most important national-liberation heroes.

Coupled with the demands for nationalization of the private energy monopolies, recurrent use of Revival imagery led protest detractors to conclude that the winter protest was nationalistic. One of them, Bulgaria's most famous contemporary novelist Georgi Gospodinov, suggested in an interview to *The New Yorker* that the protests retreated into an "imaginary past" and helped beef up the importance of the far-right Ataka party (Gospodinov 2015). The relationship between the two was a complex matter, and in several reported occasions Ataka activists were chased away and even beaten up when

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they tried to join the protests. Gospodinov was unaware of, or unwilling to acknowledge these realities.

This is not to say that there was no nationalism in the protests – there was. The question is however what kind of nationalism this was, and how the nationalist repertoire operated. During the winter protests I once questioned two protesters about the far-right party of Ataka. One of them admitted being a supporter. The other mocked him, saying in substance: "What is even the meaning of Ataka? You raise your fists and shout Ataka believing you are changing something by venting off your anger." This kind of spontaneous 'Benjaminism'[53] cannot be assimilated into the nationalism people like Gospodinov saw. It is, rather, a critique of nationalism—certainly of Ataka's type of nationalism. Another example of the complexities of meaning is the figure of the Janissary corps in protest slogans and discourse. Before they were forced to serve the Sultan and converted to Islam, Janissaries were former Bulgarian Christian boys. When cast as neo-Janissaries, energy corp(oration)s stand for the concrete, 'traitorous' "enemy inside". Like the Janissaries of the Ottoman empire, the energy monopolies are Czech, Austrian, or German corporations employing and supported since 1989 by a Bulgarian, all too local political elite. The same applies to the mobilization of Vazov's poem "Gramada". The

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53 "The growing proletarianization of modern man and the increasing formation of masses are two aspects of the same process. Fascism attempts to organize the newly created proletarian masses without affecting the property structure which the masses strive to eliminate. Fascism sees its salvation in giving these masses not their right, but instead a chance to *express* themselves. The masses have a right to change property relations; Fascism seeks to give them an expression while preserving property." (Benjamin 2010, my emphasis)

conflict in it runs less along Turkish-Bulgarian lines than along class lines: the rich father (nevertheless allied to the Ottomans) refuses to marry his daughter down and triggers the socio-natural cataclysm which eventually turns the whole village against him. The enemy is placed along a vertical axis - "the people versus the elite". Sometimes the elite happens to be Turkish, but the Janissary corps were Bulgarians. The mobilization of such Revival tales betrays the desire of the popular "slavish" nationalism of the winter protest to symbolically purify Bulgarian identity from ethnic as well as upper-class components. That is why the tales could so easily be directed at the foreign multinationals.

Bedrov's effort to separate protests into an "exotic" (for "nationalization", in Sofia) and a "reasonable" kind (a demand for rule of law and for an end to corruption, in Varna) backfired because of the definition of the enemy as an exploitative elite. The Varna and Sofia protests alike were too invested in the rewriting of the history of the post-socialist Transition on the Revival model which cast the oppressed majority (the slaves) against an elite socio-economic oppressor that is at once foreign *and* Bulgarian. In contrast, the summer protesters called their own designated enemy (the government) "Turks", "gays," and "whores". While the winter protests used historical, concrete nationalist themes such as the struggle of the people under the oppression of the Ottoman Janissary elite, the summer protests utilized racist abstractions whose generality was striking – just "Turks" (because Peevski was an MP of the so-called "Turkish" party of DPS). The label triggered an indignant response from a summer protester of Turkish descent. She wrote an essay for Webcafe, a pro-summer protest outlet, "The protest of a dirty Turk", which reminds her

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fellow-protesters that despite ethnic differences, they are all Bulgarian citizens with common concerns. (Gyulestan 2013).

Intellectuals, like the above quoted Georgi Gospodinov, scoffed at the winter protest of 2013 for being too nationalist and populist. The summer protest was spared such scornful descriptions although summer protesters raised just as many national flags and drew as many tropes from the Revival-inspired nationalist repertoire as the winter protest.

The summer protest's appropriation of the Revival contradicts historian Rumen Daskalov, according to whom the Revival provides political language that is more suitable for past authoritarian regimes than for the post-1989, liberal present. According to Daskalov,

> [T]he tone of the post-Communist discourse in Bulgaria is different, and the national ideas are hardly compatible with the universalistic liberalism, the free-market globalism, and the open-door policies now prevailing. While it is true that the Revival can be stretched in a liberal democratic style, it is more easily adopted by hardline nationalists. Hence one can make a guess that only a disappointment with the supra-national (a rejection by "Europe" in particular) may renew its actuality in the search for a source of reliance and self-assurance. (2004: 246)

In the sections to follow, I show how, *contra* Daskalov, the 2013 summer protesters creatively deployed Revival mythology, unproblematically fitting it within a cosmopolitan, upper-class, liberal, and European framework. The stigmatization of certain forms of nationalism by dominant groups often obfuscates these very groups' own

versions of nationalism—ones that are often compatible with "supra-national" and other cosmopolitan ideologies. In a way this cosmopolitan nationalism brings the nation closer to its sociological reality because, as Anthony Giddens shows, nation-building has always been beset by a constitutive paradox of transnational bourgeois elites mimicking each other by creating putatively bounded entities (1987), on the one hand, and by the deeply international, even global, reach of capitalism and colonialism which shaped the context of, and made possible nation-building (B. R. O. Anderson 2016; Calhoun 1997).

The Past Repeats the Present in a Noble Revival

The summer protesters not only invoked illustrious examples from the Revival but claimed that their movement most faithfully resuscitated the legacy of the period. Thus, they spoke of a new Revival (*novo Vyzrazhdane)* or a "Second Revival" (Kyuranov 2016; Jassim 2016a). In this section I quote from protest pundits with various professions: political scientists, PR and journalists, and a prominent teacher activist. While some of the voices are members of the "liberal estate" from the 1990s and early 2000s, others are a new generation of liberal activists who were propelled into prominence by the 2013 protests. They offer paradigmatic examples of the summer protests' New Revival.

Let us take the definition of the Revival, provided by the political scientist and philosopher Deyan Kyuranov. He is a program director at the Center of Liberal Strategies think tank and has worked in various other major think tanks. He has also served as a director of the Open Society Foundation in Sofia (1990-1992). He was a member of one of the first vocal

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informal civic organizations in Socialism, Ecoglasnost, which organized environmental protests in 1988-1989, and also a member of the first anti-communist opposition UDF. (His father, the famous Bulgarian sociologist of labor Chavdar Kyuranov, was an activist for one of the first informal civic organizations in the late 1980s). Kyuranov actively supported and participated in the 2013 protests. In line with the anti-materialist frames from 2013, Kyuranov offers a straightforward definition of Revival enlightenment:

> [the direction of enlightenment runs] from cultural uplifting to political one, from the elite – to the people [*narod*]. And the economy [plays no role]: the kind of culture [of the Revival] needs no money. It comes about not through abundance but through hunger and sacrifice (Kyuranov 2016).

Let us take the example of one prominent activist of the protests, Emil Jassim. He is a program director of the Sofia-based NGO Center for Educational Initiatives that works for the implementation of liberal reforms in education, "modernization" and e-governance understood as introduction of internet technologies in the management, curriculum and teaching methods. In addition to this, he teaches history in a private high school but is also a prolific pundit and a founding member of a new liberal political party that sprang out of the summer protests of 2013. He contributes frequently for *Terminal 3,* a protester outlet, and by his own admission reads mostly the liberal *Dnevnik* to keep himself updated (Capital 2013).

In his public interventions in Bulgarian media Jassim reflects on a wide range of topics, from Middle Eastern politics to Bulgarian education policy. He writes opinion columns

and is a frequent guest on TV political talk shows, as well as in prestigious public forums like TEDx. As a history teacher, Jassim lectures frequently on media about historical events and often draws direct parallels between them and the summer protests. Which is of direct concern for this chapter. For example, echoing the familiar frame that pitted the winter ("materialist") to the summer ("value") protests of 2013, Jassim claimed that for the original Revival revolutionaries, "freedom was more important than bread" (Almaleh 2015). According to him, the Bulgarian revolutionaries were

> a negligible percentage of society, as an *incredibly small number of people* possess the feeling for freedom [..] which places it higher than the bread, than their daily concerns and their economic prosperity (ibid., my emphasis).

This type of statement broke decisively with previous accounts of the national-liberation struggle as the "mass struggle" of the Bulgarian people. It replicated precisely the anti-materialist views which pitted winter against summer protests: bills and everyday trivialities against lofty values. Blindness to the material conditions of possibility for such professed independence from necessity characterizes the bourgeois worldview generally (Bourdieu 2000 [1984]). In Bulgaria, it also reflects specifically the turn to the "cultural-spiritual" determinations of the Revival which post-Stalinist historians borrowed from their Interwar predecessors.

Another example comes from Yvette Dobromirova. She is an entrepreneur who began her career as TV host in the national television BNT in 1992. While still at the BNT

Dobromirova helped launch a fundraising campaign for liver transplantation for a baby. The campaign was successful and eventually grew into the Governmental Fund for Treatment of Children Abroad. In the early 2000s, she left BNT and founded her own PR agency. In 2017 she had a short stint as a PR director for America for Bulgaria, a charitable foundation, that sprang up from an American investment fund set up in the 1990s to finance the creation of friendly business environment. America for Bulgaria has been dispensing civil society grants in the country since 2009. In 2013, when the winter protests ousted GERB, Dobromirova was appointed press secretary for the caretaker government. When the summer protests broke out, she became devoted participant and a member of Protest Network, the informal leaders of the protests. Very soon into the protests, she got embroiled in a minor skirmish with media critics of the protests because an employee in her PR agency explained on national TV that the protests are of the "smart and the beautiful" (I discussed the career of this statement in Chapter three). Dobromirova's detractors coined a nickname for her – Event Dobromirova – to emphasize the perceived transfer of professional PR expertise into the movement (Bakalov 2014a). After he protests subsided, she founded *Terminal 3*, a website specializing in analyses, news, commentary and dedicated to disseminating the perspective of the summer protests.

