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The Green Movement and the Green Parties in Bulgaria: Between System Integration and System Change

■ The development and distinctiveness of the Green Movement and the green parties in Bulgaria reflect the intricate logic of the transformations, which have been taking place in Bulgarian society over the past quarter of a century. The actors of the Green Movement have responded to these processes both in the direction of system integration and – more frequently – in the direction of contesting and opposing the system, whereby in their most productive periods they have even contributed to system change.

■ Much like the green parties in the West, the Bulgarian environmental movement is the result of a social evolution promoted by a middle class that has endorsed a new type of modern culture. This middle class, however, has emerged and consolidated at a different historical time and in quite a different setting. This is the reason why it mirrors peculiarities that are common for the civic movements in the countries of the former socialist system, but at the same time it manifests specific traits typical for the “Bulgarian model” of transition.

■ Environmentalism is one of the few causes capable of generating wide public support in Bulgarian society on an ongoing basis. During the three stages of its evolution (the “dissident” period from the end of the 1980s, the “NGO” period during the 1990s, and the “new green wave” of the first decade of the 21st century), the Movement has been expressing public discontent, has defended public interest against private interests clad in power, and has been a unifying factor of the broad moral opposition against the practices of the political status quo. The Green Movement has also been manifesting the national attachment to Nature, the deep cultural roots of which span over centuries.

■ Despite its achievements, the Green Movement has failed to embed an autonomous and influential green party of its own in the institutions of power. The Movement – Party relationships are problematic. What has gained the upper hand is the logic that the Green Movement should go without a party and that the green parties should be outside the Green Movement. The reason why is that parties take environmentalism on board to the purpose of coming to power but afterwards they rapidly get marginalized.

■ The willpower for direct civic participation in the decision-making processes over the last years has marked a new stage in the development of the Green Movement. After 2005, the consolidation of the environmentalist community into a civic coalition named “For Nature in Bulgaria to Stay” and the establishment of a new green formation determined to represent an authentic environmental party (the Greens), have set up prerequisites for launching an autonomous environmental project in Bulgaria. The volatility of the party system and the voter disappointment with the parties of the status quo now have opened opportunities for new political actors to emerge.

■ The integration of the environmental project goes through the lasting inclusion of the green priorities on the agendas of all political parties and in the country's policy at large. So far, the Bulgarian political system is far from envisaging an objective like this. The role of a catalyst to these processes once again falls on the shoulders of civic society embodied by the Green Movement, whereas the hopes for a “green breakthrough” in the system will continue to be linked to the synergy between this Movement and an authentic Green Party.

March 2012

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INTRODUCTION

The emergence, development, and the characteristic features of the Green Movement and the green parties in Bulgaria reflect the intricate logic of the transformations, which have been taking place in Bulgarian society over the past quarter of a century. At the same time, the evolution of the actors expressing ecological and environmentalist messages and ideas in the Bulgarian society and political space is legitimately connected with the dynamic supranational and global processes, in which the Bulgarian state, the political elites, and society at large were involved at the end of the communist regime and the beginning of the country's post-communist transition. The Green Movement and the green parties, which were born during this transition, responded to the ongoing processes both in the direction of system integration and – more frequently – in the direction of contesting and opposing the system, whereby in their most productive periods they have even contributed to system change.

In their different embodiments – from the first civic environmentalist demonstrations in the town of Rousse (1987) to the first independent running of a green party at a general election (the party of the “*Greens*” in 2009) – the Green Movement has followed up the logic of the new social movements, which are both value- and culture-oriented, poorly institutionalized, and pursue the change of the status quo. At the same time, the Green Movement mirrors the specific traits of the civic movements functioning in a totalitarian and post-totalitarian context, common for all the countries of the former Soviet Bloc, but it is nonetheless affected by the country specific Bulgarian “socialist” model and the subsequent national transition to a liberal democracy and a market economy, which also reflect a deeper historical,

cultural, and structurally institutional distinctiveness.¹

Having emerged at the end of the 1980s as an expression of the desire to eliminate the totalitarian system, which was simultaneously coupled with the desire to reform it, the Green Movement has continued to further develop this line over the following two decades. During the transition period, the Bulgarian environmental movement showed – though to a rather unbalanced degree – the capacity to interact with the institutions of political power and to impact the processes of democratization and Europeanization. This was quite often done without any due legitimacy granted by the incumbent governments. It is in this sense that the environmentalist and civic activity of the Greens coincides with the broader process of public and political modernization of a Western type, which, after the collapse of Todor Zhivkov's regime in the fall of 1989, was accepted in practice as a guide-line without any other alternative whatsoever, both by the political elites and society at large.

In the first decade of the new 21st century, opposition became the leading line once again, but now it was accompanied by the willpower to change the new status quo, namely the imposition of a neo-liberal, consumerist, and brutally market-oriented social, economic, and political system. After 2005, the Green Movement has entered a new stage of development, characterized by a new objective, new forms of action, a new direction, and new actors – both of a civic and political nature. Now, the opposition is focused on the shortfall of democracy in the institutions of power, which on the political level is manifested by ideological pretense and governmental populism, by misrepresentation and concealment of the underlying economic

¹ The Bulgarian researcher Antoniy Todorov, for instance, reveals the presence of a “cultural and institutional complex”, which has been structuring the political life in Bulgaria and has determined the type of civic participation in this country from the epoch of the National Liberation to the modern period of Bulgarian history. See. Todorov, ., (2010). *Citizens, Parties, Elections: Bulgaria 1879-2009, “East-West” Publishing House, Sofia.*

and political entities and individual players directed by the “invisible hand” of border-free capital, by the unhealthy prevalence of private over public interest, all of which has brought about the “privatization” and destruction of the public good.

The criticism concerning these negative aspects of neo-liberalism pursued by the governing majorities “in line with the Bulgarian way of doing things” has been accepted in the circles of the Green Movement in Bulgaria not only as an opposition, but also as an endorsement of the green ideas. By means of holding numerous public events and political manifestations, the Greens uphold and protect the principles of the law-governed state, the rule of law, and equality before the law, as well as the principle of the socially accountable governance and distribution of public goods, thus maintaining the line of the well-established political and cultural tradition in Europe.

The demands for a broader and direct civic participation in the decision-making processes, which have a direct bearing upon the natural and environmental conditions and the quality of the living ambience in this country, for their part testify to the growing discontent with the way the country has been governed so far. They also bear witness of the distrust with the political representation on one hand, and to the emergence of a “green” system of political values concurrent with the traditions established by the Green Movements in the West, on the other. With a view to the exceptional dynamism of the processes not only on the global level, but on the national level as well, the Bulgarian Green Movement had to “catch up” for the decades of isolation, responding at the same time to the new trends, which is exemplified by a number of anti-globalist ideas, messages, and actions targeted at the youngest generations of environmentalists.

The upsurge of the Movement over the last few years, which analysts have come to dub the “new green wave”, alongside with the

emergence of a “green civic society”,² is connected both with the Euro-integration process, the culmination of which was the accession of Bulgaria to the European Union (2007), and the consolidation of the “green” sector after a succession of effective civic campaigns, which provoked a genuine public reverberation and had a serious political impact. Despite this fact, however, throughout this entire period – from the emergence of the Bulgarian Green Movement in the late 1980s to the present day – the Green Movement has failed to produce an autonomous and influential green party capable of representing it in the country’s governance. The Green Movement/green party relations have often been problematic and what eventually gained the upper hand was the logic that the Green Movement should go without a party and that the green parties should remain outside the Green Movement. The establishment of the new political party of “The Greens” in 2007 as a result of the wave of large-scale civic environmentalist campaigns, which not only rallied, but further consolidated the green sector community, continues to generate hopes for improvement in this direction.

On the other hand, the volatility of the Bulgarian party system and the vacillating political preferences of the active electorate have become a distinct trend over the past decade. This has opened genuine possibilities for the emergence of new political actors on the national political scene. The marginalization of the right-wing parties of the transition, which – over the previous decade – had firmly focused the hopes for a tangible change cherished by the “post-materialist”-minded representatives of the middle class, coupled with both the absence of an authentic left-wing party of a distinct social profile in a society of a traditionally egalitarian political culture, plus the effects of the global financial and

² In this connection see the article of journalist Ivan Radev entitled “The Green Civic Society” in: Kanev, P., Krastanova, R. (editors), *A Place for the Future*, (2009), a collection of articles on civic participation and sustainable development, Sofia, Sofia Civic Association – Shtastlivetza, pp. 123 – 125.

economic crisis, could well result in surprises on the territory of “traditional” politics.

The beginning of the Green Movement in Bulgaria is connected with the ecological protests in the town of Rousse, which was one of the first ever manifestations of the organized civic society at the end of the totalitarian regime. The ecological demands were then taken over by the Public Committee for the Protection of Rousse and the Independent *Ecoglasnost* (i.e. “ecological openness”) Association, which brought to the fore the need for a social and political reform based on transparency, the rule of the universal human rights, the observance of individual human rights, and the accountability of the governance for environmental protection at large. In this way, ecology and environmentalism, or green politics in general – in the capacity of an essential part of the public renewal project – turned into one of the major features of the Bulgarian dissident movement. On the other hand, this environmental movement belonged to the broader civic stance, which opposed the moral bankruptcy of the regime and had no claims on representing any ideological and/or political project.

During the first years of the post-totalitarian changes in the country, the Green Movement was following the logic of the dominant political set-up. The internal specificity of the Bulgarian transition throughout the 1990s, expressed in the bi-polar opposition of “the blue” (i.e. the anti-communists and democrats) and “the red” (i.e. the nomenclature and former communists), was not conducive to authentic green ideas and their respective manifestation on the arena of conventional politics. The civic movement around *Ecoglasnost* eventually disintegrated and its participants divided and aligned on the two sides of the new demarcation line between the Bulgarian Socialist Party (BSP)³ and the Union of Democratic Forces.⁴ Despite

the fact that this period saw the formation of several labels of green political formations (the Green Party, the Conservative Environmental Party, *Ecoglasnost* National Movement, *Ecoglasnost* Political Club), the position of dependency, which they occupied in the capacity of partners to more influential political actors, and the absence of an authentic “green” activity, became the underlying factor for the marginal position of the green parties on the scene of “big” politics for quite a long period of time.

In this way, the activity of the Green Movement during the 1990s and the first years of the new millennium was carried out within the limits of various civic organizations and was mainly connected with educational and awareness campaigns, research, and expert capacity building, alongside with some participation in public policies. If at its beginning the Green Movement emphasized on human and civic rights protection, which were amply down-trodden by the totalitarian state, during the decade of transition, the stress was laid on the establishment and development of non-governmental environmentalist organizations, on the amassment of civic and expert experience, and on the promotion of the environmental policies of the European Union and their inclusion on the agenda of national politics.

What became most prominent in the activity of the Green Movement with the onset of the new millennium, in result of the neo-liberalization of the economy, the market- and corporate-orientation of the country’s political life, and the establishment of a consumerist culture of the Western type, was the aspiration for upholding the rule of law and the principles of the law-governed state, which were and are seen as an indispensable prerequisite both for the quality of democracy and the quality of life of the citizens of a democratic country.⁵ Environmental protection was and is conceived as the protection

³ In January 1990, at an ad-hoc Party Congress, the Bulgarian Communist Party renamed itself to Bulgarian Socialist Party (BSP).

⁴ The Union of Democratic Forces (UDF) was the first and – for a whole decade – only political force in Bulgaria, which had no other alternative after the collapse of the communist regime and claimed to represent the pro-Western project for the liberal democratization of the country.

⁵ In this connection see the conclusions of sociologist Antoni Galabov in: Galabov, A. (2010) “Political Socialization and Values in a Generation-oriented Aspect” in *Democracy in Bulgaria in the 21st Century*, Veliko Turnovo, pp. 129-139.

of public interests vis-à-vis the corporate interests promoted in the corridors of power, and as an important national political priority at the same time.

At the end of the first decade of the 21st century, the Green Movement acquired especially important public and political dimensions. A testimony to this fact is first and foremost the wave of civic environmentalist campaigns after 2005, which grew into an environmental protection coalition known under the name of *For Nature in Bulgaria to Stay*.⁶ The second equally significant fact is the impressive potential for public opinion mobilization demonstrated by these campaigns. As a number of public opinion surveys indicate, people often recognized the environmentalists as protectors expressing public interest and fighters against the sores of the social and political system in the country, such as corruption, lack of equality before the law, a deficit of democracy, and institutional incompetence, while their campaigns were one of the most popular events in the public environment.⁷

These initiatives were often local in terms of scope and thematic in terms of contents (such as the civic coalition, which was rallied for the resolution of the waste disposal and waste management crisis in the capital city Sofia, the campaign against the storage of radioactive waste on the territory of the Novi Khan Municipality, etc.), but more often than not they grew into national campaigns (such as the campaign against the exchange of state-owned forests for waste lands, against the excessive construction along the Black Sea coast, against illegal construction in natural parks in the mountains, against the repealed status of certain protected territories for the sake of private interests, etc.). In certain cases

the campaigns acquired supra-national dimensions (such as the *France – Rila* Civic Network) and had an European impact (such as the campaign for the preservation of the prescribed scope of the NATURA 2000 European Network concerning the protected territories in Bulgaria, and the campaign against the genetically modified organisms (GMO)).

In 2007, a new green party was established and was named "The Greens Party". It is genetically connected with the Green Movement and claims to be an authentic political force. The new party was created "from the bottom up" to the purpose of changing the system "from the inside". Its establishment is another testimony to the reinforced organizational strength and political self-confidence of the Green Movement, which is currently also seeking the proper institutional pathways to get integrated within the Establishment (the existing system).

This analysis will first follow up the periods in the development of the Green Movement and will outline those major characteristics typical for it, which have turned it into one of the very few autonomous actors belonging to the civic society in Bulgaria. At the same time, the analysis will attempt to outline the issues, which the Movement is currently facing. Further on, this study will outline the portrait of the green parties emphasizing on the context of their emergence, their development, and the reasons underlying their weakness. The interaction between the Movement and the parties will also be brought to the fore alongside with the problematic nature of their co-existence. In conclusion, certain future trends in the development of the Movement and the parties will be formulated with a view to the possibilities for their integration within the existing system, contributing at the same time to its change from the viewpoint and logical premises of environmentalism.

⁶ More information about the history, the member organizations, the campaigns, and the achievements of the coalition can be found on its website, namely: <http://forthenature.org/>

⁷ In this connection see the detailed sociological survey held by Roumyana Stoilova and Francisca Bieri in the: *Sociological Problems Journal*, issue 3-4. 2010, pp. 225 -249, which is based on a representative empirical survey of the attitudes to the activity of the Green NGOs and the environmental protection issues in Bulgaria.

Part I: THE GREEN MOVEMENT AS A DISSIDENT MOVEMENT

Origins and Emergence of the Green Movement in Bulgaria

The Inspirations of the Dissident Movement in Bulgaria: Environmental Humanitarianism, Ecological Issues, Human Rights Activity, and Social Change From Global Change to Local Action

The beginnings of the Green Movement coincided with the belated and quite a short period of anti-totalitarian dissident movement in Bulgaria. On the other hand, the co-existence of social and environmentalist demands for making a reform of the system happen, voiced by the Bulgarian Movement for Openness and Perestroika, distinctly differentiates the Bulgarian Green Movement from a number of other similar reformist movements emerging in the countries of the former Soviet Bloc. Indeed, in the larger part of the former socialist countries, environmental organizations and even 'green' parties were in existence as early as the end of the 1980s, but the majority of them were "set up" by the respective communist parties in order to create the smoke screen that the socialist regimes were in line with the demands of their time. In some of the countries, there were informal ecological initiatives even before the Chernobyl catastrophe, such as the *Ecological Club* in Poland (1980) and the *Danube cercle* in Hungary (1983). In the Bulgarian situation, however, the environmental problems became not only one of the major catalysts of dissident activities, but were the very essence of the Bulgarian dissident movement as well.⁸

In fact, the first signs of public awareness as regards the environmental hazards of "real socialism" were first connected with the 1986 Chernobyl catastrophe. The inadequate response of the authorities, which initially tried to conceal every single piece of information

to this effect and then belittled the effects of the nuclear disaster, for the first time ever focused the public interest on the issue of the technological risks of industrial advance. What is more important, however, is the fact that this catastrophe brought about the painful revelation about the moral essence of the regime, which loudly pretended to be constantly "concerned about the welfare of the people". This event and the response of the ruling circles to its disastrous effects undoubtedly contributed to the first authentic environmental event in Bulgarian history only a year and a half later, namely the civic protests in the town of Rousse.

The so-called "Rousse events" began in the autumn of 1987. They were organized by six women who had no party affiliation and were merely employees of the landscaping office of the town. Their names are: Tzonka Bukurova, Dora Bobeva, Vyara Nikolova, Evgenia Zheleva, Stefka Monova, and Albena Velkova. The Rousse events were repeatedly held until the spring of 1988.⁹ The protests were provoked by the almost decade-long gassing of the Rousse citizens. The dangerous gas was emitted by the plant producing nitrogen and chlorine compounds in the Romanian town of Georgiu just across the river Danube. These hazardous emissions were systematically neglected by both the local and central authorities in Bulgaria, probably on account of the fact that the chemical products of the Romanian plant were manufactured for the needs of the Soviet military industry, which required a seamless manufacturing method and absolute secrecy. The group of women, which organized the events, managed to attract the support of the party leadership overseeing the landscaping system in the town and the tacit support of the law-enforcement authorities. The demonstrations, dominated by the sizeable presence of women,¹⁰ were voicing moral messages to the country's governance, insisting that the

⁸ In this connection see: Leslie Holms in Holms, L. (1997), *Post-Communism. An Introduction*, Polity Press, Cambridge.

⁹ See Antonova, V. and Kamenova, D. (2008), *Dismantlement*, Vanguard Print, Rousse.

¹⁰ The march of mothers with their baby prams in February 1988 is probably the most emblematic event from this point of view.

authorities should show concern and accountability for the health and life of both the citizens of the town and the future generation – their children. The moral appeals, however, were accompanied by a yet another appeal for the “dismantlement” of the very system.¹¹

The civic pressure for openly voicing this problem and finding a respective resolution made the central authorities intervene. Grisha Philipov, member of the Political Bureau of the Bulgarian Communist Party (BCP) was sent to Rousse, where he made ineffective attempts to come to terms with the protesters and failed to abate the public discontent. The interference of the top brass party and governmental leaders and the pressure exerted by the organized citizenry led to a succession of meetings and talks with the Romanian side and to the gradual discontinuation of the hazardous manufacturing process. The public reverberation of these events was especially strong and the repressive apparatus of the system failed to dampen it down.

During the several months of protests, a group of young artists organized an ecological exhibition in Rousse, the main subject matter of which was the tragedy of this town. At the same time, a crew from the Bulgarian National Television created a film called “Breathe”, which was devoted to the environmental protests in the town of Rousse.¹² Representatives of the creative intelligentsia took it upon themselves to openly voice these events with the intention of provoking the adequate response of the country’s authorities.

On the 8th of March 1988, at the Cinema House in Sofia, the first night of the public screening of “Breathe” was held, although its showing was explicitly banned by the Central Committee of the Bulgarian Communist Party (BCP). It is at this first night precisely that the Public Committee for the Environmental Protection of Rousse was set up. It included outstanding dissident-intellectuals

and high-ranking party functionaries from the “reformist” wing of the BCP. Among them were the vanguard artist, Svetlin Roussev, the coach of the Bulgarian rhythmic gymnastic team, Neshka Robeva, both of whom were members of the Central Committee of the BCP, and film director, Malina Petrova, who at that time was Chairperson of the Union of Young Cinematographers. The dissident writer Georgi Mishev who at that time was Member of Parliament elected from the Rousse constituency was elected to the post of Chairman of the Public Committee for the Environmental Protection of Rousse. In this way the environmental and civic messages went well beyond the local context and acquired serious national dimensions. The problems of a Danubian town became a problem of the system.

The *Ecoglasnost* Independent Association was set up in the spring of 1989 as a natural continuation of the Public Committee for the Environmental Protection of Rousse. The majority of its members were from the circles of the so-called “dissident” intelligentsia, some of them were educated in the West and had a broad view of the social and political processes taking place there. The *Ecoglasnost* core group once again was made up by writers, poets, translators, scientists and researchers (a large part of whom were working for the Institute of Philosophy with the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences), as well as artists (painters, actors, film directors, etc.). People’s actor Peter Slabakov was elected to the post of first *Ecoglasnost* Chairman. For his part, he had been repeatedly “punished” by the authorities for his unorthodox statements concerning the “environmental” policy of the regime. The broad public reverberations with respect to the protest events in the town of Rousse focused the attention of the newly-established association on new environmental problems, such as the construction of the Rila/Mesta Hydroelectric Power Cascade, the pollution of the rivers, the project for the construction of a new nuclear power plant in the Danubian

¹¹ Antonova, V. and Kamenova, D. (2008), pp. 52-60, op.cit.

¹² Director of the film is Yuri Zhironov, and the script is written by Violet Tzekov.

town of Belene, etc. Right after the attempt for this independent association to be officially registered was rejected, the activity of the civic group focused on a succession of direct actions intended to gather public support.

In the fall of 1989 *Ecoglasnost* organized an open subscription meant to publicly voice the environmental problems in this country. Apart from *Ecoglasnost*, two other important Bulgarian dissident formations took part in the demonstration, namely: the Club for Openness and Restructuring (Perestroika) and the Society for Human Rights Protection. This subscription underlies one of the few landmark events in the history of the Bulgarian transition to democracy. On November 3rd 1989, after the first massive self-organized demonstration in the newest history of the country took place in the streets of the capital city Sofia, the subscription was tabled at the Bulgarian National Assembly on the very last day of the proceedings held by the Conference for Security and Cooperation in Europe on the issues of the environment, which at that time was hosted by this country. The subscription¹³ was accompanied by a petition, whereby the protesting citizens raised their demands for launching broader public reforms and enlarging the scope of human rights.

The subsequent reprisals signal that the authorities were prepared neither for the actual dimensions of the event, nor for the broad public support it raised.¹⁴ The documents about the refusal to register the Protection of Rousse Public Committee and *Ecoglasnost*, alongside the evidence for pressure – both psychological and purely physical – to

which the participants in the civic environmental events were submitted within the 1988-1989 period of time, were disclosed only after the secret archives of the BCP Political Bureau were opened over the last few years¹⁵. The archive materials pretty much coincide with the memoirs published by the participants.¹⁶ At the same time, the authorities made attempts to dampen the civic initiative by “taking over” the movement from the inside. To this end, parallel structures were established, which were meant to both disempower and compromise the authentic participants in these organizations. The authorities inculcated trusted “moles” of their own in the two civic organizations, the development of whom had to be under respective control, and the party-state was very deft at employing these and other methods. The published sources are certainly incapable of exhaustively revealing this type of covert interference, but methods like these were characteristic for the totalitarian regimes outside Bulgaria as well.

Ecoglasnost wound up its life as a dissident formation on December 9th 1989 when it became one of the nine formations, which co-founded the Union of Democratic forces (UDF). For the duration of its brief existence in the capacity of an informal civic organization, *Ecoglasnost* turned into the most readily recognizable face of the dissident movement for the broad public in Bulgaria. Its assets include the Rila-Mesta mountainous river hydroelectric power cascade, the first anti-nuclear campaign against the construction of the *Belene* Nuclear Power Plant, plus the fact that some of its members are the authors of the first democratic Environmental Law in Bulgaria, which was passed by the Grand National Assembly in 1991. At the time of establishing the UDF, *Ecoglasnost* was one of the organizations enjoying the most numer-

¹³ This subscription has unofficially remained in history as the “Subscription in front of the Crystal Café”, which at that time was an almost cult-like place in the open for the artistic and creative intelligentsia, the city bohemians, and the so-called “informals”.

¹⁴ Attracting the attention and empathy of the public was also promoted by other “informal” and non-conventional methods. Thus for instance, upon each of his appearances on stage, the informal leader of *Ecoglasnost*, actor Peter Slabakov, addressed the audience with an emotional ethical and environmental message where the description of the problems was merged with an appeal for an adequate civic response. See in: The *Ecoglasnost* Independent Association, Alexandrieva, L., Karakachanov, A. (editors). 2010, Dr. Zhelyo Zhelev Foundation, Sofia, pp. 74-84.

¹⁵ See in: The Rousse Committee, A Documentary Collection, Dareva, V., Mishev G. (Editors), 2002, Dr. Zhelyo Zhelev Foundation, Sofia.

¹⁶ See in: The Collection of the *Ecoglasnost* Independent Association, op.cit.

ous popular support. The number of its candidates for members grew to such an extent that exceeded the organizational capacity of the association and it is during this period precisely that a number of local organizations were set up throughout the country¹⁷.

This was actually the moment when the informal *Ecoglasnost* organization turned into a national movement. Some of its members, such as Alexander Karakachanov, Peter Beron, Edwin Sugarev, Krassen Stanchev, etc., are among the few who have been part of the political circles and have actively participated in the country's public life to date, whereas others, such as Peter Slabakov, the first *Ecoglasnost* Chairman, are among the few personalities who – according to the opinion poll surveys – have been permanently linked with environmentalism and green politics. What is most important, however, is the fact that from the very beginning this civic association outlined the direction of the dissident movement and formed its core – the protection of fundamental human rights and the rights of citizens, such as the right to live and to healthy living environment, which cannot be realized without a serious social change. In this way, the idea about carrying out a reform of the system crystallized in the formula “socialism with a human face” (ecology, human rights, social change).

With its very entry into the UDF in the capacity of a co-founder, however, *Ecoglasnost* sustained a transformation. The establishment of the Green Party by Alexander Karakachanov, Secretary of *Ecoglasnost* (December 1989), which gradually grew into a partner of the coalitions formed by the BSP, and the split of *Ecoglasnost* into two separate organizations – National Movement *Ecoglasnost* (or “the Blue” *Ecoglasnost* in coalition with the UDF) and Political Club *Ecoglasnost* (or “the Red” *Ecoglasnost*, which became a coalition partner of the BSP) – mark the end of the first stage in the development of the Movement. It is a fact that

the green formations originating from the common dissident organization gradually became marginalized on the political arena and even their stance in the infrequent encounters with the country's governance remained marginal.

Some of the actors and formations, which used to feed the dissident Green Movement, continued their active presence in the civic and environmental sectors (mainly the *Ecoglasnost* National Movement and partially the Green Party), but the new realities of the 1990s demanded the emergence of new actors. The new political priorities – the Euro-integration and Atlantic processes, the liberalization of the economy, the receding social functions of the state and its withdrawal from major public spheres – opened vistas for the growing prominence of the non-governmental sector, in which the newly emerged environmental formations and the “green” NGOs were about to prove to be some of the principal actors.

Some particularities concerning the green formations from their opposition period merit special attention. Firstly, they upheld the idea of “civic” politics, and by criticizing the moral bankruptcy of the regime, they took the stance of a moral corrective force to the incumbent governance. Both in its initial goals and the forms of organization and action, the civic Green Movement in Bulgaria was very much like the new social movements in Western Europe. The Bulgarian Green Movement, however, was functioning in a totally different environment, which eventually left a strong imprint on it.

The Bulgarian researcher, Olga Simova, claims that the civic movements in Bulgaria from that period failed to formulate “specific” goals, because they were united by a much larger and loftier objective – to oppose the regime, which banned any spontaneous civic activity whatsoever. This is the reason why the biggest goal of the Green Movement (as well as the goal of all the rest of the spontaneous civic manifestations from that period) was expressed in the demand for democracy as understood in accordance with the model of the liberal Western democra-

¹⁷ See in: The Collection of the *Ecoglasnost* Independent Association, op.cit.

cies, i.e. a democracy of human rights, and this is exactly what the slogan of all dissident civic initiatives actually was.¹⁸

This explains why the Green Movement in Bulgaria, much like other social movements in Central and Eastern Europe in the period of totalitarianism, was constituted as an expression of the emerging autonomous civic society and rose against the “political” society, which was the embodiment of the totalitarian state.¹⁹ The Green Movement quite consciously assumed the stance of an actor voicing a supra-political, universal, and environmentally humanitarian message, which defined and exposed “real” socialism much more in terms of a moral and social order than as an overall political system. The Program declaration of the *Ecoglasnost* Association, passed by its General Assembly on April 25th 1989, says, for instance, that its major objective is the country’s “profound social and environmental restructuring”.²⁰

On the other hand, the environmental message is as broad as possible: it reflects unconditional and universal values, which have been accepted by the communist state – *de jure* at least – and which the then regime would have found it hard to defy. In this connection it would be appropriate to quote the words of Liliana Alexandrova, a leading figure of *Ecoglasnost* during the first dissident stage of its development: “On one hand, for the majority of *Ecoglasnost* members, the worth of Nature or the quality of human life could not have possibly been subject to any discussion whatsoever. They were unconditional values going beyond ideology. On the other hand, for us the Party was merely only one of the groups exercising power in the country and we already

*knew that its decisions were prompted by other – non-ideological – interests. That was why we regarded our pursuits on the subject of ecology and environmental protection as the defense of values against certain – any other – group interests”.*²¹ In this message we can see both the first post-materialist criticism against the socialist industry and an economy labeled “anti-environmental”, as well as the demands for democratic participation and civic control over the way in which society was governed, which must also involve the fundamental human rights and a healthy living environment.²²

*“Our social and economic life is based on the fact that the various social groups are unequally represented in the decision-making process, which determines the direction of the overall development in our society. Those making the strategic decisions are different from the people suffering the main consequences from the implementation of such decisions. Without any doubt, this underlying social fact also concerns the policy pursued in the environmental sphere. (...) Moreover, for each individual the extent of responsible participation in the decision-making process is in inverse proportion to the degree, to which he or she suffers the harmful impact of environmental pollutants. (...) All this obviates the need for introducing a democratic public control over the environmental policy of this country.”*²³

²¹ Ibid, p. 67.