Commenting on the struggle of the citizens to take back their "captured state", Dobromirova argued that they are creating a parallel state, and in doing so, are repeating the Revival:

> The Bulgarian citizens are creating an alternative state. *Active* Bulgarians are doing this in their total alienation from the government to the point of radical non-recognition, just like the Revival revolutionaries did before them, over and against the [Ottoman] power structure (Dobromirova 2016, my emphasis).

It is beside the point to assess the factual merits of Dobromirova's discussion on the Revival Period. What interests us here is its performative efficacy; specifically, the way it produces political identities by equating symbolically the "active citizens" of 2013 with the national liberation struggle and the National Revival of the 19th century. Furthermore, "citizens" and "active Bulgarians" are treated as equivalents. The "active Bulgarians" are not *all* Bulgarians; they need a distinguishing qualifier ("active").

The past was, as a matter of fact, actively reinvented to fit the categories needed in the present. Contrary to Dobromirova's thesis, while the 19th century revolutionaries might have been "alienated" from the Empire, they did make use of the Tanzimat institutions and even of the independent Church which was an Ottoman institution par excellence (Neuburger 2004). In two later articles dedicated to the 19th century revolution, Emil Jassim insists that its main protagonists were very few: calling them first "a handful of young guys" (*shepa mladotsi*), "a tiny minority," (*maltsina*) (Jassim 2016a) and again a "handful" of "girls" and "guys" (Jassim 2016b). Everything that followed from this historic event, he says, "is the result of the indefatigable work of the *handful* of members of the Revolutionary committees throughout Bulgaria." Jassim added the unsubstantiated claim that the revolutionaries "were held in contempt by the *majorities*":

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Today a minority of reckless young people similarly rises up against the status quo maintained by the *bashibozuk* [mercenaries in the Ottoman army] of the mafia, directed by the regional representatives of the Kremlin *sultan* [..] and [the minority] does what it takes so that Bulgaria can keep its place in the European family which was the aspiration of the entire National Revival movement... Without much melodrama, we have to say that in critical moments for the Bulgarian people, a *small group of idealists* comes to oppose the status quo and show Bulgarians the way forward. And they are often hated both by the powers that be and by larger society... Let us never forget that just like Jesus's disciples, so did the Bulgarian [revolutionaries] enjoy very low rating among their contemporaries. *But if they cared about their rating, they would not have achieved the feat of the Uprising.* (Jassim 2016b, emphasis in the original).

Not only is there a direct link between the Revival revolutionaries and the 2013 protests, but a similar 'metaphorization' affects the constitution of the enemy's identity. The author assimilates Putin's Russia today with Bulgarian post-1989 mafia and with the Ottoman Empire of late. The anachronistic use of contemporary business jargon in this article (use of "rating" e.g.) transfers meanings across temporal and spatial contexts. From Christian antiquity to the anti-Ottoman struggle and through the present, an active *minority* of visionary revolutionaries has been facing the passive, risk-averse, hateful, and resentful majority which "does not want to get in trouble". With the addition of a saintly halo given to the 2013 activists via the analogy with Jesus Christ, forgetting that Jesus surrounded himself with lepers, ex-prostitutes, the fallen, the downtrodden, and the marginalized of Roman society, aiming at creating a universal community (Aslan 2013). In contrast, our protagonists are self-conscious members of a minoritarian elite.

In the following example, we see how the celebration of minority turns into explicit anti-democratic ideology. Commenting on the counter-protests, Jassim effects a movement from the paradox of a "minority of democrats" to plain and simple aristocratic rule. On the occasion of the anniversary of the Bulgarian unification, he builds an analogy between the so-called counter-protests of 2013 (discussed in the previous chapter) and the opposition to the unification of 1885 (again, the result of the efforts of a "handful of people") (Jassim 2016c). He argues that the "*mass* demonstrations" instigated by pro-Russian politicians against Unification were the "ancestor" of the counter-protests 138 years later. Contempt of mass society and democracy is often explicit. In an interview, Jassim refutes the idea that whatever the majority decides is necessarily "smart and correct. In fact, the greatest reformers in the world are precisely those who went against the popular will" (Jassim 2017). Or, as Yvette Dobromirova said,

> democracy fell victim of its own success. No mechanisms exist to protect it from the populism and the *diktat* of the masses. It is not because the elites are weaker or smaller in size. Progressive people who propel social evolution forward have always been a small circle of people. It's an historic fact – neither the National Revival revolutionaries in Bulgaria, nor those who inspired the French Revolution, were the predominant majorities of the people [the *narod*] (Dobromirova 2016b).

This minority is understood both as the only authentic opposition to the state ("when [the parties + mafia are] in power, the citizens are the only opposition", Dobromirova 2016a) and as the only real alternative to the state. Or, more precisely, they are a viable a state within the state. Thus, Dobromirova argues that "active citizens" have managed to build

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alternative institutions, which are far superior to the official state ones. She argues that entrepreneurship NGOs, venture capitalists, and start-up funds are a more perfect version of a Ministry for the Economy, judiciary reform civic initiatives – a better shadow Ministry of Justice, while the numerous charity NGOs double successfully as the Ministry for Social and Labour Policy (ibid). A private state is nested within the state.

This discourse is best understood as a radicalization of the neoliberal logic which pits civil society and the state in separate yet complementary domains, where the state is relegated the minimal functions of watching over private property, external security and the rule of law, while the private sector, both for- and not-for-profit, gets to run areas previously thought of as prerogatives of the state, due to its alleged dynamism, efficiency, immunity to corruption, and so on. In Dobromirova's narrative, the private sector and the NGOs build their ersatz-state institutions, and then *take over* state functions normally deemed legitimately stately even by neoliberals, such as the Ministry for Economy, for the purpose of *reclaiming* the state from the grips of the mafia. There is no more talk of separation and mutual complementarity between state and civil society but of civil society taking over the state.

This constitutes a departure from the state-civil society division, rigorously maintained through earlier liberal theory. Specifically, the new view upends the theory of civil society with which the 1989 Transition began—civil society now substitutes for the state. Dobromirova, however, is not aware of the novelty of her approach. Instead, she roots it

in the 19th century National Revival period by saying that:

> The Bulgarian people have been already in this situation. When the [Ottoman] state was not doing anything for education, the struggle [..] began and only in 15 years hundreds of schools sprang up, thanks to the personal efforts of rational and patriotic (*rodolyubivi*) Bulgarians. When the rights of the Bulgarians were trampled, the *"nongovernmental organizations"* around the church of St. Stephan fought for a Bulgarian Church [independent from the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople]. When the Bulgarians were finally liberated, *rich entrepreneurs* donated lands and monies for the great intellectual centers of the free Motherland. [..] To cut a long history short, the citizens rise to save their state, captured by the politicians [..] The future belongs to the citizens. Today is the Revival again, and there are [new] Revivalists. And we bring the light, just like they did before. (Dobromirova 2016a, emphasis added)

It is quite an extravagant anachronism to conceive of the 19th century struggle for an Independent Church as waged by civil society NGOs fighting the all too contemporary phenomenon of "state capture". It would be missing the point entirely to simply dismiss Dobromirova's reading of history as uneducated or naïve, however. Rather, its efficacy lies not in its factual coherence but in the passionate case she makes for the *longue durée* of Bulgarian civil society, comprising the brave minority of rich entrepreneurs and educated patriots, taking the destiny of the state in its own hands, over and against the inertia of the institutions "captured" by the Ottoman-Russian mafia. More still, rather than a mere continuation of a supposed primordial liberal tradition running at least since the 19th century, here we have a temporality whereby the past literally repeats the present and it is refocused entirely in contemporary terms.

Yet, pedantic reading of her text would overlook the strong performative dimension of this discourse intended as a history lesson aiming less to describe an event than to mobilize a contemporary-inflected reading thereof in order to polemically *prescribe* an identity. It's a nationalist speech act in other words.

A Nation of Masters: A New Revival for the New Middle Class

We have the contours of an identity is all too national, indistinguishable from the civil. It is a passionate case for a national identity construed in opposition not to nationalism tout court but to the lowly, populist nationalism of the populistic and materialistic masses. For example, adding to his capacity as a versatile commentator, Jassim is also an unapologetic critic of so-called "pseudo-patriotism": an umbrella term usually applied to the host of political parties or intellectuals with nationalist inclinations whose nationalism is deemed "inauthentic" due to perceived or actual pro-Russia and/or populist leanings. This has led him into a conflict with nationalist forces which got physical when an unknown man assaulted Jassim on the street in the run-up to the 2017 general elections. Jassim often insists on correcting the misguided "hateful" "pseudo-patriotism" of the far-right with a correct version thereof, which he often expresses with his slogan "*v 'rodolyubie' ima lyubov*". "Rodolyubie" is a poetic Bulgarian word for patriotism which means "love for one's kind", making it a version of patriotism which substitutes love for the hatred informing the nationalism of the radical right. In short, Jassim's is a prime example of the enlightened, liberal – and we may add loving, tolerant – "high" nationalism opposed to the primitive and hateful "pseudo"-nationalism of the masses. What is the pseudo in the

version of patriotism Jassim opposes? For example, to build a national identity upon "myths" and "kitschy" neo-medieval castles which have begun dotting the landscape in many rural areas in Bulgaria. Apart from being "irrational", Jassim finds this tendency as lacking in "added value", as though national identity's primary purpose was the generation of added value. (Actually, these castles are styled first and foremost as business ventures for economically depressed regions, supposed to revive their postindustrial economies through injections of EU-funds in the tourist sector. In that sense, it is not true that they do not aim at generating "added value". It is precisely the opposite. And this is part of the problem with them).