²² The imposition of post-materialist values as one of the traits of the cultural transformation of most developed industrial societies and the reflection of this transformation in politics have been substantiated and treated in detail in the works of Ronald Inglehart. See in: Inglehart, R. (1977), *The Silent Revolution. Changing Values and Political Styles among Western Publics*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1977, and Inglehart, R. (1992) *Cultural Shift in Advanced Industrialised Societies*. The connection between the new culture and the new social movements is manifested in the inter-connect-edness of the quality of life and the quality of the environment. More specific information about the impact of the post-materialist “revolution” on the attitude to politics and political action see in: Inglehart, R. (1990), “Values, Ideology, and Cognitive Mobilization in New Social Movements” in: Dalton and Kuetchler (eds) *Challenging the Political Order. New Social and Political Movements in Western Democracies*, Cambridge/Oxford/Polity Press, 1990, pp. 43-66 and Dalton Russel J., Kuetchler and Wilhelm Burklin (1990), “The Challenge of New Movements”, In: *Challenging the Political Order: New Social and Political Movements in Western Democracies*, Dalton and Kuetchler (eds), Cambridge, Polity Press, pp. 10-16.

²³ Program Declaration of the *Ecoglasnost* Independent Movement from April 25th 1989, *ibid.*, p. 154.

¹⁸ See Simova, O. (2010). “Civic Movements in Bulgaria. Twenty Years Later”, in: *The Bulgarian Democracy in the 21st Century*, a Collection, Veliko Turnovo, pp. 63- 69.

¹⁹ The list of proponents of this thesis among the analysts of the transition period is a long one. Thus for instance, see Ralf Dahrendorf in: Dahrendorf, R. (2000) *After 1989. Morality, Revolution, Civic Society, the “Citizen” Association*, Sofia. This is also a stance uniting some of the leaders of the Eastern European reformist movements, such as Vaclav Havel in the Czech Republic, Lech Wałęsa in Poland, and Zhelyu Zhelev in Bulgaria.

²⁰ See in: The Collection of the *Ecoglasnost* Independent Association, *op.cit.*, p. 155.

Consequently, environmentalism as a form of supreme humanism is the major ideological message of the green dissident movement. Environmental humanism is an expression of endorsing ethical and intellectual values directed against the brutal “materialization” of social, political, and economic relations – something that was rampant at the time of “developed socialism”. This specificity is difficult to grasp without going deeper into the particular “Renaissance” spirit of intellectual, creative, and moral ebullience at the end of the 1980s in Bulgaria, which both gave rise and provided a vent to the willpower for changing society that had been suppressed for decades by the reprisals imposed by the regime and the civic self-censorship of fear, acquiescence and resignation.

The third characteristic trait of this period is connected with the formal aspect of the Green Movement, by virtue of which its organizations remained at the level of “informality” and were unwilling to get institutionalized. In part, this stems from the very specificity of the system, which does not allow for the legal recognition and institutionalization of “self-emerged” civic initiatives. On the other hand, informality is a consciously chosen stance, inasmuch as it reflects the desire of the green movement actors to be seen as representatives of the authentic civic society.

Lastly, according to the logic of the classic green paradigm, the civic movements from this period emerged from local cases (such as the gassing of the town of Rousse, the construction of the *Rila-Mesta* Hydro-electric Power Cascade, etc.), which used to provoke a political response on the national level and put to doubt the very *raison d’être* of the ideological foundations of the system itself. Addressing the “environmental” policy of the regime, at the same time they actually challenged its moral failure, the lack of social justice, and its inhuman attitude. Thus, in its initial stage, the Green Movement manifested itself as a striving for reforming the system “from the inside”, through a kind of evolu-

tion, rather than initiating any radical political change. Its message was that it was pursuing a policy, but it was a different policy of a civic nature, which was far from the aspirations of coming to power and exercising it. It had neither the ambitions, nor the readiness to become a “traditional” political actor mainly because it had no clear idea either about the form of the new social and political organization of the country, or about its place in it in the capacity of an ideological and political project. The participants in the *Ecoglasnost* organization were keenly aware of all these facts when later on they commented on these events from the distance of time.²⁴ The subsequent incongruent developments, such as *Ecoglasnost* joining the UDF, the formation of a Green Party separated from the Movement, which entered into partnership relations with the BSP, and the rapid division of *Ecoglasnost* into a “blue” and “red” factions, merely confirm the hypothesis outlined above.

Part II: THE GREEN MOVEMENT AS A NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATION

*From Dissident Politics to European Policies:
Professionalization and Europeanization
of the Green Movement
Establishment and Consolidation
of the Environmentalist NGOs.
Institutionalization of the Environmental Issues
by Making Them Part of the Political Agenda*

In the period after 1989, a new actor emerged on the public scene, namely the non-governmental non-profit organizations. Their emergence is connected with the new social and economic realities taking root in the country. The priorities on the agenda of the then country’s governance were to erect the institutions of the liberal democratic political system and the market economy, but they were also accompanied by the need to create and consolidate an autonomous civic sector. The devel-

²⁴ The *Ecoglasnost* Independent Association, op.cit.

opment of the Green Movement took place within the limits of the attempts for the emancipation of civic society, which was looking for legitimacy by amassing knowledge, expertise, and professional authority. This period was connected with building the organizational structure of the Movement, which at that time was engaged with making its own contribution by drafting the relevant environmental legislation, and with the institutionalization of the European policies in the Bulgarian political and public agenda. At the same time, the green NGO sector tried to establish an internal cohesion by building itself as an “environmental community” and to legitimize itself as a serious public actor in its relationships with the institutions of power by participating in the process of public policy making. The third direction was the search for contacts and legitimacy among kindred organizations outside Bulgaria and especially within the European Union.

These three dimensions in the activities of the Green Movement, however, found it hard to co-exist. The efforts to build professional and organizational capacity, to be seen as partner to the institutions of power, and to assert itself within the national and European public space were accomplished at an uneven pace and in a number of cases this led to discrediting these very efforts. And yet, there were achievements and they were rather in the international interactions of the Green Movement. It took 15 years, however, to achieve a consensus on the need for internal unity in the form of shared principles and goals. Therefore, this period can be seen as the stage of professionalization and legitimization along the lines of the future consolidation of the Movement. With a view to its professionalization, the Movement laid the emphasis on expertise, science, and research, which gave rise to a number of “mergers” between certain NGOs and research institutes, taking place on the basis of common members. Thus for instance, certain leading figures in some of the large green civic organizations, such as the *BALKANS* Wild Nature Association, the

Bulgarian Bird Protection Association, the *Biodiversity* Bulgarian Foundation, the *Agrolink* Association, etc., were working for various institutes of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences and at a number of other academic units.

Contrary to the preceding period, what was observed within the Green Movement with a view to its legitimization was the “formalization” of its constituent organizations. This means that the stress was laid on the organizational capacity and on the rapprochement and joint work with the institutions of power in the form of participation in expert councils and commissions at the various ministries and Parliament, in the form of joint work with the local authorities, in the form of legislative initiative, and lawsuit cases. It was the green NGOs that were the major actors participating in the elaboration of plans for the management of protected territories, for the preservation and management of forests and water basins, plans for their protection from industrial and chemical pollution, etc.

At the beginning of the country's transition, the Green NGOs had had their prior existence, however brief it was. Actually, the first attempts to set up environmental “civic” organizations date back to the time coinciding with the end of Todor Zhivkov's regime. On the one hand, this corresponded with the desire of the regime to demonstrate – both nationally and internationally – its concern for the state of the environment; on the other hand, they reflected the spirit of the time and managed to mobilize already existing “green-minded” generations, which had been socialized in the decade of the highest economic stability and material security (1970-1980) and in the decade of perestroika as well (1980-1989). At the end of the 1980s, several organizations were set up, which opened up vistas for experts to contribute to environmental protection and ecological expertise by making respective expert assessments. These organizations were recruiting members and supporters from students' biology and ecology clubs and among the participants in various informal amateur initiatives.

The impact of the university and research centers must be included here, too, as these were the entities developing ecology and biology as academic and research disciplines, which – alongside other disciplines from the “exact” sciences – enjoyed the benevolence of the regime. At that time, the most significant among these organizations was the *Green Balkans* Federation of Environmental Associations²⁵, which to date is not only the largest organization in terms of members and supporters, but also enjoys the authority and image of the most readily recognizable green NGO in Bulgaria. This organization was established at the end of 1988 after a civic action, whereby an informal group of students, researchers, and lovers of nature protested against the poisoning of over a million of migrating birds in Bulgaria in result of spraying tons of airborne chemical insecticides.

The new organizations set up at the beginning of the 1990s in the form of NGOs made it possible for the new generation of environmentalists to give their contribution by espousing the cause of popularizing the environmentalist subject matter among the broad public. It is precisely then that they made their first attempts at promoting green education and scientific expertise. On the other hand, these organizations put on the agenda environmental problems of significance for the whole society and tried to offer solutions to

the institutions of the central and local authorities. A number of the large-scale civic campaigns for protecting the environment started during this period precisely. One of them, for instance, was the campaign for the protection of the Kresna Gorge, which was directed against the construction of hydroelectric power cascades. Eventually, this campaign turned into one of the emblematic environmental battles of this period. New organizations combining the espousal of both environmental and civic causes also emerged and asserted themselves at that time. Representatives of this sector unanimously now admit that this period marked the peak of the “green” volunteering wave in this country.

The unifying thematic characteristic of the civic organizations during that period were the campaigns in defense of wild nature (their purpose being: the identification and protection of species subject to extinction, the creation of conditions for their restoration and reintegration within the eco-systems, the opening of training centers for volunteers who love nature, etc.). This is the direction in which many of the green organizations were working, such as the *BALKANS* Wild Nature Association (which was especially active in 1991 in its capacity of an independent association founded by ecologists protecting nature who were former members of *Green Balkans*)²⁶, the *Biodiversity* Bulgar-

²⁵ According to information published on the website of the organization, the civic groups and volunteers of *Green Balkans* have held more than 400 actions, 180 of which are of a nation-wide significance. Many of these actions are mass protest demonstrations, which proved capable of preventing serious crimes against nature in Bulgaria. At the end of 2008, the *Green Balkans* network enjoyed 4500 individual members united in 4 regional offices and 25 correspondent centers. For its 20-year-long existence, the organization has implemented more than 110 environmental protection projects with the support of partners and donors such as the EU PHARE Program, USAID, GEF, REC, UNDP, WWF, EURONATUR, etc. Two large conservation projects – for the river Danube and the Western Rhodopes – to an overall cost of about EUR 20 million – were initiated by *Green Balkans*, the WWF, the Danube-Carpathian Program, and the Bulgarian office of the Bird Protection Society. *Green Balkans* is the first ever NGO in Bulgaria to have received support from the German Environmental Fund and the World Bank for the management and implementation of a project for the conservation of the biodiversity of the Pomorie lake. See: http://www.greenbalkans.org/category.php?language=bg_BG&cat_id=13, visited on 20.09.2011.

²⁶ Some of the significant achievements of the Association are: the National Biodiversity Strategy (1993–1994), the Management Plan for the Vratza Balkan Natural Park, the elaboration and implementation of action plans for the preservation of rare species, the protection of the water eco-systems of the rivers Iskar, Vit and Ossam. The members of the Association are among the group of non-governmental independent experts approved by the Ministry of the Environment and Waters, who have prepared the scope and description of zones belonging to the NATURA 2000 European Network entirely on their own, as well as the zones covered by the two EU Directives – the Birds Directive and the Habitats Directive. Two of the members of the Association have been elected by the environmentalist organizations as their representatives in governmental structures such as the Supreme Expert Ecological Council with the Ministry of the Environment and Waters and the Hunting Council with the National Forests Directorate. The Association also assists various local initiative committees in their attempts to solve local ecological and environmental problems. See: <http://balkani.org/about/history/>, visited on 28.09.2011.

ian Foundation (set up in 1994 as a joint Bulgarian-Swiss program for the preservation of biological diversity), *For the Earth Environmental Association*, the *Nature Fund Association*, *Eco-club 2000*, the *Nature on Lease Society*, etc. This specificity is partly due to the deindustrialization of the Bulgarian economy when many enterprises of the heavy and chemical industries were closed down, which brought about the considerable reduction of the risks for industrial pollution and the gradual cleaning up of the ambient air and adjacent rivers. On the other hand, the priority focused on the preservation of wild nature was connected with the first adverse effects from the ongoing privatization and the weakened state control over natural resources, resulting in the uncontrolled “misappropriation” and exploitation of the country’s natural wealth.

Other green organizations continued to put on the agenda various industrial and technological problems and their respective impact on the environment, such as the problems of pollution caused by the thermal-electric power plants (the TPPs), the risks connected with the nuclear power plants (the NPPs), and the future of nuclear power generation in this country. It was the “older eco-generation” that was mainly working in this direction – mostly the *Ecoglasnost* National Movement. The activities of its members, however, did not enjoy a broad public support. Within the context of the requirement raised by the European Union for closing down two out of the four blocks of the *Kozloduy* Nuclear Power Plant as one of the conditions for Bulgaria’s EU accession, the prevailing attitudes within the Bulgarian public space were inclined against the closing down of the two blocks, because as early as the time of the socialist regime the development of nuclear power generation was taken to be a guarantee for energy independence, na-

tional security, and economic benefits for the country.²⁷

Though less frequent, the problems, which the towns were suffering from, were also highlighted by the green organizations. They habitually concerned the increased demographic mobility and rapid pace of urbanization affecting mainly the capital city and several of the big towns in the country, whereby what stood apart were the infrastructure and town-planning problems, city pollution, the management of municipal space, and in more general terms – the disintegration and overall deterioration of the urban living environment. Other problems were emerging as well, which were yet to rapidly escalate over the next decade, namely problems connected with increased consumption (the issue here being waste management and waste disposal), the organization of urban public transport, and the overall motor traffic. Last but not least, this period saw the emergence of initiatives focusing attention on the risks stemming from the “conventional” intensive agriculture and the concerns for food safety (the *Agrolink* Asso-

²⁷ Actually, the attitude of the broad public opinion to nuclear power generation in Bulgaria has been inconsistent and is rather ambiguous. The conviction that nuclear power is beneficial – both economically and politically – has been instilled in the population by the totalitarian state for decades. This conviction logically follows the ideological line of pursuing industrial and technological advance and five-year-plan production targets of the East European type, on which “developed socialism” was based, paying homage at the same time to the power generation dimension of the “Bulgarian-Soviet friendship”. On the other hand, the mass panic provoked by an entertainment show in the Bulgarian National Television at the beginning of the 1990s, which announced fake information about a radiation leak from the *Kozloduy* NPP, speaks rather of fear and mistrust concerning the capacity of the competent authorities to secure the safety of the *Kozloduy* NPP. Without any doubt, this mistrust bears the signs of the experience after the *Chernobyl* NPP catastrophe and portends rather an ambiguous and dim future for the Bulgarian nuclear energy, especially taking into account the fact that the governing authorities often adopt the same “schizophrenic” behavior. A fresh example to this effect is the stance of the incumbent Prime Minister, Boiko Borissov, who was in the habit of talking about reviewing and even terminating the disadvantageous contract Bulgaria had signed for the construction of a new NPP in the town of Belene, funded mainly by Russia, and his arguments were based on the desire to avoid any energy dependency and uncertain profits on the background of the huge initial costs. But as soon as he headed the Cabinet in 2009, his stance concerning the *Belene* NPP construction and the country’s energy (in)dependency have changed several times now and currently there is no clarity whether and on what conditions this project can be completed.

ciation). All these problems coupled with the insufficient administrative and managerial capacity of the various state authorities opened up new niches for the varied activities of the Bulgarian green organizations.