Instead, in line with the anti-fake news fads perceived to be fueling the current populist wave, Jassim wants to base the construction of national identity upon "facts" and the outstanding examples of individuals. As he says, individuals drive history forward. The example he gives for an "authentic" model for national consciousness is of a mythical revolutionary who was a wealthy scion and squandered his patrimony for the sake of the national-liberation effort. In other words, the anti-materialist selflessness of the true revolutionaries is conditioned upon their membership in the propertied classes but this is not explicated (Almaleh 2015). So more than a conflict between nationalist and anti-nationalist positions, Jassim's position embodies an antagonism with nationalists waged *not* from an anti-nationalist position but from a stance proper to a *particular* nationalism: one fitting the enlightened educators of the nation from the upper classes who are ready to sacrifice their material wealth for the cause of national uplifting (which is somehow

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expected to generate "added value" in the process), rather than make money from nationalist projects. To paraphrase Max Weber, they embody a case of nobly "living for nationalism", rather than "of nationalism" as the inauthentic "pseudo-patriots".

Despite styling himself as an heir to the 19th-century National Liberation movement against the Ottoman empire, Jassim does not shy away from recommending colonialism for others. For example, in a 2015 article suggestively titled "The Problem is in Islam", he blames the recent spate of terrorist attacks on Islam (Jassim 2015). He argues that Muslims cannot take care of their own affairs and cannot reign in the terrorists among them which is why Jassim proposes recolonization of the Middle East with the express purpose to subject Islam to "Reformation".

These didactic liturgies rely on a conception of history as elite-driven and circular. The self-styled heroes of the 2013 summer see themselves as avatars of the epic 19th century national freedom fighters who prevailed over uneducated, timid majorities and their masters, bankrolled by, and accountable to, the Kremlin. They repeat the history of class and of dominant classes as well as the spiritual-cultural motors of the Revival rehabilitated by post-Stalinist revisionism, dropping the last vestiges of popular struggle and democratic aspirations in those earlier analyses.

The new Revival heroes don't see themselves as slaves shaking their bonds; they consider

themselves instead as the masters, the ones "paying the bills of the country" (Rashev 2013). A crucial dimension has thus been dropped from the legitimate repertoire: the legitimacy of dominated groups in their struggle for emancipation.

That struggle spoke the affective language of slavery. The 19th century revolutionaries and poets invented a register that articulated the wretched condition of Bulgarians in the Ottoman Empire, in which the idea of slavery was a pivotal motif. Ottoman Bulgarians were cast as slaves who needed to rise up and throw away their shackles in the pursuit of "absolute freedom" (T. Hristov 2013). Revival intellectuals, national-liberation and poets roused the imagination of their public with images of slavery. The Ottoman empire was repeatedly cast as a ruthless slave-owner holding its boot mercilessly upon Bulgarian slaves' throats. Modern Bulgarian literature, which was the primary vehicle for developing and spreading national consciousness, was replete with slave metaphors. The most important book after Liberation was literary "patriarch" Ivan Vazov's *Under the Turkish Yoke,* which narrates the tribulations of the national-liberation movement. To this day it is a mandatory literary work in every Bulgarian school, and its enduring sway over national imagination is ensured by the reproductions of its main plot in the countless plays, films and artworks. Even though the word "slavery" is mostly a literary trope, it has had a firm grip upon the national self-understanding of the period before the Russo-Turkish war of 1878 which led to Bulgaria's Independence.

After 1989 the trope of slavery has been repeatedly destabilized. First in the early 1990s

a group of nationalist historians fanned suspicious that the government wants to replace the term "Turkish slavery" with "Ottoman presence". Noticeable shifts in school curricula did indeed occur with the gradual introduction of the term "Ottoman rule" phasing away the emotionally charged "slavery" discourse (even if it remained in literature textbooks). A renewed attempt to purge the term "slavery" flared up another public controversy in 2014 when nationalist organizations sounded the alarm that the Ministry of education was about to introduce incendiary "politically correct" changes into school curricula. The ministry quickly denied the allegations, but the row had already inspired a concerned citizen to author an elementary school textbook (*bukvar*) which he claimed contained all the necessary patriotic education the youngest pupils need. (If anything, the whole gesture of publishing a "citizen's bukvar" proves that the nation-state has long lost its monopoly on the production of national ideology, if it ever had one.) The public controversy did not come out of the blue as there already had been a sustained revisionist scholarly tendency to challenge the received nationalistic tropes about slavery (Hranova 2016; Stoilova 2016). The literary critic Albena Hranova, one of the most outspoken critics of the "slavery thesis" holds that technically speaking, Bulgarians could not have been slaves because they owned property, and were accorded a modicum of civic rights, especially after the Tanzimat (the modernizing reforms of the 1830s-1870s). In her view, "slavery" is just a historically inaccurate metaphor, best understood only in its capacity as a metaphoric device rather than an accurate descriptor[54] (see Detrez 2010). Todor Hristov

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54 Contemporary Bulgarian scholarship on the Revival has revealed the mechanisms with which the metaphor of the Revival has become a determinate period with its defined, knowable and objective features and styles (i.e. the Revival house, the Revival dress, and so on) (see Vezenkov 2010: 36). Hranova uses the verb "metastasize" to describe how the Revival moves in history, as if to describe

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(2010) has challenged this revisionism on the grounds that it relies uncritically on the elevation of a particular historical experience of slavery – American racial chattel slavery – into a universal definition thereof. When measured against the American standard, the Bulgarian experience falls short. Hristov vexes the liberal revisionism for failing to register the performative effects the identification of slaves has upon its carriers. In other words, identification is never a neat expression or a representation of an already-existing and constituted identity. It is a process of signification which does not precede its signified but produces it in a performative way. A historically inaccurate identifier can nonetheless produce effects which are true in their performative and mobilization efficiency, and Hristov identifies the truth of the discourse of "slavery" in a particular conception of "total freedom" which Revival revolutionaries entertained, irreducible to the teleology and objectives of national independence. And because "total freedom" was denied to them (even after Independence), it made them no better than slaves in their eyes.

On this view, the word "slave" expresses a metaphysically radical denial of freedom, rights and dignity rather than a concrete case of legally enshrined subjugation. It is therefore a potent identification to adopt (despite the lack of "real historical bases") for

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"wrong" moves taken up by the term (In fact, she repudiates the application of Revival to the forced 1980s re-christening of the Bulgarian Turkish minority and the ensuing violent expulsion from the country). This is an act of reification. More than a metaphoric traction, inhering in the concept itself, myths and concepts get weaponized in symbolic and political battles and do not thread along in history on account of their own force. At times this mobilization is mediated by class, not in the sense of the class position of the speaking and writing subject "shining through" their words but as a class-building project.

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the purposes of the advancement of a cause as crucial as the liberation of an entire subject population. This performative dimension of the "misnomer" is neglected in the liberal positivist historical revisionism and its uncritical hypostatization of Atlantic slavery as the stand-in for "slavery-as such". But while scholars such as Hranova endorse the replacement of "slavery" with more "accurate" (from the point of view of historical science) term such as "Ottoman rule", others go to great lengths in the quest against "slavery" motivated in part, by (dubious) psychological theories, according to which Revival-era metaphors enshrined by Socialism harm the nation's consciousness by teaching Bulgarians that they are mere "slaves" dependent on someone else for their well-being. This view erases the performative dimension of the identification discussed above which, far from nurturing immobility, aimed (and achieved) the mobilization of countless Bulgarians against the Ottomans, precisely on the premise that they are fighting their slavery *qua* slaves.

Let us turn to the form the "abolitionist" revisionism takes in the summer protest discourse. In a youth magazine which sprang from the 2013 protests we find the upper-class revisionism of the Revival-era liberation struggle, with direct implications for our contemporary situation. Alexander Stoyanov, a university lecturer in history and co-founder of a medieval military history journal, takes stock with the raging debate about the Turkish slavery, arguing that:

> [t]he [Socialist-era] rhetoric of class struggle has yielded its juicy yet rotten
> fruits in the consciousness of the Bulgarians. Precisely the "class" most

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responsible for the spiritual, social and political liberation of our people was disparaged and persecuted as "kulaks" (Stoyanov 2016).

While, according to the author, this class is

the relatively limited in terms of *quantity* but unsurpassed in terms of *quality* product of the best available education at that time. [A class] which carried the burden of national awareness-raising and liberation. The well-traveled descendants of the commercial and artisanal elites considered the mass Bulgarian back then an impenetrable mystery. These were the families [*rodovete*] whose youngest scions applied themselves to the job of liberating their compatriots, not from Ottoman but from that much more horrific slavery, the self-imposed slavery of their own minds [producing] laziness, sycophancy and sheepish resignation that has given birth to nonsensical proverbs such as "nobody is greater than the bread", seeking to preserve the life of those cowardly enough not to sacrifice it for the cause of freedom and [self-determination]. [Even after the Liberation] this mental slavery has not disappeared. The multitudes are still infected with this spiritual disease. Alas, the mental slavery persisted amplified by our war defeats to reach its apex during Communism when the new, Moscow-legitimated ideology found in the idea of the slavery the perfect tool for stifling the Bulgarian spirit (Stoyanov 2016, my emphasis).

We find here nearly all of the themes that populate the ideological horizon of the 2013 summer protest: the opposition between quantity and quality, the inculcated passivity, the minority and elite nature of the active citizens who alone can rouse the nation to a conscious existence, the mental deficits plaguing the masses, the privileging of "immaterial" over "material" values (in the critique of folk proverbs).

Let us consider another (neoliberal) refutation of the "slave mentality". Vladimir Levchev,

a writer and a participant in the first ecological movement in 1989, and currently professor

in the American University in Bulgaria, defines the slave as someone who complains,

engages in mischief, and does not take responsibility for himself (2016). He pits this

"ideal-type" explicitly against "civil society" which he bases on the existence of creative,

active and responsible individuals. The immediate cause for his reaction is the public letter

by local mayors urging the PM to keep the references to "Turkish slavery" in textbooks

(around the umpteenth initiative to introduce the descriptor of "cultural cohabitation"

between Bulgarians and Ottoman Turks in textbooks). Levchev condescendingly accepts

the mayors' "desire to be slaves, if they so wish" and asserts that by contrast, he, a scion

of "craftsmen, teachers and [Revival] revolutionaries", is not a slave. He adds that "unless

we liberate ourselves from our slave self-consciousness, we won't succeed as a nation."

However, since slaves never liberate themselves, someone else has to grant them freedom

(ibid.) So the danger inhering in the metaphor of "Turkish slavery" is that it ends up

producing that which it purports to be describing:

> Why do we love our slavery so much? Slave mentality is equal to a [sycophantic] type of thinking. It is the total opposite of civic consciousness. To be a free citizen means to live in a civil society and it is different from being a loyal subject – be it of the sultan, of the Russian czar, of Stalin, Putin or comrade Zhivkov. This is how the "Turkish slavery" metaphor helps perpetuate a retrograde and harmful way of thinking for our nation. It serves powers that are hostile to European democracy and civil society (ibid.)

Levchev's hypothesis about the debate's genesis is a conspiracy trying to derail the

contemporaneous campaign to "bring the truth about Communism" in school textbooks

(Levchev 2016).

A shining example of the liberal "anti-slavery" revisionism is an essay by the Bulgarian cultural anthropologist and prolific public commentator Ivaylo Ditchev. He pitched the extravagant to replace the model figure of the slave with that of the master for the purposes of aligning Bulgarian national identity with the challenges and needs of "the 21st century". The Revival period word for "master" is *chorbadjia*, and Ditchev offers an etymology which traces the word to the Turkish word for soup, concluding that the *chorbadjia* is someone who generously offered soup to his workers, and is therefore an early example of commendable (bourgeois) philanthropy. On his view, the *chorbadjia* is a much more apt historical role model for the nation as opposed to the whiny, wretched and dependent slave (Ditchev 2016a). (On their part, the winter protesters insulted the utilities companies as *chorbajii*, that is to say, as exploiters.)

The proposal stands out in the boldness and scope of its imagination, but it is not a total outlier. It is part of a wider trend to fashion a new national consciousness that reflects the basic premises of its designers: that capitalists and not slaves/workers are the primary motor of historical progress and producers of value. The labor theory of value from the Marxist-Leninist orthodoxy that ruled supreme during Socialism gave way to Schumpeterian-inflected theories of value which put the entrepreneur at the heart of the process. This shows that it is not true that neoliberalism destroys nations; it pries them open for capital flows and the production of national ideology concomitantly adapts to the

process. The end-result is that the figure of the worker as a model citizen is challenged, dethroned and denigrated, and in its stead rises that of the entrepreneur. Consider the words of history teacher Emil Jassim:

> In the literature, the 1393-1878 period of our history is defined as slavery. The historical sources however prove the existence of a sufficient amount of people who were too rich, too powerful and too dignified (*dostoyni*) to be called slaves (Obretanov 2017b).[55]

In short, while the debate appears as being between nationalists and liberal cosmopolitans, it is a quarrel between two nationalisms: one more rooted, popular and traditional, defending the old conceptual frameworks for thinking about the nation, modeled on the slave and on the toiling masses, and a liberal-cosmopolitan nationalism which endorses the active, upper-class subjects as a motor for moral and political uplifting of the nation. Despite its liberal trappings, this "high" or "noble" nationalism is no less nationalistic than its popular (populist?) rival inasmuch as it operates within similar collective and mentalist frameworks that posit the existence of a collective Bulgarian "us".

The ramifications of this shift in public discourse about national consciousness are manifold. If the Eastern bloc had actively participated in the anti-colonial struggles of the

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55 Somewhat ironically, right after quoting Jassim on the need to keep history and literature separate, the author gives an example of a non-slave *chorbadjia* from the novel uniquely responsible for fixing the image of the Bulgarians under the Ottoman rule as slaves – Ivan Vazov's *Under the Yoke*.

1960s and after, with frequent cultural (Djagalov and Salazkina 2016; Dragostinova 2018) and economic (Apostolova 2017) exchanges between the Second and the Third Worlds complementing the military efforts at decolonization and the economic ties between the blocs, today countries of the former Eastern Bloc identify with the ex-colonial masters. In short, today "the slaves" are extolled to shed their abject revolutionary rags and to vie for membership in the elite club of ex-colonial, civilized and white European nations.

This shows that far from antithetical to nationalism, neoliberalism is not incompatible with nationalism but can co-exist with nationalism of a specific kind: elite and enlightened. The purported clash between liberal open society and nationalist closure is thus better understood as a clash between "two nationalisms" (J. Tsoneva and Valiavicharska 2017): a popular nationalism from below, or the nationalism of the "slaves", and the nationalism from above, as befits a liberal, cosmopolitan elite which both draw on the symbolic nationalist resources supplied by the nation-state.

In that sense, there is no contradiction between nationalism and cosmopolitanism, so long as the former obeys the protocols of a master imaginary of the nation. By distinguishing two nationalisms I also want to challenge scholarly work which posits a "Bulgarian nationalism" in the singular. While scholars of nationalism are certainly perceptive to the changes effected by the meandering development of the nationalist imagination throughout history – usually relating those shifts to regime change – to speak of one nationalism misses how social class plays produces competing visions of what national

identity within the same historical period and regime. It misses out on the *synchronicity* of the diachronic nationalist discourse. To reiterate, far from rejecting nationalism tout court, the elitist neoliberal discourses under scrutiny here reject its *popular* (slavish) version, cast as the intolerant, narrow-minded national descriptor of a risk-aversive, unenterprising, passive and welfare-dependent population. In its international dimension, the slave nationalism is considered loyal to authoritarian Russia rather than to the EU; loyalty driven by a nostalgia for the security of Communism and the Eastern Bloc.

In contrast, the national ideology compatible with the cosmopolitan outlook of the liberal protesters models the nation after the figure of the entrepreneur, the risk-taker, the law-abiding, honest capitalist who takes seriously the struggle against corruption because it is "for the good of the country", selflessly sacrifices his time and money to further Europeanization, and if he rakes in some profit by helping others through social entrepreneurship, all the better. And the elite is by definition a minority in society. The education and experience of its proponents are said to immunize them from succumbing to the demagogic temptations of the "national-populists" which lure the masses with unrealistic promises for national closure and autarky, wage increases and more generous welfare handouts. (It must be emphasized that I am merely summarizing the main talking points of the popular liberal critique of "national-populists". In actual fact, far from a generous welfare state, the Bulgarian far-right promises fiscal discipline and cuts in welfare which align it more closely with the liberal-centrist pro-austerity parties than liberals care to acknowledge.)

The true patriots inveigh against and banish the low and "inauthentic" nationalism from the category of nationalism by way of calling it "patriopathy":

> The patriopathy is visible in the fetishistic attachment to the border fence beyond which everyone is an enemy: the Bulgarian Muslims, the Turkish state, the refugees, and emigrants, the EU... There rages an instinct toward isolation, enclosure, encapsulation and mummification of all symbols of Bulgarian-ness. The latter happens either by fixing ourselves to the physical land with fences, or by sticking to the understanding of the past rooted in the victim status of the people as eternal slaves or through the introduction of mandatory folk dances for children in order to freeze the march of time (Spirova 2016).

As Veronika Stoyanova explains (2018), while the summer protesters depict themselves as forward looking and progressive, they cast their adversaries as hopelessly stuck in the past (2018). Yet the summer protesters also look into the past for resources for their movement and find it in the Revival. The fault-line is thus less "past vs present" but what kind of past gets mobilized and how class mediates this mobilization and produces a host of elevated or noble patriotic representations of the 2013 summer protesters.

To use cultural anthropologist Ivaylo Ditchev's terminology (Ditchev 2016b), the "non-territorial" or global Bulgarians are better patriots than the "territorial" ones. The protesters compete with the so-called "pseudo patriots" to articulate a more authentic patriotism. The open and cosmopolitan one of the protesters locates its legitimacy in the cultural capital of its carriers, more specifically, their experience and exposure to life in

Western democratic countries, and their certainty that they can transfer this knowledge to Bulgaria. As a protester living in the US put it: "compare our [financial and cultural] contributions to those of the whiny moaners at home" (Petrov 2016).

The nation of masters overrides the relatively egalitarian idea of the nation which the ideology of the community of freed slaves inherited from the 19th century Revival. I believe it is a significant shift in the imaginary of national identity. Yet scholars of national identity in Bulgaria tend to see mostly continuities. For example, the literary critic and historiographer Albena Hranova theorizes a continuity in Bulgarian nationalism, rooted in the very notion of the "always existing, if dormant" nation the Revival operates with. This is a common line of argumentation in contemporary Bulgarian historiography, especially that of liberal persuasion (i.e. see Vezenkov 2006, 2010). Sometimes a continuity is imagined between late Socialist nationalism and contemporary nationalism (V. Georgieva 2017b, Vezenkov 2010). However, this stance paradoxically mirrors its rival nationalist historiography: if the former posits the immutability of Bulgarian nationalism, the latter thinks the same applies the Bulgarian nation.