On the other hand, the process of European integration opened prospects for the green organizations to work for closer alignment of their activities with the European environmental agenda. A large part of the expert activities involved with the preparation of the country for the process of harmonization and integration of the EU environmental policies were carried out by the actors in the green NGO sector. They participated in the newly established agencies and expert councils with the individual ministries and helped to draft the necessary legislative texts and establish the respective case law in this area. All these processes resulted in the genuine inclusion of the green sector in the act of public policies making. A good example to this effect is the fact that the overall process of determining, selecting, and mapping out of the territories, which were of the highest conservational value for Bulgaria, by the EU network of protected territories NATURA 2000, was entrusted by the Ministry of the Environment and Waters to several environmental non-governmental organizations such as the *BALKANS* Wild Nature Association, the *Biodiversity* Bulgarian Foundation, the Bulgarian Bird Protection Association, etc.

To a large extent, the transparency introduced at the public deliberations within the framework of the procedures for assessing the environmental impact of projects and initiatives, as well as the control over the decisions made by the respective competent authorities, were the contribution of the green NGOs as well. The latter were the main actors in the process of launching awareness campaigns intended for the country's civic society. They mainly concerned the international environmental standards and policies, which require that citizens should be involved in the decision-making process. The practice of de-

manding public access to information related to environmental problems, which were of public interest, was imposed in an especially visible way during the first decade of the new millennium. The new civic campaigns organized during the next period in the existence of the Green Movement, where a genuine boom of this type of activity could be observed, were based not only on the amassed expert experience, but also on the civic competence of the entire NGO sector at large.²⁸

What should be pointed out here are several typical traits, which summarize the development of the Green Movement at that stage. Over the period under review, it managed to appropriate and integrate a significant capacity in the area of public policies by means of working on numerous specific cases. This capacity was manifested not only on the level of ecological and legal expertise (e.g. in the area of legislation, in the area of legal practice with the large number of won lawsuits, as well as with the numerous administrative opinions and acts, and with the consultative vote NGO representative exercised at different governmental agencies), but also with its specific work with citizens, which helped the Movement also build political and civic skills on top of its ample legal expertise.

The contacts and joint work with the institutions of the European Union on one hand contributed to integrating the EU environmental priorities into the Bulgarian domestic agenda, and on the other – imparted European legitimacy to some of the green organizations. The country's opening to Europe and beyond had another important dimension as well, namely its entry into the system of the international non-governmental environmental community

²⁸ Thus for instance, the citizens from the civic coalition for finding solution to the crisis with waste dumping in Sofia handed in to the newly elected Sofia City Mayor, Boiko Borissov, in December 2005 a copy of the Aarhus Convention (on the civic right to access to information, law-suits, and participation in the decision-making processes whenever environmental issues are concerned) instead of a holiday season greeting card. The Convention has been ratified by Bulgaria, too, and over the last years environmentalists have repeatedly referred to it not only when demanding information, but also in connection with filing in respective lawsuit papers.

and the establishment of affiliates of some of the largest international organizations working for the protection and preservation of nature, e.g. the World Wild Fund (WWF International),²⁹ Bird Life International,³⁰ Friends of the Earth – Bulgaria, the CVS – Bulgaria (Cooperation for Voluntary Service) organization,³¹ etc.

The Green Movement made consistent attempts to work with the local authorities as well, whereby the highest achievements on the local level can be said to be the establishment of relations of trust with the local communities.³²

However, the capacity acquired with communicating on the various institutional levels – international, national, and local – could not possibly make up for the absence of shared vision for common actions among the green organizations. The relationships among them were often conflict-laden, which was partly due to the very logic of the NGO sector functioning. This sector usually has foreign, frequently corporate donors, the organizations struggle for funding and for projects awarded precisely to them in an atmosphere of keen internal “market” competition, a lack of any legal framework capable of regulating the relations between the NGOs and the government, an absence of financial incentives for the burgeoning medium- and small-size business with a view to encouraging donations on a national scale,³³ a lack of civic experience after the long years of total absence of a genuine

civic society, and hence – the shortfall of civic and community solidarity combined with the super-individualism and egocentrism characteristic for the culture of the 1990s generation.

On the other hand, this issue has another dimensions as well, which affects not only the green NGOs, but also the Bulgarian “NGO model” at large.³⁴ The way in which NGOs function stems from an organizational culture that is “imported” or “borrowed” in the Bulgarian environment and it often acquires a corporate nature, which approximates the profile of this sector with that of business organizations and makes it difficult for citizens to distinguish the NGOs as entities functioning for the public good.

Thirdly, it should also be noted that the professional profile acquired by the green organizations over the period under review helped to distance them from the broad public. This profile made them a tolerable partner to the authorities, especially in the numerous cases when the institutional administration could not deprive itself from their expert capacity and international contacts, but it also encapsulated them in the unenviable role of protectors of “birds and grasses”, thus denigrating their actual merits in the public perceptions. Having started as organizations of the civic society, the green NGOs increasingly more often got caught in the trap of corporatism, expert encapsulation, and the “non-politic” neo-liberal lack of principles. All this explains their lack of openness both to civic society and “big” politics alike.

In fact, the green formations functioning within the framework of the party system at that time also rarely worked “hand in hand” with the green NGOs. This is due to the different profiles they inherently possess and the mutual distrust and lack of understanding brought about by their different generational culture – both civic and political, on one hand, and en-

²⁹ The WWF has been functioning in Bulgaria since 1998, and throughout the period of 2006 - 2008 the representative of the organization for Bulgaria was the WWF – Danube-Carpathian Program. In 2008, the WWF registered a separate affiliate in Sofia under the name of World Wild Fund – Bulgaria, <http://www.wwf.bg/>, 29.09.2011.

³⁰ The Bulgarian Bird Protection Society is the largest Bulgarian NGO working for the preservation of the biodiversity, which is the official partner of Bird Life International in Bulgaria. <http://bspb.org>

³¹ CVS - Bulgaria, http://cvs-bg.org/bg_index.shtml), visited on 29.09.2011.

³² A specific case in point is the local community in the municipality of Kresna after the decade long campaign of the *BALKANS* Wild Nature Association against the construction of mini hydroelectric power plants in the Kresna Gorge.

³³ On this subject matter see the exhaustive and very indicative report of the Bulgarian Center for Non-Profit Law released in 2009 and entitled “NGO participation in the decision-making processes”, on its website: <http://www.bcnl.org/bg/articles/883-участие-на-нпо-в-процесите-на-вземане-на-решения-софия-2009>, visited on 29.09.2011.

³⁴ In this connection, see the study made by Vyara Gancheva on the NGO sector in Bulgaria: Gancheva, V., (2007) “NGO Capacities for Sustainable Local and Regional Development” in: *Euro-integration and Sustainable Development*, A. Mantarova, M. Zakhariyeva (editors), Friedrich Ebert Foundation, Institute for Sociology, Sofia.

vironmental, on the other. Actually, this is the most significant trait of the green organizations from the years of transition, which distinguishes them from their “dissident” predecessors. Having started as an opposition to the state with the desire to change the system, which actually created the first autonomous civic structures with their environmental demands, the Green Movement in its NGO form fell under the shadow of the state, on one hand, and – on the other – under the shadow of corporate donors, and thus began to surrender its civic legitimacy.

In nearly two decades, the circle got closed. Both, the widening of the social base of the organizations and their opening to the country’s civic society over the next period were about to prove to be the spring-board, which would make it possible for the green organizations to bring about not only the internal consolidation of the Green Movement, but would open up the prospects for building a “green” political project as well.

Part III: THE GREEN MOVEMENT AS A CIVIC MOVEMENT OF A NEW TYPE OR THE “NEW GREEN WAVE”

The Green Movement within the Post-transition Context : New Challenges, New Issues, New Actors

Civic Green Policy

From Local Campaigns to a Global Change

From a Grassroots Movement to the Establishment of a New Green Party

The instability of the party system and the country’s governance, leading to the swift emergence and rapid “depreciation” of the newly established parties, coupled with – in the broader sense – the crisis of the ideological political projects, which threw wide-open doors to populist and nationalist formations, became the characteristic feature of Bulgarian political life during the first decade of the 21st century. These phenomena accelerated at the end of the transition and were not only a symptom, but also a factor in the broader processes of societal transformation. The

neo-liberal model was imposed as a dominating structural and value-oriented paradigm affecting both economic relations and the political and public life. Bulgaria’s entry into the system of the world globalized economy brought about the further merger of economic and political entities, which had begun as early as the beginning of the country’s transition. These economic and political entities were taking advantage of the weakened regulatory mechanisms on the national and supranational levels in order to “flow into” the global market ocean.

Certainly, the findings mentioned above do not concern Bulgaria alone. The political instability, which stems from the growing distrust concerning the traditional political parties, coupled with the imposition of populism as the political face of the neo-liberal and “free-of-values” ideology, have characterized the situation of the Western democracies both in Europe and outside it in the course of the last few years. In Bulgaria, however, this political framework has specific “East-European” dimensions.

On the social plane, the enforcement of the neo-liberal logic has led to an enhanced process of social and economic stratification. What has been observed is the constantly widening gap between the impoverished strata of the population plus the increasing marginalization of the middle class (the so-called “losers” from the transition), on one hand, and, on the other, the emergence of the thin strata of the super rich (the “winners” from the transition, such as industrial, construction, media, and energy entrepreneurs, often recruited from among the circles of the former State Security officers and collaborators, or people connected with organized crime on the national, regional, and international level),³⁵ the economic interests of whom are guaranteed on the highest political level.

³⁵ These processes are certainly typical for the so-called post-communist transition in all the countries belonging to the former totalitarian system. In this connection see for instance: Holms, L. *Post-Communism - An Introduction* (1997), Cambridge University Press, Cambridge and Bafoil, F. (2006) *Europe Centrale et Orientale: Mondialisation, européanisation et changement social*, Presses Nationales de Sciences Politiques, Paris.

On the political plane, the enforcement of the neo-liberal model has increased the ideological vacuum, which emerged after the disappointment with the two successive waves of mass privatization (in 1989-1990 and 1996-1997) during the so-called decade of transition. The impact on the level of the party system was manifested in the cartelization of the parties and the clientelism in their relationship with the governing majorities. The blurred boundaries between left-wing and right-wing, between liberal and conservative political practices in the governance of the country revealed the growing lack of political principles on the part of the governing elites and consolidated the impression of voters that "all of them are all the same when they come to office".

The domination of economic logic, which had been pursued for more than a decade in the capacity of a "civilizational choice" and a "modernization project", and the entry into the globalized system put the parties in the role of obedient conduits of the vested interests of economic lobbies, the capital of which had no clear origin. These lobbies were often connected with the former totalitarian nomenclature and had emerged at the beginning of the transition as a result of the hurried "mass" privatization. The latter had brought about the coalescence of economic and political structures subjugated to a short-term logic, whereby the former were looking for a quick profit at minimum costs, and the latter were seeking maximum political and economic benefits throughout the duration of their term of office.

In fact, the corporate-monopoly logic of the neo-liberal ideology and practice increasingly more often turned into the total opposite of the ideas and practices of liberalism, whereby in the Bulgarian post-totalitarian conditions this logic rendered meaningless the very idea for any free market initiative. The lack of a "level" start for the economic actors in conditions of a rampant economic and political corruption cannot possibly guarantee equality, despite the fact that the principle of

equality before the law has been enshrined in the new Bulgarian Constitution.³⁶

In the first decade of the 21st century, the now emancipated major economic players, some of whom are notorious figures in the world of organized crime, consolidated the practice of "expanding their influence" by "purchasing" politicians and policies in the form of orders for amendment to legislative acts, purchase of judicial and administrative decisions, positions in the institutions of the local authorities, and a guaranteed access to public procurement. In the latest stage of their development, some of the big economic players are no longer satisfied with their political "screens" in the corridors of power and have opted for direct inclusion in the political life of the country by setting up political formations of their own.³⁷

All these processes impact the state of the natural environment at an exceedingly rapid rate. According to a survey held in 2007, for the 2002-2007 period of time, Bulgaria lost more biodiversity and natural landscape than over all the previous 20 years.³⁸ Within the context of the findings

³⁶ In the decade of the transition, the assets of the Bulgarian communist state were "privatized" within an inner circle of business entities, which were hastily set up by "insiders", who were directed by figures belonging to the communist State Security and managed by criminalized sportsmen – former wrestling champions and favorites of Zhivkov's regime. The draining of enterprises from their assets and the export of capital abroad were accompanied by setting up "cover" companies in off-shore zones, which legitimized the process of dirty money laundering. In this connection see the book of the Bulgarian investigative journalist Christo Christov entitled *"The Empire of Companies Set up Abroad: Establishment, Activities, and the Funds Tapping of the Companies with Bulgarian Stake Abroad 1961-2007"*. Siela, Sofia, 2008.

³⁷ The latest 2009 general and local elections were especially indicative as far as this process is concerned. The newly established LIDER Party (acronym for Liberal Initiative for Democratic European Development) ran the elections and almost made it to Parliament, despite the fact that law-suits for misappropriation of government funds in especially large amounts have been filed against its leader, businessman Christo Kovachky. The latter, who is also the owner of the Bobovdol TPP, had the audacity to ask the government and the Ministry of the Environment and Waters in particular to pay the fine his company owed to the European Commission for having abused the EU environmental standards by failing to meet the deadline for the implementation of sulfur cleaning facilities.

³⁸ See in: "Public Attitudes Concerning the Subject of Environmental Protection in Bulgaria and the Degree of Acceptance of the Green Way of Life – 2007", a study of the *Biodiversity Bulgarian Foundation* and the Institute of Sociology with the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, on the website of the *For the Nature in Bulgaria to Stay Coalition*, <http://forthenature.org/documents/category/54>, visited on 11.11.2011r.

laid out in the paragraph above, the boom of the construction business and tourism, which characterized Bulgarian economic life during the first decade of the 21st century and especially after 2005, opened broad opportunities for businessmen with dubious capital and investment merits. Under the pretext of developing local business, companies with off-shore registrations and shadow capital “invested” in construction sites located in protected territories. This activity was accompanied by wood felling in natural parks and reservations and covering with concrete slabs remarkable natural spots, which were unique in terms of their natural landscape and beauty. These vicious practices, taking place in a number of cases with the assistance of the local, legislative, and judicial authorities, led to the revocation or amendment of the status and coverage of quite a few protected territories. The most conspicuous example is the revoked status of a protected territory of the Strandja Natural Park in 2007, which brought about mass civic protests³⁹ and ultimately resulted in the reinstatement of the previous protected territory status of this park.