Yet, just like I argued *a propos* the discourse of civil society in Chapter three, the nationalist discourse and the Revival discourse also obey what Michel Foucault has called the "tactical polyvalence of discourses" (Foucault 1988). Therefore, depending on the actor wielding it, nationalism and its myths change. As historian Roumen Daskalov argues *a propos* political mythology, while rooted in the past, the myth always references the

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present because it is mobilized *in the present* by specific forces in furthering their interests and agendas (2010: 38). The coveted figures in the Bulgarian Revival are a *wager* in symbolic struggles and, what amounts to the same thing, are appropriated and re-appropriated by the antagonistic forces fighting that struggle. And in the process, the semantic parameters of the nationalist myths shift, with some characters and events getting accentuated or included at the expense of others. In short, the struggle cannot but change the form and the content of the nationalist myths, understood not as fake representation of the past but "the present of every past" (Daskalov, cited by Hranova 2010: 55).

Conclusion

Every nationalism is beset by an original performative contradiction of coming into existence because of a "foreign" example or influence (In the Bulgarian case, the German Romantic movement supplied the main matrix and motifs). Wilhelm Reich called this paradox "nationalist internationalism" binding together nationalist movements in a perpetual and unavoidable mimetic cross-pollination (see Balibar 1988: 62 and (Giddens 1987). I argued for the possibility of a "cosmopolitan nationalism" which weakens the opposition between the supposedly boundless and universalist cosmopolitanism and the particular, rooted and bounded nationalist outlook. It is a "nationalism for the 21st century" whose self-defined expression is in its "global reach" and embrace of globalized modernity. The Bulgarian version of this cosmopolitan nationalism draws on the 19th century pool of symbolic resources that supplies also the traditional national narrative but renders it through an upper-class-biased analytic inherited from late Socialism and ties it

with contemporary entrepreneurial and active citizenship discourses.

To wrap up, to speak about two nationalisms helps us observe more clearly not only the "fault-lines" between competing visions about national identity that inhere in the same national context, but it also introduces more precision in accounting for ruptures, not only continuities, in the historical development of national consciousness(es). A dominant, state-secreted national narrative can co-exist with "challengers" from below. Moreover, the case of the neo-Revival proves that, contra received wisdom, there is no incompatibility between nationalism and cosmopolitanism, *so long as the nationalism in question is of the enlightened, "high" nationalism type that the summer protest movement espouses.* We are faced with competing versions of nationalism relegated along the vertical axis of "high" and "low" (loosely corresponding to "right" and "left"). The elite or high nationalism is an enlightened project that tasks itself with aligning the backward nation with the "demands and challenges of the 21st century" and acts in opposition to the slavish nationalism of the lower classes. To this end, the activists consecrate themselves as national *bildungsburgertum* or knowledge bourgeoisie whose urgent mission is to elevate the nation from its supposed baseness. More concretely, the nation needs to have its mentality expunged from the damages and remnants of totalitarian communism, populism, delusions of slavery and other non-European, oriental pathogens.

One of the interesting results of the critique of mentality is that intellectuals who deploy it inadvertently reproduce models inherited from the now discarded nationalist discipline

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of "folk psychology" [*narodopsihologia*]. However, unlike the old folk psychology which professed undying love for "the Bulgarian *narod*", intellectual critique of the so-called "post-socialist mentality" could more aptly be re-christened as *Völkerpathologie* as it is bent on a relentless search (and destroy?) for "communist" and "populist" residues (even "metastases" in the vocabulary of some) in the mentality of the "populist majorities". The purification of illiberal pathogens reflects a widespread idea among protesters according to whom the liberal democratic institutional form is devoid of proper substance, understood as liberal democratic subjectivities who accept and defend the reform consensus without complaining. Instead, the majority is represented as mired in some primitive communistic mentality, nurturing dependency on welfare, unwillingness to take responsibility for their lives, their communities and their country. The term Völkerpathologie is a composite one, playing on the now defunct nationalist academic discipline of folk psychology. Much like its predecessor, Völkerpathologie also accepts the existence of a national mentality. However, if folk psychology worshiped the nation and the people, folk pathology is unapologetically demophobic. While folk psychology habitually credited "the Bulgarian people" with a "state-craft genius", folk pathology taxes it precisely with an ingrained inability to establish "a normal [read, western] state."

In *The Hatred of Democracy"* Ranciere (2006) argues that unlike the "classical" totalitarian paradigm of the 20th century which sought to protect society from the overbearing state, its 21 century take assumes the shape of a "bottom-up" totalitarianism

of the democratic majorities allegedly seeking to destroy the constitutional liberal order with their populistic desires. This imaginary seems certainly to have taken hold among the post-2013 "liberal estate" in Bulgaria, and beyond. One need not go farther than Brexit or the Trump election to find similar contempt for "uneducated voters" and "deplorables" seduced by populism. All of these are examples from the emergent post-democratic citizenship which ties citizenship rights (especially voting rights) to narrowly specified legitimate knowledge of the political process.

Conclusion

Democracy Without a Demos

"perestroika in the spiritual sphere [..] by necessity precedes reforms in the economic and social spheres." Zhelyu Zhelev, "The Great Time of the Intelligentsia"

"We wished to awaken the feeling of man's sovereignty by showing his divine birth: this path is now forbidden, since a monkey stands at the entrance."

Friedrich Nietzsche

This dissertation followed an instance of 'class struggle' unfolding on the terrains of civil society, citizenship and nationhood. The appointment of the oligarch Delyan Peevski head of national security in 2013 triggered mass protests against the collusion between politicians and shady economic elites. These protests attracted an inordinate number of intellectuals. No other protests in recent Bulgarian history have. The protests expressed their critique and distaste at corruption in moral as well as class terms. Time and again protagonists repeated that the protests portend the emergence of the Bulgarian middle class. Thus, while protesting, the protests carved up a space for their class in national politics. This has led me to treat the protests as class struggle that has given rise to a class-conscious subject, rather than being preceded by such a subject. I have traced the emergent class consciousness in the contributions and debates about the protests and their objectives in the liberal Bulgarian public sphere. Yet, while the protests provided the immediate

context for the articulation of middle-class consciousness, I argued that the middle class of 2013 is the crystallization of the efforts of what Ivan Krastev has called "the liberal estate" to find and buttress the social base for the neoliberal reforms. The reforms' deepening unpopularity towards the end of the 1990s engendered various challenges to the "democratization" and "Europeanization" process, mostly in the guise of nationalism and populism.

Much like Gramsci, I treat civil society as a terrain of competing class interests and struggle. However, whereas Gramsci thought that each class produces organic intellectuals who publicly articulate its interests in turn, the Bulgarian case invites scrutiny of the opposite phenomenon: intellectuals conjuring up the organic class on whose behalf they speak about. As I stated above, this is the class of the unpopular neoliberal reform. I have tried to make sense of the constitution of the class subject with the help of Ernesto Laclau's theory of political identification and Pierre Bourdieu's theories of class and delegation. Laclau has helped me make sense of the middle class as a *political* class-making project. The middle class of the 2013 summer protest comprised diverse groups that cut across *objective* class positions, such as low-paid academics and millionaires-entrepreneurs. Laclau's optics enables us to see how the sociological diversity of the class is preserved as well as transcended via an antagonism to a common enmity – in this case the criminal post-communist corrupt elites and their welfare-dependent constituencies. The antagonism stabilizes the identity of the middle class, lending it discursive homogeneity. Yet, Laclau cannot explain what the social conditions of possibility for the

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efficacy of the "middle class" identity are. In short, why raise a "middle class" flag as opposed to say, "the people"? The clue lies in the historical overview of the neoliberal reform and the faltering centrist consensus which prompted the "liberal estate" to search for a social base for the wildly unpopular reforms. Namely, to the efforts of the liberal policy and intellectual elites to steer the country towards "modernization" and "Europeanization" amid mounting electoral and protest resistance to neo/liberalization. To this end, I supplement Laclau with Bourdieu because Bourdieu uniquely among theorists teases out the reflexive effect speech acts have on the speaking subject. As Bourdieu says *in Une Classe Objet*, an obscure essay which has inspired me tremendously, "If there is one truth, it is that the truth of the world is an issue of struggle. The social world is will and representation and the representation that groups themselves make of themselves and of other groups contributes an important part to what the groups are and what they do" (1977: 1). I have followed the representations of the middle class and its rivals in the liberal public sphere and have tried to reconstruct its political universe and the effects its discourses exercise upon the social world. I argued that the constitution of the class as a class subject, a class-for-itself, is reflexive and negative. It is negative in the double sense of the antagonism lubricating the assembly of the diverse elements of the class, as well as in the emptiness dividing and maintained by the antagonistic classes. Yet, amid the double negativity, the middle class has articulated a *positive* self-image of a class-bearer of specific substances: civility, education, demeanor, taste, culture, etc. This positivity has had tangible political effects on the imaginaries of citizenship and nation, including an open renouncement of political equality, a chief ingredient in the liberal democracy the protesters otherwise would like to see finally taking root in Bulgaria. I

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analyzed these effects with my terms of neo-republican citizenship and the anti-citizen, marking the symbolic bifurcation of citizenship into "active" and "passive" citizens, respectively.

In sociology and political science, it is a truism that (liberal) democracy thrives in contexts with strong middle classes. Barrington Moore famously asserted "no bourgeoisie, no democracy!". His 1958 classic has invited multiple revisions and methodological criticisms, yet no one seriously questions the dictum. Even Marxists, who habitually chastise the middle class' soft spot for fascism, tend to think that it abandons liberal democracy mostly during economic crisis or when it is threatened by proletarianization. To an extent this is shared even by some liberals, for example, Francis Fukuyama recently worried whether the shrinking middle classes in the West won't eclipse democracy in the absence of progressive ideology to mobilize the disgruntled majorities the way the right-wing populists succeed in doing (Fukuyama 2012). So, whatever the political persuasion, it is widely accepted that liberal democracy needs economic development and the attendant robust middle classes to take root. Jacques Ranciere reconstructs the philosophical foundations of this constellation in the Aristotelian distinction between "good" and "bad" democracy, the latter being "democracy true to its name" (Rancière 2007: 16), that is to say, the rule of the poor. On this view, good democracy is a "sociological utopia" (ibid.) in which the center of the city and the center of the social structure coincide, ushering in a rule of the middle class understood as neither too rich, nor too poor (ibid.: 14). Only such a regime could purportedly cushion the original

contradictions and tension in society, constitutively split between its promise of equality and the tensions arising from the class divisions and conflicts.

What my dissertation followed is the open transmogrification of the democratic (in the limited sense of liberal-democratic) into a demophobic middle class in the effort to prop the consensus and complete the "return to Europe" inaugurated in 1989. Decrying the "façade democracy" in Bulgaria, the middle class and the liberal estate have filled it with "substances" that exclude the vast majorities from citizenship and civil society. As Jacques Rancière says, "politics is primarily conflict over the existence of a common stage and over the existence and status of those present on it" (Rancière 1999: 26-27). In excluding the "gullible majorities" from the stage, the civil society of the middle class has also redrawn the boundaries of the stage, resulting in narrow and minoritarian visions of civil society I captured with my term bürgerliche Gemeinschaft.

Political class formation is a tiny snippet of the diverse practices subjectivizing the nascent Bulgarian middle class that did not find a place in this dissertation but merit deeper exploration. I have in mind the austere ethos and practices expressed in the new economies of consumption and place-making, mushrooming around Bulgaria. For example, the class' particular breed of "austerity nostalgia" (Hatherley 2017) sparked a feverish national debate in 2019 when an "extreme performance" running and business developer guru ran half-naked from the center of Sofia to a nearby mountain peak to celebrate New Year's Eve there, and would have died of hypothermia had it not been for the timely intervention

of the mountain rescue services. Detractors called him "irresponsible". Some of the voices

defending his idiosyncratic approach to NYE partying compared his "irresponsibility" to

that of the mass of ordinary Bulgarians who stuff themselves with fatty pork and brandy,

thereby harming their health and thus becoming a financial burden on the state health care

much like the runner. The familiar discursive frames from the "long 2013" resurfaced

pitting the gluttonous and noisy materialism of the masses against the austere self-

abnegating ethos of the middle class, opting for the quiet solitude of the mountain and the

spatial and symbolic sublimity it offers. Middle-class ascesis breaking with "comfortable"

middle-class consumerism, associated with the post-war "golden years" of capitalism, is

one alley for further research into the new middle class. Another is the links with the

political economy, a completely neglected aspect in this dissertation.

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"Civil society" was the great rallying cry of democracy against totalitarianism and, for the

first two decades after 1989, its entrenchment seemed irreversible. The prospects for civil

society seem less rosy today with the rise of authoritarian populism on both sides of the

Atlantic. It is thus an opportune moment to revisit the (embattled) concept, its (precarious)

relation to democracy, and asses its trajectory and viability. A major question guiding me

throughout this thesis has been whether we are bearing witness to the historical unraveling

of the nexus between democracy and civil society, and if so, what are the sources of the

pressure on the discursive assemblage that anchored the Transitions in CEE in seemingly

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unshakable ways. In addition to the pressures exerted by the wave of authoritarian majoritarianism and the oft-cited illiberal democracy, might we not find some tensions emanating from within the liberal project itself?

The repetition of the early anti-communist liberal language and themes on part of the so-called "Cultural revolution" of 2013 such as civil society, led to a radical overhaul of their late 1980s and early 1990s usages. Repetition produces sameness only in the Inferno and in ancient myths. In repeating the anticommunism of the 90s, the middle class of 2013 expelled the other crucial element of the "chain of equivalence" they purported to be inheriting: democracy. Thus, from a critique of the communist party elite out of egalitarian perspective, i.e. "they had exclusive and better food supplies whereas we suffered shortages of necessities", *the summer protest recalibrated anticommunism as a weapon of the emergent middle class not only against the post-communist elite (the "scions" of the old nomenklatura), but also against the population at large, chastised for its socialist nostalgia, passivity, lack of knowledge and entrepreneurial spirit and so on.* From a democratic invective towards an indulgent elite as in the 1990s, anticommunism today is an explicitly elitist, inegalitarian, anti-democratic rejection of the demos and denial of its capacity to exercise citizenship rights. In short, in the 1990s visions, civil society struggled against the party elite (and elites are by definition a minority!). After 2013, civil society means a self-styled creative and enlightened elite rising against the coalition between organized crime and the (heavily orientalized) communistic masses.

To appreciate the difference the repetition of the liberal tropes wrought on their semantics, and in lieu of conclusion, I close this dissertation by returning to the beginning.

Genealogy and Some Embarrassing Moments

To appreciate the novelty summer protest discourse brings to the idea of the democratic "civil society" and the new post-democratic and post-materialist normativity surrounding it, we need to place it in its longer historical context. Summer protestors repeatedly emphasized that they must finish off the aborted changes 1989 initiated (referring to the "incomplete" "return to Europe", the lack of proper decommunization). Some academics took these claims at face-value. For example, the political scientist Anna Krasteva (2013) called the summer protests of 2013 the "second democratic revolution" (Krasteva 2016) (the first one being 1989), propelling the evolution of citizens from spectators to actors of democracy (Krasteva, Staykova, and Otova 2019: 219). Krasteva thereby built a direct genealogical link between 1989 and 2013 (something with 1997 in between). In the remaining pages I critically assess this pedigree. My aim is to trace both the continuities and discontinuities weaved through the history of the protests. Given that this is a process of self-narrativization, a linear logic of teleology stabilizes this identity. It is therefore a "biographical illusion" (Bourdieu 1987a). This stabilization necessarily rests on a good deal of historical repression and purging of heterogeneous moments in the past protests to develop a coherent teleology of an uninterrupted struggle against Communism (and its spectral presence after 1989).

The notion of identity stabilization cannot be over-stressed. The appearance of a unified, coherent identity is premised on a process that negates, purges, sanitizes, assembles and organizes into a coherent order otherwise heterogeneous and unselfsame elements. Identity is not pre-given at the beginning but begins at the end of the process of identification.[56] As Foucault puts it in "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History", "[w]hat is found at the historical beginning of things is not the inviolable identity of their origin; it is the dissension of other things. It is *disparity*" (Rabinow 1984: 79, my emphasis.). Differently put, an identity is a coincidence of identity and non-identity, and taking my cue from Foucault's Nietzschean approach, I hereby embark in a journey in time in order to recover the embarrassing surplus which was repressed from the 2013 protests' self-narrativization in the process of their self-appointment as continuation of the 1989 struggle.

18.XI.1989

In Bulgaria the democratic demonstrations with which "1989" came to be associated throughout CEE began *after* Todor Zhivkov, the chairman of the Bulgarian Communist Party [BCP], was deposed by his peers in politburo on 10th November 1989. However, the first mass rally (on 18th November) appeared in support of the new government leadership and demanded "real perestroika" (that Zhivkov had presumably failed to achieve).

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56 "We should not be deceived into thinking that this heritage is an acquisition, a possession that grows and solidifies; rather, it is an unstable assemblage of faults, fissures, and heterogeneous layers that threaten the fragile inheritor from within or from underneath" (Foucault in Rabinow 1984: 82).

Let us look at some of the slogans of the 18 November demonstration, as documented in a report about the demonstration prepared by members of the Institute for the Study of Youth, a research center affiliated to the Bulgarian Komsomol (Mirchev 1990). According to the report, the general theme of the protest was in support of the "*preustroistvo* [the Bulgarian word for perestroika] of the country." While it may have been possible that participants had projected anti-communist and anti-government meaning into the word *preustroistvo*, it is nonetheless indicative that they used the official language to voice their demands, obeying Foucault's "rule of tactical polyvalence of discourses". In short, protesters did not demand the opposite of what the state wanted but *more of the same,* albeit in a more "authentic" form. This is visible in some of the slogans, such as "Perestroika, not perestruvka": a play on words exploiting the similarity between the Bulgarian words for "perestroika" and "pretense", *prestruvka*.