Another trend is the purchase at an extremely low cost or the outright embezzlement of strategic state-owned sites or terrains by means of a disadvantageous property exchange. Among the numerous examples that we can mention here is the purchase of a coalmine, which according to the Bulgarian Constitution is the exclusive property of the state, by a Bulgarian “businessman” known to be close to the then authorities. Another wide-spread practice during the term of office of the tri-partite governing coalition set up by the BSP, the MRF⁴⁰, and NMSP⁴¹ (2005-2009 r.) was the disadvantageous exchange of state-

owned forest and sea-coast terrains for private terrains. Apart from the purely financial loss, the state also suffered damages on account of the strongly adverse impact of such exchanges on the natural environment.⁴² And despite the fact that the new GERB government⁴³, which came to power in the summer of 2009, proclaimed that the discontinuation of such exchanges and the punishment of the guilty parties would be one of its government priorities, these practices have not been terminated so far and are even subject to further development.⁴⁴

The new situation has another aspect as well and it concerns the practicing of both – civic and political participation. The discrepancy between the programmatic and ideological party labels and the parties’ actual activity on the political scene, as well as the lack of transparency on the part of the political elites in their relationship with citizens and the corporatization of political life, create the perception of lacking democracy. To a still greater extent this feeling is fed upon the perceived cohesion between the political circles and the criminalized economic environment. These facts result in the deepening distrust in the governmental institutions and bring about the withdrawal from any conventional participation in the political life of the country.

⁴² See in: Stoilova, Roumyana and Francisca Bieri (2010) “Nature Preservation: The Stratified Public Opinion”, the Sociological Issues Journal, 3-4. 2010, p. 227.

⁴³ GERB is the Bulgarian acronym of the party Citizens for European Development of Bulgaria, a centrist political project of the new populist type, headed by Boiko Borissov, former Chief Secretary of the Ministry of Interior at the time when the “tsarist party” NMSII governed the country (2001-2005), and before that time – personal bodyguard of the last party and state leader of the People’s Republic of Bulgaria and head of the totalitarian regime, Todor Zhivkov.

⁴⁴ As early as the beginning of the new government’s term of office, the GERB Party parliamentary faction tried to pass an amendment to the Law on Hunting and Game Preservation, which makes it possible to extend the duration of the hunting season. The Environmental Coalition organized a petition against such amendments, which benefitted mainly the hunting business of one of the GERB Party Members of Parliament. <http://forthenature.org/petitions/11>, visited on 10.10.2011. As far as the legislative initiatives tabled by the new parliamentary majority are concerned, see the publication of the Institute for Modern Politics “Two Years of the GERB Party Term of Office – Clientelism and Erosion of Statehood and Civil Rights”, which describes in detail all cases of lobbyist-inspired amendments to the Bulgarian legislation passed to the detriment of public interest since the beginning of the GERB government’s term of office. <http://www.glasove.com/dve-godini-ot-mandata-na-gerb-klientelizum-i-eroziya-na-durzhavnostta-i-grazhdanskite-prava-14808>, visited on 10.10.2010.

³⁹ In this connection see the tale-telling analysis of Yassen Borislavov, journalist of the “Sega” Daily, concerning the civic campaign in defense of the Strandja Natural Park entitled “Strandja – A Revolt against Ugliness” on the website of the Place for the Future Campaign: <http://placeforfuture.org/archives/153>, visited on 10.10.2011.

⁴⁰ MRF is the acronym of the Movement for Rights and Freedoms, which is better known as “the party of the Turkish ethnic minority” in Bulgaria both among the Western analysts and media and among the Bulgarian public.

⁴¹ National Movement for Stability and Progress, formerly National Movement Simeon II, is a centrist party, which governed the country between 2001 and 2005. Prime Minister of this Cabinet was Simeon Saxe-Coburg-Gotha, son of the last Bulgarian Tzar, Boris III.

The distrust in the party system and – on a larger scale – in the effectiveness and even in the significance and/or senselessness of political representation, shared mainly among the representatives of the so-called middle class (which has been getting increasingly more frustrated in the Bulgarian conditions of “transition” and “post-transition” and has also been affected by mass emigration and an increasingly more visible economic and social marginalization), has come to repulse a considerable number of active citizens from any political involvement. They rather preferred to opt for civic participation as a guarantee for independence, they were more inclined to get involved or support informal and non-institutionalized initiatives, which were considered to be a guarantee for authenticity⁴⁵, and found it hard to accept the usefulness of party participation, and consequently the need for establishing a party or supporting a party in power.⁴⁶ At the same time, the actual democratization of public space and the almost unconditional acceptance of the democratic order as a public project⁴⁷ by the majority of Bulgarian citizens

is another reason for channeling civic energy outside the limits of “traditional” politics.

This context appropriately mirrors the new stage in the development of the Green Movement. Ever since 2005, what has been observed is a boom of environmentalist initiatives in the form of local campaigns, initiative committees, and civic groups. Some of them gradually, and in other cases – quite rapidly, have turned into coalitions, uniting various actors who belong to the civic society. This new stage has brought to the fore new subjects and topics for mobilization and they have been openly manifested in new forms and by new public actors.

The first major civic campaign in this new period was connected with the waste-disposal crisis in the capital city Sofia (2005) and the decision of the Sofia City Municipal Council to introduce a “temporary” strongly polluting technology (bundling waste into bales without any prior separation of hazardous waste) for a period of three years. This decision was passed without any preliminary consultations with the population and infringed several laws, administrative ordinances, and sanitary norms. For the span of a year, the campaign mobilized the people from the locations and settlements most acutely affected by the way “the problem was solved”. People there made all possible attempts to make their concerns public and to work for an appropriate solution to the crisis. They even did not hesitate to go beyond the local and national level and addressed the competent EU institutions – the European Commission, the European Parliament, and the European Court of Justice. The citizens appealed to the EU institutions to exert pressure on the Sofia Municipality to discontinue such hazardous baling, which, under the Bulgarian conditions, was carried out in an absurd way threatening the health of the capital city population.⁴⁸

⁴⁵ In this connection see the results from an in-depth survey on the motivation for civic participation in the Green Movement in the 2005 – 2009 period of time, held by Radosveta Krastanova in: Krastanova, R. (2010) “From Democracy of the Elites to Democracy of Participation? An analysis of the motivation of participants in the environmental movement in Bulgaria” (2005-2009), published in *“Democracy in Bulgaria in the 21st Century”*, Veliko Turnovo, pp. 82-91.

⁴⁶ This finding was confirmed by a recent in-depth survey of the generation within the 18 – 30 age bracket in Bulgaria. The authors see the apolitization of the “new young” as an expression of the “conflict between generations”. According to Ivailo Dichev “There is a grave crisis with representation: the young people are unwilling to delegate their civic actions to parties or formal mediators and prefer to act individually and without any mediation whatsoever.” (Dichev, I., Spassov, O. (2009) *The New Young and the New Media*, The Open Society Institute – Sofia, Sofia, p. 235).

⁴⁷ According to a comparative study in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, held by INTERNATIONAL IDEA (Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance), what prevails in the Bulgarian post-communist society ten years after the onset of its transition are citizens with democratic values and expectations, whereas those whose expectations are for strong governance independent from any democratic limitations are relatively few in number. See on: <http://www.idea.int/>, visited on 29.09.2011. In this connection, the French researcher Dianne Ethier speaks about an “Eastern European paradox” expressed simultaneously in a strong attachment to democracy and a strong dissatisfaction with it. See in: Éthier, D. “Le paradoxe est-européen: attachement et insatisfaction envers la démocratie”, *Transition*, n. 39 (4), nov. 1998.

⁴⁸ See for instance “Environmental Organizations: The Mayor Must Shoulder the Responsibility for the Solid Waste Dumping”, http://old.bluelink.net/zero-waste/camp_opinions.shtml?x=8531, visited on 08.10.2011.

In the course of the campaign, it was established that the decision to bale wastes had a complicated preliminary history. The company, which had won the public procurement order, was owned by a municipal councilor who was close to the former Sofia city mayor. The capital city had neither a strategy, nor any organized system for waste management and treatment of wastes. To date, the only legitimate solid waste disposal depot of the city dates back to the time of socialism and its capacity is almost depleted. In the summer of 2005, the depot was closed down, but later on it had to be reopened, because the city had neither a solid waste processing plant, nor was there a project for its construction at that time. It is then that the Sofia City Municipal Council came up with the decision that baling waste was the only outcome from the situation.

The decision provoked protests among the local population, which resulted in the second closing down of the solid waste dumping ground. An official announcement was made that the capital city was in a "crisis situation" and that a "new" technology – solid waste baling – would be implemented. *Per se*, this technology is applied very rarely and only for "packaging" non-hazardous separated solid waste. But as the city had neither a system of separate waste collection, nor a depot for hazardous waste, all the waste was baled "together". The choice of the new technology made it incumbent upon Parliament to start amending the respective legislation, as the decision of the Municipality contradicted several laws and secondary legislative acts. Thus, amendments were made to the Environmental Law, the Urbanization Law, and the Waste Management Law. At the same time, however, waste was baled on open sites in three boroughs of the capital city without any construction permits, without the mandatory sanitary distances and control, as well as without the mandatory expert assessment on the impact such waste baling had on the environment.

Despite the tactical move of the Municipality to pit the different civic groups against each other (following the principle of "each

one must keep his/her waste in his/her own yard") and the attempts of the media to instigate "proper Sofioters" against "the locals from the outskirts" with the argument that the generated waste had to be dumped "somewhere" after all, what emerged was a serious and united civic coalition, which for the stretch of a year continued to raise the issue both before the competent authorities in the country and the EU and before the citizens of the capital city at various public events. One of the lasting results from the campaign was the "admission" of the civic groups engaged with the solution of the issue to the proceedings of the Sofia City Municipal Council. In February 2006, after a several-month-long civic pressure, the Municipal Committee on the Environment and Waters came up with the official decision to include the civic groups in the decision-making process concerning the disposal of the solid waste generated by the capital city.

The campaign was not merely an expression of the public discontent against the flagrant abuse of law. It also managed to attract the public attention throughout the country to the increasingly more serious problem with the storage and management of solid waste in the larger towns. It brought to the fore the thorny issue about the relationships between the "Waste Mafia" (a widely spread phenomenon, especially in the countries of Southern Europe) and the administration of Sofia Municipality.⁴⁹ Besides, this campaign put the debate about the choice of a solid waste treatment technology on the agenda of both the mass media and the Municipality and played the role of an "enlightener" of the public opinion by making people aware of the EU environmental standards in this area. This civic campaign also managed to lay the foundations

⁴⁹ For quite a long time, the waste collection and waste transportation in Sofia was usurped by a company, which had been awarded the concession for this activity, namely the "Wolf" Company, owned by the notorious "shadow" businessman, Roumen Gaitansky, nicknamed 'The Wolf'.

of a public debate at the Sofia City Municipality about the need for strategic planning of the waste management process.

At the end of 2005 and the beginning of 2006, the coalition *Zero Waste* was set up within the framework of the waste disposal campaign. It included veteran environmentalists, such as the *Ecoglasnost* National Movement, waste management experts from the NGO sector (from *For the Earth* Environmental Association in particular), civic associations and initiative committees of the affected boroughs, such as the Association for the Preservation of Life and Health of the Inhabitants of Sukhodol (where the waste disposal depot is located), the *Kremikovtzi* Environmental Association, committees of the affected by waste baling settlements, such as Eco Trebich and Eco Mramor, the initiative committee named *For Cleanliness and Rule of Law* from the Strelbishte Sofia borough, and other informal civic groups from the city and the region, such as the *Novi Khan – an European Settlement* Association. The coalition tabled a proposal for the Municipality to pass a strategy for the integrated solid waste management meant to reduce the need for open site waste dumping to a minimum. The strategy envisaged the reduction of waste at the source by separate collection, waste recycling, repeated waste utilization, and the elaboration of a strategic environmental assessment subject to public deliberation, which had to comply with the national and EU legislations.⁵⁰

The capital city had no facilities for solid waste processing and harmless solid waste disposal at that time and what ultimately happened, after several warnings issued by the European Commission and the civic pressure exerted on the local authorities, was that the baled solid waste gradually started

to “leave” the boundaries of the Sofia Municipality by being transported to the country in order to be disposed in appropriate land-fill sites there, thus contributing to the expansion of the problem on a national level.⁵¹ The danger for punitive sanctions imposed on Bulgaria by the European Commission on account of the lack of a waste treatment system operating in Sofia continues to face the country to date.⁵²

The increased “investment” pressure on the Bulgarian Black Sea coast and the rapid “entombment in concrete” of a large part of the Black Sea resorts (following the example of the Spanish coastal line) provoked the emergence of the first significant civic campaign for the defense of the Black Sea coast and its beach line. The campaign under the name of “*Let Us Save Irakli*” began as a civic initiative of a group of citizens for the preservation of one of the few remaining “non-urbanized” beaches, namely the beach line in the locality of Irakli-Emine, a part of the zone belonging to NATURA 2000 European network. Within two months only, the initiative turned into a large-scale national campaign⁵³ not only in Bulgaria.⁵⁴ The campaign unfolded mainly in Sofia and

⁵¹ Nonetheless, the waste baling was not discontinued, only the storage of the bales was terminated on just one of the three storage sites located between the Trebich Borough and the village of Mramor.

⁵² To the present day, Sofia has neither any waste treatment plant, nor any modern solid waste disposal depot for safe waste storage. The proposal of the *Zero Waste* Civic Coalition for the elaboration of an integrated waste management strategy was turned down by the Sofia City Municipal Council and the municipal administration. The high environmental standards of the European Commission, the disagreements between the central and municipal authorities concerning “who is to blame for the crisis”, and the internal in-fighting at the Municipality itself about the choice of a given technology have deferred the solution to the waste treatment problem to a dim and unforeseeable future. And yet, due to a large extent to the civic activities, the Sofia City Municipality introduced the method of separate waste collection in 2005.

⁵³ 6000 subscriptions in defense of Irakli and the last non-urbanized wild beaches were gathered within 24 hours only. For further information see the *Let Us Save Irakli* website: http://daspasimirakli.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=74&Itemid=18, visited on 28.09.2011.

⁵⁴ See “Bulgaria for Second-hand Use – the 14th of October. Thousands against the Construction Sites, which Are Killing Nature”, a press-release of the *Let Us Save Irakli* civic group, on: http://daspasimirakli.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=80&Itemid=18, 28.09.2011.