The November 18 protest was organized by the first civil society groups known collectively as the "informal" groups [*neformalni*]. For example, the "Club for preustroistvo", the "Independent Students' Association", the "Club of the Repressed [by Communism]", the "Independent Trade Union Podkrepa", the "Independent Association for the Protection of Human Rights"[57] among others. Among the organizers was Angel Wagenstein, a renowned and respected Bulgarian novelist and film director, an ex-partisan

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57   Established in 1988, this was the first self-styled, self-identified civil society association. It was led by Iliya Minev who was the longest serving political prisoner in Bulgaria (he spent 37 years in jail during Socialism) and after 1989 was "baptized" by the media as the Bulgarian Nelson Mandela because of that. In the interwar period he was part of a Nazi paramilitary group. In the 1990s he published Holocaust-denying articles.

and an anti-fascist who never renounced his Socialist politics after 1989. He recently described Communism as a "melody that lingers on even when we err the lyrics" (Wagenstein 2017). He was a dissident, member of the Communist party (as were other organizers), albeit one who criticized the regime from *left-wing* positions. Because of his dissidence he was invited to the famous breakfast with the French President Francois Mitterrand in January 1989. His apartment in the center of Sofia was used by the informals as an HQ for the organization of the *miting* (Bulgarian version of the English meeting, used in the 1990s as a shorthand for "demonstration"). He never imagined the protests rooting for a transition to capitalism but for a more democratic socialism. The critique to totalitarianism hadn't yet began to fully equate it with socialism but expressed the bureaucratization and ossification of the system. Many years later Wagenstein admitted that he got the idea about the *miting* from the Stasi director Markus Wolf (H. Hristov 2017). Wagenstein knew Wolf through his brother, the film director Konrad Wolf, whose award-winning movie *Sterne* (Stars) is the only film about the deportation to extermination camps of Macedonian and Greek Jews by the Bulgarian government during the occupation of Greece and Macedonia in World War II. Wagenstein wrote the screenplay of the film.

According to the report,

> 10.11.89 and the following plenum of the central committee of the Bulgarian Communist Party [BCP] were massively and spontaneously welcomed as the beginning of a true *preustroistvo,* as the end of the years-long dictatorial and criminal personal power. [..] Ruptured are the skepticism and mistrust that *preustroistvo* is impossible. Hope is born that *preustroistvo* finally begins and people look determined to engage actively in the process [..] The demonstrators expressed their trust in Petar

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Mladenov [the new secretary general of the BCP] (massively, spontaneously, without alternative) as a leader of the impending real *preustroistvo*. [..] Negative remarks against the BCP were not tolerated, while positions which identified with the Party were applauded. People clapped to silence groups who attacked the Party. The negative attitude towards the party apparatus DID NOT TRANSFORM [sic] into a negative attitude towards the party as a whole. People think that those responsible [for the crisis] are not the Communists but the 'communistees' [*komunistcheta*].[58] [..] The appellation "mister" was not spontaneously accepted by the multitude.[59] "Socialism" [as a system] [was not challenged] in the speeches and the spontaneous reactions (Mirchev et al 1990).

There were also anti-communist opinions and petitions. Like every protest, this one too was heterogeneous. But it teemed with slogans which did not establish a radical incompatibility between Socialism and Democracy[60]. This history is repressed by the anti-communist genealogies of the mobilizations nearly three decades years later.

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58   Diminutive of Communists, meaning "petty communists", "pseudo-Communists".

59   During Socialism the common appellation to strangers was "comrade" [*drugariu,* m. and *drugarko,* f.]. The Bulgarian equivalents of "Mr" and "Mrs" were discarded as bourgeois forms.

60   This issue merits a dedicated research project in its own right. A research program informed by Walter Benjamin's (Benjamin 2009 [1940]) thesis that "[t]he only writer of history with the gift of setting alight *the sparks of hope in the past* is the one who is convinced of this: that not even the dead will be safe from the enemy, if he is victorious. And this enemy has not ceased to be victorious." There is indeed plenty of material ready for re-kindling the "sparks of hope in the past". For example, Malina Petrova's documentary "Pantheon" from 1986 in which she interviews people indignant of the vandalism visited upon an important socialist monument. In that film they decry the lack of political equality as some of the vandals are children of high-ranking communists and call for the establishment of "rule of law". Yet, their indignation was first and foremost a *Communist indignation* calling for rule of law *in* Socialism which demonstrates that the 1980s utopian visions were polarized retroactively in the 1990s with a lot of their oxymoronic contents reconciling Socialism with Liberalism, from today's point of view of the most widespread anti-communist visions, getting effaced.

From this rich account of the protests we learn that people were not yet ready to give up on Socialism but seemed to have wanted a better version thereof. They did not accept the appellation "mister", booed anti-Party speeches, welcomed warmly the new BCP leadership (from the slogans: "Go Pesho!"[61]), blamed the "the pseudo-communists and not Communism" for the problems, even remained loyal to the party line against the Turks: "The demonstration was carried out under the banner of patriotism [..] the declaration calling for the restoration of the civil rights of Turks and Pomaks [victims of mass renaming and expulsions during the so-called Revival Process] was booed" (Mirchev et al 1990).

The sociologist Petko Simeonov, who was one of the speakers, explained that "the oppressor class of Party apparatchiks and nomenklatura cadre displaced the [pre-1944] bourgeoisie", arguing that "actually existing" Socialism was not an authentic Socialist society as an ersatz-bourgeoisie took the mantle from the previous one (Kovachev 2014). Such criticism to the Party is only possible from a perspective of equality and thus a more authentic Socialism.

The report concludes that the demonstration forged a spirit of "loyalty to the authorities." Perhaps it is not far-fetched to consider the first free pro-democracy demonstration also a

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61 Pesho is diminutive from Petar. The "Pesho" in question is Petar Mladenov, the BCP gensec that succeeded Todor Zhivkov on the 10th of November 1989.

pro-government one. Or what the 2013 summer protests pejoratively called a "counter-protest", a concept used to describe the pro-government rallies in the same year (described in Chapter five).

Now, let us look at some of the slogans of the protests grouped into a meticulous taxonomy in the report. I found the slogans which lump together things "material" and "spiritual" most interesting because the 2013 summer protests explicitly wedged them apart. For example:

- "We want Mercedes cars, Cheese, [Western baby formula]!"
- "I am a teacher who has been fired and my family starves."
- "Democracy, Glasnost, Sheep-milk cheese!"
- "We want to leave the supermarket smiling, the same way we leave the protest."
- "Glasnost, Oxygen[62], Salami!"
- "Freedom, power to the people, private property based on labor!" [*chastna trudova sobstvenost*]
- "And what has been done for the children, the disabled and the poor?!"
- "Lower the price of fuel, raise the wages!"
- "Put the Communist Party under people's control!"
- "Democratization = glasnost + sheep-milk cheese!"
- "A Bible for every home!"

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62   This refers to the air pollution from Romanian gas leaks that sparked the first environmental protests in Bulgaria in 1988.

- "Let's become citizens instead of workers."[63]

- "Death to the red bourgeoisie!"

- "Give the official residences to the people!"

- "The millionaires must be tried!"

- "People's tribunals for all those who robbed Bulgaria!"

As visible from these examples, the protesters did not seem to experience the articulation of demands for *glasnost*, democracy, "Mercedes cars", sheep cheese and imported baby formula as contradictory. In fact, consumption was one of the ubiquitous terrains from which the attack against Socialism was waged (the other being repression of freedoms). It must be noted that Socialism created this vulnerability by urbanizing and habituating the hitherto peasant Bulgarian population to consumer goods and modern lifestyles (Scarboro 2014; Neuburger 2012; Crowley and Reid 2010; Bren and Neuburger 2012). Having failed its promise to liberate people from want, it was now liable to critique from the point of view of the same values and objectives Socialism had based its legitimacy on (Mineva 2016). To this day people still remember the long queues for bananas or other deficit goods. Transition to democracy thus carried with itself promises to raise the living standards and achieve material satisfaction for the greatest number of people: "Freedom and Mercedes cars for all!" Hence the appearance of "salami" and "glasnost" in the same equivalential chain. The slogan about experiencing the same type of happiness in the

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63   Yet participants recall that when one of the speakers, Rumen Vodenicharov, a head of the Independent Association for the Protection of Human Rights, took the mic and used the word "mister" in relation to Mladenov, the crowd booed him (Bakalov 2014b).

supermarket as in the protest is also in the same register.

Similarly, the mass anti-communist protests of 1997 (another pillar of the symbolic pedigree of the 2013 summer protest), did not oppose material needs to immaterial values. For example, in a sympathetic dispatch from the protest, titled "An antibiotic against the red plague" Iva Rudnikova from *Capital weekly,* quotes protesters complaining that they cannot pay their bills and miss their children who had emigrated to the West to escape poverty (Rudnikova 1997). In short, in 1997 the contradiction between the values of the "educated citizens" and their everyday material concerns that came to define 2013 was absent.

This is a far cry from the ideology of the 2013 summer protests which opposed "base" and "material" to "lofty" and "idealist" values. "Freedom is more important than bread", insisted the activist Emil Jassim quoted in Chapter six. For the people of 2013, to compare a pro-democracy protest to a shopping trip to the supermarket would be sacrilegious. For example, the late juridical expert and summer protester Christian Takoff explained in 2016, the masses do not understand freedom because "it can't be touched nor eaten", pitting the material against the spiritual in no uncertain terms. As Ivaylo Penchev, a successful Bulgarian entrepreneur (and a supporter of the 2013 protests) put it in 2014,

> More and more people lose their motivation to work and they impart this ethos to their children. A culture is taking place which preaches that everybody is entitled to a decent existence – a nice dream, but a totally absurd one. When you fulfill the needs of the non-ambitious and the

spiritually inferior people, they stop working and we lose the energy of 80% of humanity (I. Penchev 2014).

This observation concludes with his rueful acknowledgment that the EU is taken over by Communism simply because people expect to live better. In other words, one of the major expectations in 1989, that life for the vast majorities will become better: materially, politically and in every other way, is *now ridiculed as the very symptom of what 1989 is said to have rebelled against: Communism.*

Civil Society as a Universalist Category

To appreciate how different the 2013 civil society is from the earliest articulations thereof, let us compare it to the seminal essay on "civil society" by Dr. Zhelyu Zhelev (1988), a dissident philosopher who suffered internment in the 1970s because of a book he wrote on fascism which was intended to be read as an allegory to socialism. His book deployed and introduced the liberal version of the notion of 'totalitarianism' in Bulgarian political vocabulary (Valiavicharska 2014). In 1992 he became Bulgaria's first democratically elected president.

In his 1988 essay "The Great Times of the Intelligentsia" for *Narodna Kultura,* Zhelev imagined civil society in class terms (Zhelev 1988). The essay is a Marxian analysis of contradictions between antagonistic social classes and is one of the earliest appearances of the idea of "civil society" before 1989. Only the struggle is not between capital and

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labor but between the "intelligentsia" and the state bureaucracy. In short, we have a view of civil society that differs from the "anti-political" understanding of it as a "safe space" from socialist "ideologemes" such as class struggle in that it puts class struggle at the heart of civil society. In addition to that, Zhelev's civil society comprises the anonymous democratic *multitude* (not a minority!) standing united behind the class of the intelligentsia. The latter is a "spiritual leader" that produces "new ideas and spiritual values" that civil society needs. The leadership role of the intelligentsia is akin to that of the vanguard Party in Communist revolutionary theory but shifts from the "material" to the "idealistic" plane. In contrast to the liberal understanding of "civil society" as a system of needs and particularity (Hegel), or free associations of citizens (de Tocqueville), Zhelev's civil society assumes the form of a homogeneous whole that is propelled to action by a *single* interest that only the intelligentsia can express and defend. The sociologist Petya Kabakchieva (2012:12) argues that civil society "thickens up" in Zhelev's approach, and accuses Zhelev of rescinding the classic liberal understanding of civil society as the sphere of competing particularities.

Zhelev's civil society included everyone except for the bureaucratic class which is the enemy against whom he defined the boundaries of belonging to civil society. However, despite the overt hostility to "the bureaucracy" Zhelev's civil society is not anti-communist. It is an entity not opposing but complementing the *perestroika*.

Zhelev argues that to achieve authentic perestroika, the intellectuals must assume their

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historic role in leading civil society in the struggle against bureaucracy. Zhelev thus hijacks a key signifier of the regime (=perestroika), gives it a new polemical content, and turns it against its bureaucratic operatives for the sake of achieving one of the Socialist regime's stated goals: the *perestroika*.

This shows that towards the end of Socialism, civil society hadn't yet assumed its visceral anti-communist meaning. Far from the enemy of socialist perestroika (which aimed to keep socialism intact, only reformed), civil society was imagined as the sole vehicle for its achievement, impeded by the inertia of what Kotkin (2010) called "the uncivil society" of the bureaucracy.

As stated, the Bulgarian Transition to democracy began with the great hope that the changes will usher in great improvement in the standard of living and material conditions for *everyone*. The critique of socialism, as Raychev and Stoychev (2004) show, was animated by a rejection of the hierarchies and privileges in the Socialist society and was done from the point of view of equality. As Georgi Medarov argues, "liberal capitalism promised to dissolve the privileges and inequalities of the socialist state into a sort of universal 'affluent middle class' (Medarov 2015a: 7; Nikolova 2014a). Correspondingly, "civil society" in the earliest dissident imagination was something akin to "the masses", a shorthand for the "commonwealth" of *all* citizens (visible also in Zhelev's 1988 essay). The "mass base" of civil society as well as the potentiality for universalistic improvement cannot be emphasized enough. Consider this example, taken from *Demokratsia,* the

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flagman of the anti-communist opposition of the UDF:
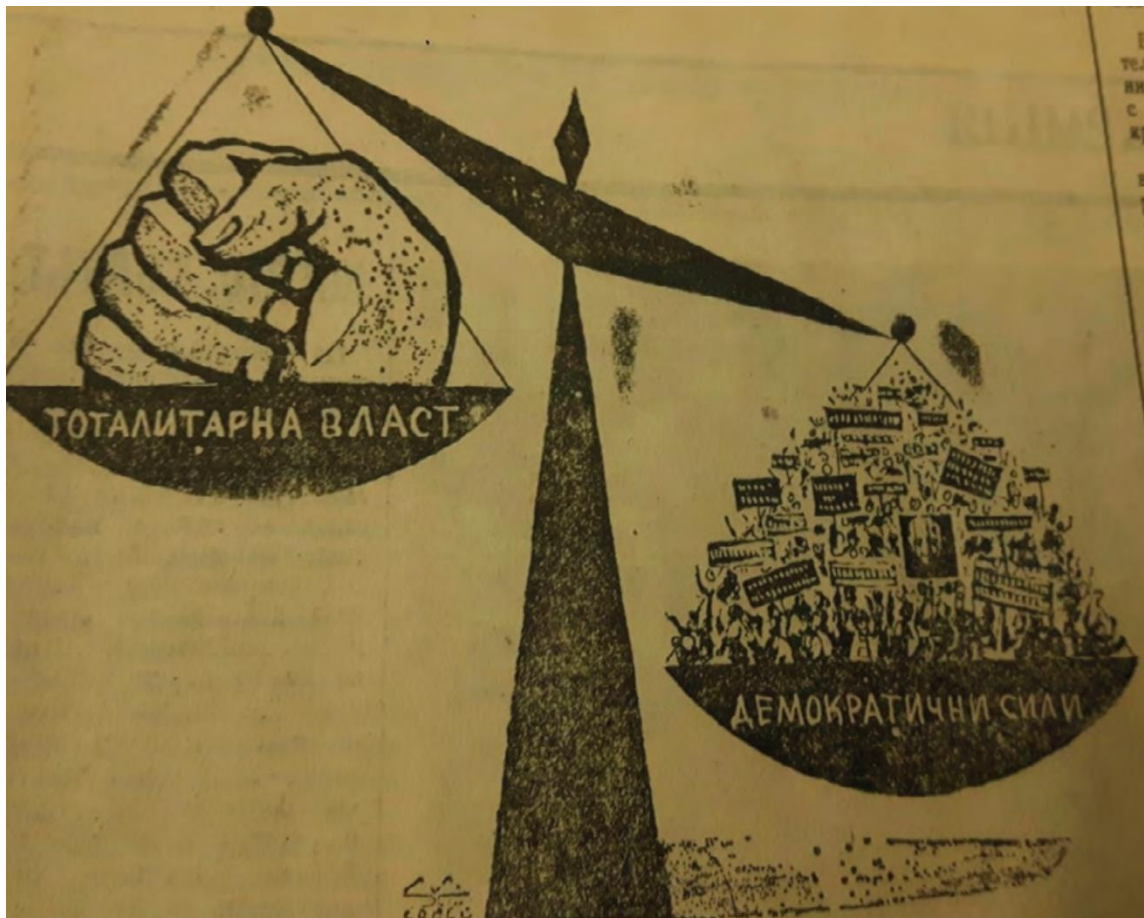
FIGURE 21 DEMOKRATSIA NEWSPAPER, FEBRUARY 11TH, 1990. PICTURE BY THE AUTHOR

The first issues of the *Demokratsia* newspaper, the organ of the opposition, were dedicated to the popular mobilizations of that period. The visual imagery accompanying the coverage materializes the idea of the vast, anonymous multitude which rises against the totalitarian elite. It is telling that the latter is represented by a *single* fist outweighed by the "democratic forces" of the multitude in the picture above. All of this is not to say that 1989 was a suppressed democratic-socialist revolution, and thus reclaim it for the Left.

Rather, revisiting such events that enjoy the status of "myths of origin" defamiliarizes established oppositions in contemporary liberal theory, such as "civil society against Communism".

In those early years anti-communism meant a promise of universal prosperity and fast-tracking everyone into a middle-class status. The so-called mass privatization from the early 1990s was presented as one way of achieving that. Workers were invited to participate in the shared, egalitarian ownership of capital. This utopia was so strong that economists published "sobering" analyses that "mass privatization" is a "social hypnosis", arguing there is nothing just in privatization as it is only an efficient way to "redistribute" public property (Avramov 1995, in Medarov and Tsoneva 2014: 37). The desire for the universal, affluent middle class understandably mediated the widespread critique of the perennial consumer goods deficits in the socialist economy. A language that chastised the "red bourgeoisie" and the "red aristocracy" articulated this discontent, and moreover, it was only possible from the point of view of *equality*. Today the desire for material affluence and egalitarianism is abandoned, and the masses' alleged consumerism is repudiated, as Penchev's statement indicates.

I believe the summer protests of 2013 in Bulgaria constitute a case of "civil society" against democracy, or more precisely against the demos. Through the protests, the minoritarian civil society of *bürgerliche Gemeinschaft* consecrated itself as the most appropriate subject of democracy, endowed with knowledge, taste and cultural trappings

for the exercise of citizenship rights. Liberal democracy literally became *democracy for liberals* (especially the economic sense of the word)*,* excluding the majorities. One vector for exclusion from civil society citizenship is education, marking a transition from property in things (slaves, capital, etc. in classical civil society) to properties of the subject: education, demeanor, liberal values.

This portends a post-democratic order without the demos, eliminated because of its intractable "Orientalism" and "populism". It is legitimated by references to cultural deficiencies the half-century of "Asiatic communism" is suspected to have wrought on the national consciousness. As the liberal expert and political scientist Evgenii Daynov said, "we are half oriental and half Western-oriented citizens and thank God for this Western spiritual half for it allows us every now and then to enter the model of the normal Western states" (Daynov 2016).

Students of the liberal tradition agree that liberalism, especially in its early history, is not a natural ally of democracy, and its association with democracy was built over many centuries of bloody struggle and revolutions. The case of this dissertation points to the possibility that liberalism might be returning to its undemocratic origins.

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