⁵⁰ See the journalist publication entitled “Civic Organizations Insist on Discontinuing Waste Baling and Introducing the Zero Waste Strategy in the Capital City” from June 13th 2006 on: <http://old.bluelink.net/zero-waste/barometer.shtml>, visited on 29.09.2011.

in several large towns, such as Rousse, Stara Zagora, Varna, Blagoevgrad, Plovdiv, but also abroad – the support for the campaign in Amsterdam was connected to a large extent with the sizeable immigrant lobby there. The civic group *Let Us Save Irakli* managed to attract to its side not only the support of the public opinion. It also managed to exert pressure over the competent authorities – in this particular case the Ministry of the Environment and Waters, which issued a two-year-long moratorium on all construction works in this locality.⁵⁵

However, the campaign rapidly went beyond its local dimension of defending just one beach line and set in motion an entire wave of civic activity. As a result, at the beginning of 2007, representatives of the new civic groups and the Green NGO sector handed in a petition to the Bulgarian and European Parliaments, signed by 50,000 Bulgarian citizens, with the demand for the Bulgarian government to make a commitment that it would protect and preserve the Black Sea natural wealth and would elaborate a governmental strategy to this effect. The petition expressed the desire and determination of citizens for the protection of the Black Sea coast to become part and parcel of clearly defined national priorities.⁵⁶

Over the next two years, the intensity of the campaign grew, and so did the number of cases subject to campaigning. The *Citizens for Rila* civic group launched a campaign against the extension of ski-runs in the protected territory of the Rila Mountain National Park and against the project for the construction of an eighth artificial lake⁵⁷ next to the emblematic Seven Rila Lakes. Subsequently, the campaign expanded outside Bulgaria as well in the form of

an international *France-Rila* civic network, which was coordinated by a French citizen. Before growing into a civic association for the protection of green areas and the integrity of urban environment, the *Citizens for Green Sofia* initiative started as reaction against the illegal construction of a petrol station and the felling of centuries-old trees in certain boroughs of the capital city. For its part, the *Zero Waste* coalition began as a reaction to the solid waste disposal crisis in Sofia. All these and many other campaigns contributed to tracing and exposing new environmental topics, such as: sustainable urban development, town-planning and infrastructure issues, conservation of natural wealth and landscapes threatened by extinction in the form of “lands for the future generations”, bio-agriculture and the genetically modified organisms (GMO), food safety, etc.

The specific cases showed a trend to grow larger in scale and to become more generalized, thus making it possible for the green organizations to hold a public debate on a number of significant topics, which had remain unnoticed or had been ignored by the representatives of the governmental institutions. These topics include: the relationship between public and private interests in the process of managing natural wealth and resources, the rampant corruption practices when political decisions are made, the need for a strategic approach and planning in the management of towns and smaller settlements, the need to overcome the clash between economic development and environmental protection, etc. The interactions with the governing institutions improved, they grew in number and acquired new forms. For the first time since the beginning of the democratic changes and the political crisis in the winter of 1996 – 1997, the Bulgarian public environment was witnessing massive civic protests, which often went beyond the legal and conventional forms of manifestation.

⁵⁵ See “The Ban on Construction in Irakli Was Extended by Another Year”, information from News.bg published on the website of the *Let Us Save Irakli* civic group: http://daspasimirakli.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=125&Itemid=17, visited on 8.09.2011.

⁵⁶ <http://www.forthenature.org>, visited on 29.09.2009.

⁵⁷ This artificial lake is rather a toxic pool for artificial snow.

Alongside the rallies and street demonstrations, increasingly more frequent traffic and road blocks were being organized by means of the so-called flash-mobs⁵⁸ or instant mobilization of supporters, as well as other ad-hoc thematic demonstrations, and other unconventional manifestations in front of various public institutions, such as the Parliament, the Council of Ministers, different ministries, municipal councils, etc. The protest policies often led to prompt and more effective political results than the numerous lawsuits filed in court and the partial success in certain emblematic cases,⁵⁹ the thousands of applications for access to information, the lobbying efforts at the level of the political elite, and the pressure exerted during municipal and parliamentary committee sessions.

The mass protests against the decision of the Supreme Administrative Court, which repealed the status of a protected territory of the Strandja Natural Park in the summer of 2007, made the judiciary review its decision. This brought about a new legislative amendment guaranteeing that the status of protected territories in Bulgaria would no longer be subject to appeals. The eight-month-long protest actions of the NATURA 2000 civic campaign in front of the building of the Council of Ministers with the demand for accepting the protected territory network in its full coverage of 34 percent of the territory of the country, made the execu-

tive power give up its intention to "exclude" a sizeable portion of the protected territories from the network, the purpose of which was to benefit private investment interests. This environmentalist campaign enjoys the highest recognition rate among the general public to date, which testifies to the fact that the Bulgarian citizens have proven to be best acquainted with the NATURA 2000 European network on the level of the entire European Union.⁶⁰ The protest actions also enjoy a broad public support to date, which is confirmed by numerous public opinion representative surveys.⁶¹

The environmentalists not only feel the pulse of public opinion, but they also influence it with their fact-finding and analytical work in support of the activities connected with the preservation of nature. The surveys testify to the high approval rate for the environmental campaigns on the part of the majority of Bulgarian citizens who recognize in these protests the willingness to protect public interests. This makes certain analysts talk about "the surge of a green wave in Bulgaria",⁶² which gives vent to the broad public attitudes to environmental activities at large.

⁵⁸ From the English coinage "flash mob", or instantaneous mobilization. This is a new form of civic disobedience influenced by the wide penetration of cell telephones and the Internet. In essence, this is a mass gathering of large groups of people at key public places aimed at manifesting protest or defending a certain cause, which is held after a massive SMS message sending or by sending blog and social networks messages via the Internet. It is precisely in this way that on June 29th 2007 Sofia citizens blocked one of the busiest places in the capital city – the Tzarigrdsko Shosse Boulevard at the Eagles Bridge, in order to express their protest against the decision of the Supreme Administrative Court to revoke the status of protected territory of the Strandja Natural Park only an hour after the news about the decision broke out.

⁵⁹ In the lawsuit on the Irakli case, the court decision was issued in 2011, after 5-year-long continuous legal proceedings. The decision was in favor of terminating the construction works of the Swiss Properties off-shore investment company. See the website of the *Let Us Save Irakli* civic group: http://daspasimirakli.org/index.php?option=com_content&ask=view&id=366&Itemid=1.

⁶⁰ A survey on the attitude of Europeans towards biodiversity, held by Gallup International in November 2007 within the framework of the Eurobarometer Surveys, indicates that Bulgaria ranks first in terms of awareness of the NATURA 2000 network: Thus for instance, 80% of the Bulgarians have heard and as much as 45% know what the NATURA 2000 European environmental network of protected territories means. http://forthenature.org/upload/documents/no-date/Eurobarometer_Biodiversity.pdf, 29.09.2011.

⁶¹ According to a representative public opinion survey held by the Institute of Sociology with the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, 87% of the respondents support the protests for terminating the construction works in Irakli, 86.7% - in the Strandja Natural Park, 75.1% are against the construction of ski-lifts in the area of the Seven Rila Lakes, and 73.1% and 72.1% respectively are against the construction of new ski zones in the Rhodopes and Pirin mountains. As a whole, these high levels of awareness prove the effectiveness of the activities targeted at raising the awareness of the public. See Stoilova, R. and F. Bieri, (2010) op.cit., p. 246.

⁶² See for instance the conclusions of the opinion poll survey entitled "Public attitudes on the subject matter of nature preservation in Bulgaria", held jointly by the *Biodiversity* Bulgarian Foundation and the Institute of Sociology with the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences for the period 15.10.-26.10.2007, as well as the "Survey on the public attitudes concerning nature preservation in Bulgaria", held by the Alpha Research Opinion Poll Agency to order by the WWF Environmental Organization on the website of the *For Nature in Bulgaria to Stay* Coalition, <http://forthenature.org/documents/category/54>, visited on 11.11.2011 r.

However, the success of the protest actions, which has been brought to fore far too often, actually demeans the political results achieved by “conventional” activities. In fact, the Green Movement has scored public success and political results by combining protest actions, which pinpoint the attention of the public opinion on existing problems, with expert opinions and demands for legislative measures formulated by the green NGOs, coupled with civic pressure “from the inside” in the form of filing in lawsuit petitions, participation in municipal and parliamentary debates, and tabling legislative initiatives.

It is in this period precisely that a new characteristic feature of the Green Movement emerged, namely the increasingly more frequent practicing of direct action initiatives, realized in the form of unconventional protests, happenings, blockades, etc. and by means of well-established forms of direct democracy, such as the handing of petitions,⁶³ massive filing of application for access to information,⁶⁴ summoning of local referenda, and an enhanced striving for direct decision-making by civic participation in the functioning of the local authorities. This for instance, in 2007, the Municipality of the town of Novi Khan decided to denounce the storage of radioactive waste on the territory of the municipality by summoning a referendum initiated by the civic association called *Novi Khan – European settlement*.⁶⁵ In 2010, civic initiative committees and associations united under the formula of “Union of the Sofia City Civic Associations and Citizens for Green Sofia”

took part in the elaboration of one of the parts of the New Town Plan of the capital city, namely the part concerning the green areas of the city.

At the end of 2006 and the beginning of 2007, the wave of civic campaigns and the entrance of new civic actors in the green initiatives resulted in the rapprochement of the green NGO sector and the various civic initiatives. The enlargement of the social base of the Green Movement was crowned by the establishment of the *For Nature in Bulgaria to Stay* Coalition. It united the best renowned organizations from the time of the country's transition, such as *Green Balkans*, the *BALKANI* Wild Nature Association, the *Biodiversity* Bulgarian Foundation, *For the Earth* Environmental Association, the *Natural Fund* Association, The Association of Parks in Bulgaria, alongside with branches of world environmental organizations, such as the WWF – Danube-Carpathian Program, the Bulgarian Bird Protection Society, and informal civic groups and new civic associations from the “second green wave”, such as the civic groups of *Let Us Save Irakli*, *Let us Save Strandja Mountain*, *Citizens for Rila*, the *Eco Rila – Samokov* Association, the *White Coast – Balchik* Association, the *UNESCO Students' Club* for Ecology and Sustainable Development with the St. Kliment Ochridsky Sofia University, and also educational and cultural initiatives, such as the *Future Now* People's Chitalishte⁶⁶, the Ecology Information and Training Center, as well as research and academic units, such as the 2001 Phytoscenology Bulgarian Society, the respective institutes of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, plus tourist organizations such as the Bulgarian Association for Alternative Tourism (BAAT).⁶⁷

The enlargement of the Green Movement in the direction of civic participation was accompanied by the democratization of the organizational procedures, i.e. it was marked by its openness to informal civic actors (the coalition itself has not

⁶³ Among the most successful conventional forms of action are the petitions containing mass subscriptions in defense of the Bulgarian Black Sea coast (50,000 subscribers), and for the defense of Rila Mountain (170,000 subscriptions, out of which more than 70,000 are on a paper carrier, and more than 95,000 have been posted on-line). Both petitions were filed in the Bulgarian and European Parliaments. See the website of the *For Nature in Bulgaria to Stay* Coalition, <http://forthenature.org/petitions>, visited on 11.11.2011r.

⁶⁴ With the advanced penetration of the Internet and on-line communications, these forms of gathering public support have marked a significant surge.

⁶⁵ For further detail see <http://ggeo-events.blogspot.com/2008/02/blog-post.html>, visited on 09.10.2011, and http://www.bgpetition.com/phrao-novi_han/index.html, visited on 09.10.2011

⁶⁶ Chitalishte is a centuries-old cultural center dating back to the period of Bulgarian Revival in the 18th century, which is typical for both larger and smaller Bulgarian settlements, providing facilities for educational and cultural activities and combining a rich library, reading room, training and performance space.

⁶⁷ See the website of the *For Nature in Bulgaria to Stay* Coalition, <http://forthenature.org/members>, visited on 11.11.2011

been registered as a legal entity) and the consensual principle in the decision-making process. From 2006 to 2009, the coalition was the most significant actor pursuing the “green” subject matter and imposing it on the political agenda of the country. To a large extent this was due to the variety of instruments for political impact, which the coalition used to employ. But what played an equally important role for the success of this coalition was the flexible democratic formula of making internal decisions. Last but not least, what merits mention here concerning the achievements of the coalition is the public support it enjoyed owing to the broad thematic scope of the campaigns and the varied profiles and orientations of the participating organizations. The achievements of the coalition are also largely due to the fact that the new civic groups managed to bring closer together the three “green” generations in Bulgaria, by making them overcome the long-standing differences and contradictions that used to divide them before.

The joint work between experts and citizens, both in the capacity of environmentalists, resulted in improving the quality of interactions with the governmental authorities and with the broad public simultaneously. The logic of continuity, which was established as a leading principle in the functioning of the coalition, contributed to the reception of its green messages by broader public circles and resulted in the greater durability of the results it achieved. The coalition managed to win the confidence of the citizenry, a testimony to which are the subscriptions for the protection of Bulgarian nature and the support they received by tens of thousands and even hundreds of thousands of citizens, coupled with the high public recognition rate and the approval⁶⁸ for the coalition's actions during several of the key campaigns it

held throughout this period.⁶⁹ On the other hand, *For Nature in Bulgaria to Stay* coalition managed to table legislative initiatives and motions for amendments to several legislative acts, such as the Environmental Law, the Law on Forests, the Law on Hunting, the Law on Protected Territories, the Law on Genetically Modified Organisms (GMO), etc.⁷⁰ Thus the coalition succeeded in affecting governmental decisions on the national, regional and local level, and created precedents in the Bulgarian case law (e.g. the lawsuit concerning the Strandja Natural Park).⁷¹

The wave of green civic activity also improved the intensity and quality of interaction with the EU institutions. As a result of the numerous signals for infringements of the environmental legislation sent to the European Commission, and the petitions with signatures of hundreds of thousands of Bulgarian citizens (only the subscription for the protection of Rila Mountain, for instance, contained 170,000 signatures), which were handed in to the National Assembly and the European Parliament, and due to the supranational networks set up to the purpose of exerting pressure, the Bulgarian Green Movement enjoyed and is enjoying an increasingly better visibility on the European level.

In 2006, in result of the civic campaigns connected with the waste management crisis and the problem with the entrepreneurial overdevelopment of resort localities, the European Commissioner, Stavros Dimas, paid a special

⁶⁸ According to a representative opinion poll survey held in 2009 by the Institute of Sociology with the Bulgarian Academy of Science, to order of the *Biodiversity* Bulgarian Foundation, as much as 83.1% of the respondents agree that the environmental organizations guarantee the preservation of nature, and only 16.9% are of the opinion that they hinder economic development. The pollsters interpret this result as a mark of substantial public confidence in these organizations. See Stoilova, R. and F. Bieri, (2010) op.cit., p. 242.

⁶⁹ For further information on this significant phase from the development of the Green Movement see: Peter Kanev, in Kanev, P. (2009) “In Search for a Place for the Future”, published in: Kanev, P. and Krastanova, R. (editors), *A Place for the Future. Year One*, Sofia Civic Association – Shtastlivetz, Sofia, pp. 16-58, and Krastanova, R. (2008) “Civic Society and Environmentalism in Bulgaria within the Context of European Values” in *Civic Society and European Values*, a collection of acts from the Conference under the same name, the Society of Solidarity Foundation and the Jean Jaures Foundation, Sofia, pp. 179-194.

⁷⁰ <http://forthenature.org/documents/category/34>, visited on 11.11.2011.

⁷¹ For greater detail see the publications “The Bulgarian Law-court Issued a Final Decision Proclaiming that the “Zlatna perla (Golden Pearl) Complex in the Strandja Natural Park is Illegal”, on the website of the *For Nature in Bulgaria to Stay* Coalition, <http://forthenature.org/news/669>, as well as “Strandja Mountain Remains a Natural Park”, <http://forthenature.org/news/74>, visited on 10.11.2011.

visit to Bulgaria, one of his major objectives being to meet the representatives of the civic sector.⁷² The official visit of representatives of the Committee on Petitions with the European Commission in October 2008 was provoked by the numerous signals for abuses to the environmental legislation of the country, but above all its major aim was to get acquainted with the success of the civic campaign in defense of the NATURA 2000 network in Bulgaria, which ended up with the victory of the environmentalists, when the Council of Ministers made the decision to reinstate the territories excluded from the network (located mainly in the mountainous and Black Sea resorts of the country), thus restoring the initial coverage of 34% protected territories as substantiated by the scientists and experts in the first place.⁷³

Since 2009 the Green Movement has entered a new phase of development and expansion of its social base, which brought about the most successful green civic campaign to date under the slogan of "Bulgaria – a zone free of GMO", which was directed against the liberalization of the regime concerning growing crops based on genetically modified organisms in Bulgaria. The campaign was launched at the end of 2009 in connection with the amendments to the GMO Law and forced the government and Parliament to pass a strongly restrictive law, which – on the basis of the wide coverage of protected territories within the scope of the NATURA 2000 network in Bulgaria – in practice makes it impossible to grow GMO crops on the territory of the country, at the same time providing for very strict rules with

respect to their commercialization.⁷⁴ This legislative decision is even more significant within the context of the liberalization of the policy concerning GMOs, which has been promoted by the European Commission on the territory of the European Union over the past few years.

The most remarkable feature of this process, however, is the broad coalition formula of the campaign, which started as an initiative of *BG Mama*, the internet e-forum of Bulgarian mothers, but gradually came to involve a broad circle of civic and political actors, such as industrial and agricultural branch organizations (the *Bio-products* Bulgarian Association, the National Beekeeping Association, the Regional Council of Agrarian Cooperatives – town of Veliko Turnovo, the Association of Chefs in Bulgaria, etc.), the *Greens* Political Party, the *For Nature in Bulgaria to Stay* Association, the *Bioselena* Foundation, the Foundation for the Environment and Bio-agriculture, an Initiative Committee of Parents and Citizens, students' and professional clubs, scientists, and informal civic groups.

What is also important to note here is the fact that within the framework of this broad civic coalition, the representatives of the *Greens* Political Party preferred to make their public appearances in the capacity of representatives of the citizenry (i.e. of the green organizations they initially originated from), or in the capacity of experts, but not as representatives of a political party. Undoubtedly, this conduct was dictated by the desire to attract as much public support as possible and qualified the underlying supra-party and universal message of the coalition, namely that the competitiveness of Bulgarian agriculture within the boundaries of

⁷² Stavros Dimas declared: "Despite the fact that Bulgaria occupies only 2.5% of the overall territory of the European Union, this country is home to nearly 70% of the protected bird species in Europe and about 40% of the European protected habitats. This exceptional natural biodiversity must be protected, as the legislative protection is the only secure way of preserving the future economic and social welfare. What I expect from Bulgaria is to coordinate its legislations with the EU requirements and – most importantly – to ensure its proper enforcement in the practice of real-life cases." See this on the website of the *Let Us Save Irakli* Campaign: http://daspasimirakli.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=338&Itemid=1, visited on 29.09.2011.

⁷³ "The Council of Ministers Enlarged NATURA", see on the website of the *For Nature in Bulgaria to Stay* Coalition, <http://forthenature.org/news/1969>, visited on 11.11.2011.

⁷⁴ The amendments to the most contentious Article 80 of the GMO Law read that "a ban is imposed on growing and freeing GMO in the protected territories and protected zones of NATURA 2000, and also at distances shorter than 30 km from their boundaries, at distances shorter than 10 km from stationary beehives, at distances shorter than 7 km from agricultural lands subject to biological way of raising crops and farm produce, as well as at distances smaller than those enumerated in Appendix 2 for areas subject to traditional methods of crop growing". 144 MPs voted for the text formulated in this way, only 1 voted against, and 3 MPs abstained. For further detail see: "The Citizens Have Won a Victory in the Battle with GMO", website of the *For Nature in Bulgaria to Stay* Coalition, <http://forthenature.org/news/1413>, visited on 10.11.2011.

the European Union should be promoted by developing biologically untainted crops and this objective should enter the governance priorities of all political parties.

The civic reaction to the GMO case combined several new aspects, which the political and economic actors felt obliged to take into consideration increasingly more from that point on. **Firstly**, this reaction was a testimony to the heightened sensitivity of consumers and the presence of environmental culture among certain strata of the population.⁷⁵ **Secondly**, it meant that the latest environmental issues had already been fully accepted within the public space – starting from the food safety problems and ending with the ethical dimension of genetic engineering – i.e. issues questioning the direction, in which technological advance was developing. **Thirdly**, the public reaction is an expression of the willpower for stricter norms and rules to be imposed on the market in the direction of an enhanced regulation on the national and supranational level. **Last but not least**, the public support for the campaign is an expression of national cultural predispositions and of a deeply rooted agricultural tradition.⁷⁶ The unprecedented high public approval of the “Bulgaria – a zone free of GMO” coalition indicated that should the Greens decide to get permanently committed to this cause, this was one of the areas in which the Green Movement

and the green parties would be able to enjoy an increasingly larger public support.

In the newest stage of its development that far, the Green Movement revealed some new characteristics, such as:

- **First**, it put new topics on the public agenda and offered a new interpretation of already existing topics, and after a succession of effective campaigns these topics became an integral part of the country's political agenda.
- **Second**, the Green Movement emphasized the need for making environmental protection a national, governmental, and public priority. This is testified by both the numerous successful campaigns with genuine political results (such as legislative amendments, legislative initiatives, judicial decisions, the integration of the environmentalist subject matter into the public policies), and the impressive public response these campaigns generated.

At the same time, contrary to the prevailing economic and market-oriented logic, supported by the institutions of power as well, in the public environment the Green Movement defended the belief that economic and social prosperity go through the preservation of nature and the quality of the environment. In this sense, it proved to be a major actor tracing the philosophy of sustainable development, which for several decades now has been exerting its impact on the overall European approach to politics, not only in the area of environmentalism.

- **Third**, the Green Movement facilitated the emergence of a new type of civic and political actors who are molded “from below”. These actors stay their autonomy with respect to the government authorities, and declare their right to exercise their direct “civic” politics and to impact the decision-making processes without being institutionalized or formally recognized by the Establishment. In this sense, such is the response of the new type of political actors to the deepening democratic deficit of

⁷⁵ In one of the few systematic representative public opinion surveys concerning the relationship between environmental protection and environmental value attitudes in Bulgaria, Roumyana Stoilova and Francisca Bieri found out that the “GMO case” in Bulgaria “certainly marks a new stage in the development of environmental culture”. See Stoilova, R. and F. Bieri (2010), op. cit., p. 228. In the same connection see the conclusions of Anna Mantarova in: Mantarova, A. (2010) “Dimensions of Environmental Culture”, Mantarova, A. (editor), *Environmental Culture in a Society Undergoing Modernization*, Sofia, pp. 81-121.

⁷⁶ It is appropriate to mention here that from a societal point of view up to 1944 Bulgarian society was an agrarian society with traditional agrarian culture, which had a considerable impact on the specificity of the political life in the country after Bulgaria won its national independence in 1878. The agrarian parties enjoyed an exceedingly wide support among the population, a testimony to which is the governance of the Bulgarian Agrarian People's Union (BAPU) of Alexander Stamboliysky in the 1920s. During the totalitarian regime, despite the nationalization of all farmlands, the BAPU continued its existence (though in rather a bureaucratic way) and even enjoyed a certain amount of autonomy with respect to the governing Bulgarian Communist Party.

the institutions of power, and at the same time, this is the way in which they contribute to the democratic renewal of the public and political life in the country.

- **Fourth**, the enlarged social base of the Green Movement contributed to the process of consolidation of the green sector, turning it into a genuine “environmentalist community” of shared principles and values – a fact, which has unanimously been accepted by the representatives of the Movement as one of its highest achievements at that time.
- **Last but not least**, the Green Movement succeeded in taking the environmental problems out of their local – and even out of their national – context, thus making them part and parcel of the European agenda of themes and policies, and the NATURA 2000 civic campaign is an appropriate example to this effect. The campaign under the motto of “Bulgaria – a zone free of GMO” testifies to the ability of the Bulgarian Green Movement not only to get integrated within the European environmental context, but also to set up precedents at the level of the European Union. Campaigns such as *France-Rila* indicate the availability of a capacity for raising international civic support. The recently established Balkan Anti-Nuclear Coalition (BANC), which was initiated by the *Greens* Political Party, is a yet another step in this process of supranational enlargement.⁷⁷ New initiatives, such as the “Climate Coalition – Bulgaria” established in 2005, which was especially active after the 2009 Climate Summit in Copenhagen, placed the environmental activity of the greens in Bulgaria within the context of the global environmental challenges.⁷⁸

One of the most interesting characteristics of the Green Movement, however, is the fact that it managed to combine the formula of non-party and supra-party civic participation, creating at the same time prerequisites for the emergence of an authentic green party. The new party of the *Greens*, which was set up in 2007, made a broad referral to its genetic link with the Movement. It is true that both on the leadership level and the level of supporters and grass-root party members, the party drew support from the ranks of the Green Movement. It is only logical that the registration of the party coincided with the peak period of the booming “second green wave”. The future will show whether the Movement and the *Greens* Party would prove capable of co-existing and feed on each other, as well as whether the *Greens* would live up to the achievements of the Movement by managing to impose civic demands on the agenda of Bulgarian politics “from within” – demands, such as the assertion of the principles of the law governed state, equality before the law, which guarantees the protection of the public good, a change in the current system in the direction of an increasingly expanded civic participation, and – in the broader sense – a demand for the system change of the current Establishment.

Despite the enumerated achievements of the Green Movement, the situation with its constituent organizations, however, indicated a number of problems. Some of them concern **the formal level** and make up **the first type of problems**. On one hand, the fact that the new civic initiatives upheld their status of informality created prerequisites for greater autonomy and flexibility in the functioning of the Movement, whereby the civic organizations of a new type were less dependent and hard to manipulate by the Establishment and its structures. On the other hand, however, this peculiarity created conditions for instability and – in a number of cases – for unpredictability of the campaigns and their outcome.

Coalitions and campaigns generate public energy and a large amount of civic support, but often they also create an impression of

⁷⁷ The coalition was established on March 26th 2011 and encompasses green parties and civic organizations from Bulgaria, Macedonia, Serbia, Romania, and Turkey. See further information about this coalition on the website of the *Greens* Party: <http://www.zelenite.bg/3654>, visited on 10.10.2011.

⁷⁸ You can find further information about this initiative on the website of the coalition: <http://www.climatebg.org/>.

ephemeral formations, which is not always necessarily true. Because these formations lack a stable organizational structure and a constant pool of participants, an outsider may remain with the impression that they disintegrate and “vanish” once the brief period of mobilization is over. The internal links between formal organizations and informal groups, which have a cumulative and – in the final account – a durable impact on the process of consolidation and enlargement of the Movement, are invisible for the naked eye in the short-term period of time. The qualitative results brought about by quantitative accumulations take time, which is often incompatible with the dynamic nature of the “political agenda”, as it requires a fast decision-making process and immediate effects on the level of political results. At times, this characteristic trait of the coalitions and campaigns makes them invisible for the public eye and also makes it very hard indeed for their participants to be recognized as serious partners and opponents to the authorities. The conventional mass media, or the so-called “fourth estate”, contribute to their “invisibility” as well.

And – to top it all – the modesty, which the coalitions and campaigns consciously try to impersonate, often harms their initiatives. Beyond the causes they defend, the broad public rarely connects them with specific names of organizations and personalities (whereas this connection was very strong in the dissident period of the Movement). All this hinders the presence of a more lasting positive reverberation in the public space and, as a consequence, hinders the wider public support for the initiatives of the Green Movement.

The second type of problems is of an **essential nature**. The fact that the organizations belong to different “green” generations, as well as the differences in the civic and political culture not only between the organizations, but very often within themselves, generate problems concerning the work done among partners. These problems are connected both with the form of joint action and

the forms of interaction with the representatives of the Establishment, which is testified by a number of campaigns held by the environmentalist coalition. These contradictions prove incapable of enhancing the public image of the Movement, because they rather taint it and undermine its authority.

The above mentioned differences also had an impact on the polar antagonism concerning the debate on the need for establishing a green party. Such a party could hardly rely on success without the support of the Green Movement, which would have actually spawned it. Nonetheless, over the last several years it seemed that the centrifugal forces within the Movement had taken the upper hand. This was largely due to the principled opposition to the establishment of the *Greens* Party within the circles of the environmentalist community. They also opposed to the input of a serious amount of human resources in the party building effort, which would have brought about the partial “blood loss” within the Movement. In this way, right after its establishment, the *Greens* Party was placed in the difficult situation not only to have to prove its capacity to generate public support, but also to prove that it was a truly authentic anti-system party by managing to change the system without becoming a part of it.⁷⁹

Part IV. THE GREEN MOVEMENT AND THE GREEN PARTIES

Parties of the Change and Parties of the Status-quo

The green parties in Bulgaria, much like the environmental parties in the “old” Western democracies, are largely the product of the Green Movement evolution. Some of them have emerged “from below”, from the civic society itself, in result of substantial experience and the desire for an in-depth social change

⁷⁹ This means that the *Greens* Party as an anti-system party, attempting to change the system without becoming a part of it, must do so without the financial resources, which officially or unofficially, covertly or overtly, usually fund the parties in Bulgaria

achieved by political instruments. However, the distinctions between the Bulgarian greens and their Western counterparts lie in the different political, economic, and cultural environment they have “grown up” in, and in their different historical time, the specificity of which underlies both their characteristic traits and their weaknesses thus far. Much like the Green Movement, they are in the unenviable position to “catch up” at a fast rate what the “model” they aspire for has already achieved, namely – the developed industrial democratic Western societies and their corresponding political and party system. The speed of this “catching up” process leads to explicable mistakes, which are inherent in any process of “development” and “growth”. One cannot make sense of these mistakes, however, outside the limits of the country’s transition and the political “model”, which the transition itself has imposed.

Two are the characteristics of the Bulgarian post-totalitarian party system, which – if seen in terms of mutually complementing each other – explain to a large extent the absence of an autonomous green party in Bulgaria.

First, the specific post-socialist situation in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe turned “upside down” the political cleavages, which are traditional for the West European countries.⁸⁰ If in all the Western democracies the left-wing parties are generally connected with the idea about the need for change and are perceived as “progressive” parties, while the right-wing parties are seen as the entities

expressing and upholding the status quo, in the conditions of a post-totalitarian transition, the left-wing and right-wing parties exchange their long-established roles. Thus for instance, in Bulgaria, the Union of Democratic Forces (UDF), which embodied the opposition to the communist status quo, assumed the role of the political alliance standing for change, although the ideological profile of some of its constituent formations could hardly be qualified as left-wing or progressive. The Bulgarian Socialist Party (BSP), despite its attempts to gain legitimacy as a modern left-wing party, which defends social equality in the new market environment, was seen through the eyes of a significant part of society as an emblem of a conservative status quo, preserving and reproducing the privileges of the nomenclature or “the governmental aristocracy” (in the sense implied by the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu) from the time of “the old regime”.⁸¹

Second, the dominating political clash at the time of the transition, mainly expressed in the opposition between the BSP and the UDF (“communists” versus “democrats”), was not especially conducive to the formation and independent materialization of a green party. This is the reason why the Bulgarian green formations of the transition preferred to stay in the shadow of their big political partners by supporting them in a coalition format at the time of elections, which sometimes brought them awards – either parliamentary seats or ministerial posts, and in a number of cases – public and political legitimacy,⁸² but they rarely received any public authority whatsoever.

The fate of *Ecoglasnost* mirrored the bi-polar model, which was typical not only for the party system of that period, but for the entire public life as well. This bi-polar division even

⁸⁰ It is in this connection that first democratically elected President of Bulgaria after the collapse of the totalitarian regime wrote: “The political environment of the post-communist society – a society in transition from communism to democracy and a market economy – is an abnormal, non-standard, unusual environment, and making an analogy with the physics of elementary particles I could dare call it “a distorted environment”. This is the reason why to a large extent it would be senseless and naïve to speak about “left”, “right”, or “center”. (...) The parties here have not been “grounded” yet, their feet are not rooted in a social base, i.e. those social groups, strata, and sub-strata, the interests of which they claim to express and defend. (...) Zh. Zhelev, The Parties and the Party System of the Transition – 1, see on: <http://novotovremie.bg/?cid=34&p=&id=3601>, visited on 28.09.2011.

⁸¹ This is the reason why it is small wonder that the greater part of the members and supporters of the new Greens Party originate from within the circles of the disillusioned active supporters of the “right-wing” parties – the UDF in particular, but also of the more conservative Democrats for Strong Bulgaria (DSB) party.

⁸² The *Green Party* became the first ever and only Bulgarian green party to date, which has been acknowledged as a member of the Greens faction at the European parliament.

brought about a split within the Holy Synod of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church, which was divided into a "blue" wing (of an anti-communist bias, supporting the UDF) and a "red" wing (supporting the status quo).⁸³ Having been united in upholding civic and environmental causes before the democratic changes, the dissidents from *Ecoglasnost* underwent several splits because of ideological reason, but more frequently their splits were prompted by short-term political ends. The decision for the movement or a part of it to join one or another coalition was dictated by the motive for a greater political "effectiveness". In this way, the autonomous political project initiated in the name of environmentalism was gradually left behind and was used increasingly more frequently as an instrument and spring-board for coming into office.

The first official green party in Bulgaria, bearing exactly the same name – *Green Party*, the Chairman of which was Alexander Karakachanov, was set up on December 28th 1989, immediately after the establishment of the Union of Democratic Forces. The party managed to avail of the prestige and authority of *Ecoglasnost* to the maximum extent, as well as of the favorable context at that time (an increasing number of supporters to the *Ecoglasnost* community and a rapidly growing membership), thus attracting new members to the organization.⁸⁴ Despite this fact, the *Green Party* failed to add to its "assets" achievements commensurate with those,

with which *Ecoglasnost* had asserted itself on the public arena.

The *Green Party* is qualified as a moderately-centrist party. After 1991, when it ran the general election with the UDF, it continued to run elections by participating in coalitions with various political labels. In 1994 the *Green Party* entered into coalition with socialist and social-democratic parties within the format of the Democratic Alternative for the Republic (DAR). In 1997, it entered into an exotic coalition together with the MRF, the Alliance of the Democratic Center, and the "Kingdom Bulgaria" Federation, and after 1997, it oriented itself to coalitions formed around the BSP and from that time on it invariably has been running elections in this format. This led to partial success and what merits mention here is the fact that almost at the very beginning of the transition, the Chairman of the party, Alexander Karakachanov, was elected Sofia City Mayor. Two Bulgarian Prime Ministers from the first decade of the transition were also members of this party at the onset of their political careers, namely Philip Dimitrov (who was Prime Minister of the first UDF government in 1992), and Ivan Kostov (who headed the Cabinet during the second UDF term of office from 1997 to 2001).

However, the only large-scale independent campaign of the *Green Party* during this period remains the 1997 subscription in defense of Vitosha Mountain. The stance, which the *Green Party* had taken for a rapprochement with the party of "the nomenclature", did not seem to prove conducive to attracting a broader electorate from the circles of the middle class representatives who were looking forward to change, and to this end they rather preferred to give support to the parties of the UDF.

Some of the figures from the "old *Ecoglasnost*", headed by the dissident writer Edvin Sougarev, moved on to establish the National Movement *Ecoglasnost*,⁸⁵ which remained within the UDF. Among the political "assets"

⁸³ In this connection see Peter Kanev, in: Kanev, P. (2002), "Religion in Bulgaria after 1989: Historical and Socio-cultural aspects", in: *South East Europe Review*, 1, 2002, pp. 85-95, and Daniela Kalkandjieva in: Kalkandjieva, D. (1997), *The Bulgarian Orthodox Church and the State 1944-1953*, Albatros, Sofia.

⁸⁴ The party was registered on February 15th 1990 in accordance with the Political Parties Act and returned 16 MPs to the Grand National Assembly. The political objectives of the *Green Party* are: an unpolluted environment, health, understanding, a society of free people, middle class, a reasonable economic reform, a new taxation policy, fast and decisive privatization, the right to ownership of land and forests, the freedom for owners to cooperate and associate, a responsible social policy, the unity of the nation, an independent foreign policy. As of April 1990, the membership of the party numbered 5000 people. Members of the party leadership were: Solomon Passi – a future Minister of Foreign Affairs of Bulgaria at the Cabinet of NMSII (2001 - 2005), Philip Dimitrov – future Prime Minister of the UDF government (1992), as well as other politicians unknown at that time. See http://www.omda.bg/bulg/news/party/zeleni_partiya.htm, visited on 29.09.2011.

⁸⁵ See <http://www.omda.bg/bulg/news/party/Ekoglasnost.htm>, visited on 28.09.2011.

of this Movement are mainly the campaigns against nuclear power generation, connected with the *Kozloduy* Nuclear Power Plant, and at a later stage – with the construction of the *Belene* NPP. Other such campaigns were those against the storage of nuclear waste, including the referendum against the nuclear waste store in the Novi Khan Municipality, as well the Movement's participation in the search for solution to the solid waste disposal crisis in Sofia in the capacity of member of the *Zero Waste Coalition*, and still later on – as part of the *Civic Environmental Union* (CEU).⁸⁶ To date, the anti-nuclear policy is the determining factor in the public manifestations of National Movement *Ecoglasnost*, which over the last few years has been working closely with local civic and regional groups such as CEU, for instance.

In 1990, the so-called “left-wing” faction of *Ecoglasnot* under the leadership of its first Chairman, Peter Slabakov, separated from the remaining factions to set up an organization of its own under the name of Political Club *Ecoglasnost*. The newly established PC *Ecoglasnost* managed to return 17 Members of Parliament to the Grand National Assembly elected on the party slate of the Union of Democratic Forces. PC *Ecoglasnost* determined itself as an environmentalist movement,⁸⁷ which upheld the major values of humanism, placing a special emphasis on human rights. Much like its “blue” counterpart, the National Movement *Ecoglasnost*, Political Club *Ecoglasnost* stood against the construction of a Nuclear Power Plant, the *Gorna Arda* Hydroelectric Power Cascade, and the storage (or “burial”

in their terminology) of toxic wastes in Bulgaria. During 1990 – 1991, the Political Club issued its own *Ecoglasnost* newspaper. Political Club *Ecoglasnost* returned MPs of its own to the 37th National Assembly as well, within the framework of the coalition it had set up with the BSP and one of the several Bulgarian Agrarian People's Unions – that under the name of “Alexander Stamboliysky”. PC *Ecoglasnost* also returned MPs of its own to the 38th National Assembly, this time within the framework of the Democratic Left Coalition, set up once again together with the BSP.⁸⁸

To conclude the review of the green formations from that period it would be interesting to mention the establishment of a party of a “centaur” type – the Conservative Environmental Party,⁸⁹ which was set up by former members of the *Green Party* who had split from it because they disagreed with its “left-wing” bias. The newly established Conservative Environmental Party (CEP) was also an integral part of the UDF and has remained in the history of the Green Movement with the fact that it was the spring-board, which shot to the post of Prime Minister its leader, Philip Dimitrov, who thus headed the first UDF Cabinet.

In fact, the green parties and formations from that period seem to have strived to acquire the ideological distinction of “green” organizations, similar to those of the Western European green parties, but they remained at the level of imitation and instrumentalization, gaining legitimacy – simultaneously in the left-wing and right-wing political environment – at the expense of the dissident heritage of *Ecoglasnost*.⁹⁰

⁸⁶ For further detail on CEU see the website of the group <http://grupa-geo.blogspot.com/2007/10/blog-action-day.html>, visited on 29.09.2011.

⁸⁷ The choice of the formula of “Movement” rather than “Party” is very indicative. It eloquently speaks about the willingness of the formation to keep on representing the broad supra-party formation, which was characteristic for *Ecoglasnost* in its dissident period. Unlike it, the choice of the label “Political Club” rather speaks about the separation of an organization, which is closing in within itself. This kind of linguistic contradictions, which are a frequent occurrence among the political formations of the Bulgarian transition, actually reflects the ideological, programmatic, and organizational confusion dominating the political life in the country throughout this period of time.

⁸⁸ See <http://izbori.bg/parties/POLITChESKI-KLUB-EKOGLAS-NOST.46.html>, visited on 03.10.2011.

⁸⁹ Since 2000, there have been no entries or other information in the political parties registers about the activity of the CEP. For further detail see: <http://www.omda.bg/bulg/news/party/sds.htm>, visited on 28.09.2011.

⁹⁰ A fleeting glance at the history and achievements of these parties can confirm this statement, despite the fact that a considerable part of the new party builders and leaders had never taken part in any conceivable form in the dissident manifestations and events organized by *Ecoglasnost* at the end of the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s.

Some researchers of the Bulgarian political life are of the opinion that, on the whole, the Bulgarian transition ended at the beginning of the new millennium. On the other hand, it can be assumed that “the end of the transition” was actually marked by Bulgaria’s accession to the European Union on January 1st 2007. Regardless of the fact which of these two theses is accepted, the rise to power in 2001 of the National Movement Simeon II (NMSII) and its government headed by Simeon Saxe-Coburg-Gotha, son of the last Bulgarian King Boris III, imposed the lasting formula and practice of the liberal-centrist policy and thus put an end to the dominant political model of the 1990s, which was based on the opposition pitting “the BSP against the UDF”. This event actually signaled the fact that the latter model had been completely exhausted in the national context of Bulgaria. On the other hand, it was a reflection of the supranational process moving in the direction of an enhanced economic and political neo-liberalization. The new situation proved conducive both to the entry of new political actors on the national arena and to their subsequent rapid “devaluation”.

The efforts of Bulgaria to accede to the EU within the “post-transition context” have had an interesting impact on the development of the green parties in the country. The first ever election for Members of the European Parliament (MEP) in Bulgaria came right after its accession back in 2007 and the need for a European legitimacy at the level of the European Parliament brought about some accelerated “party building” efforts and the emergence of several new green parties and formations, such as *Green Bulgaria* for instance. The opportunities opened by the EU accession not only at the level of European legitimacy, but also in terms of access to the substantial EU environmental funds, led to the inception of other “green” structures, such as the *Green Alliance*, which has been renamed to its current official name of *Party of the Greens in Bulgaria*⁹¹, and the *Green Tigers*, which currently

has the status of a youth organizational structure of the *Green Party*.

Although the *Green Party* managed to win the status of a Bulgarian representative in the factions of the Greens at the European Parliament, it began losing both members and supporters. This is the reason why it opted for enhancing its capacity by “merging” with the newly established *Green Bulgaria* party in 2009. After the merger, the party took the name of *Green Party - Bulgarian Greens* and won the support of 0.51% of Bulgarian voters at the 2009 MEP election. At the 2009 national general election, the *Green Party - Bulgarian Greens* made the decision to give its support to the GERB Party, which – according to its leader, Alexander Karakachanov, – was “the party most interested in redeeming democracy in the country”, as it was “least connected with the status quo in Bulgaria”.⁹² In the fall of 2009, the *Green Party - Bulgarian Greens* ran the local elections in a coalition with *Ecoglasnost*.⁹³

The *Greens Party*⁹⁴ was also registered in 2007. As already mentioned, it was the successor of the achievements and values of the “new green wave”. In line with the good traditions of the West European green parties, three co-chairpersons are heading the top leadership of the *Greens*. This co-leadership combines representatives of three generations of green activists who have been working for the Green Movement. The three co-chairs are: Andrei Kovachev from the *BALKANS Wild Nature Association*, Petko Kovachev, who represents the first green generation, and a young lady, Dentza Petrova, who represents the youngest generation in the Movement.

⁹² The quotation is taken from a material published by the “News. Bg” Internet News Agency on June 25th 2009. For further detail see: http://news.ibox.bg/news/id_993493209; visited on 29.10.2011.

⁹³ For further detail see the article of Lora Phileva published in the *Dnevnik Daily*, entitled “Three Green Parties United for the Local Elections” at: http://www.dnevnik.bg/bulgaria/2009/09/27/790480_tri_zeleni_partii_se_obediniha_z_a_mestnite_izbori/, visited on 10.10.2010

⁹⁴ For further detail see: <http://www.bulgariangreens.org/>, visited on 29.09.2011.

⁹¹ <http://www.greensbg.com/>, visited on 29.10.2011.

The most interesting moment in the election program of the *Greens* is the claim that the party intends to work for change by virtue of a new formula for political governance, which is based on the party's determination to be wide opened to the instruments of direct and participatory democracy. What is also notable in this program is the felicitous match between environmental (green"), traditionally liberal, and traditionally conservative values, whereby the environmental protection and the sustainable development of both society and the state are closely linked to individual human rights through a broader access to the decision-making process, but at the same time these rights are an instrument for staying the national culture and identity of Bulgarians.

The party determines itself in the following way: *"... an association of personalities who accept the ethical principles of environmental protection, the preservation of nature and the cultural and historical heritage of the country, as well as the observance of human rights, the parliamentary method of governing the country by means of an enlarged direct democracy, coupled with the liberal economic principles and upholding the identity of the Bulgarian nation, culture, and traditions."* According to its statute, the party works for *"protecting the environment and preserving nature in the capacity of a permanent operating doctrine and priority in the present and future sustainable development of the state and its civic society"*.⁹⁵

The new party managed to attract organizational support and membership among the participants in the initiatives of the new wave in the Green Movement and their supporters. Alongside the big event – a yet another "new" party came into office and took the helm of

the country's governance (i.e. the moderately populist GERB Party), the 2009 general election also saw a green party – the party of the *Greens* – run its first independent election campaign and win 0.52% of the popular vote⁹⁶. The party, however, was not allowed to run the 2009 partial local elections following a decision issued by the Supreme Administrative Court.⁹⁷ The party was getting ready to run again the 2011 local election with a party slate of its own. The main message of its election campaign was the need to strengthen the mechanisms for direct civic participation in the governance of the country at both the local and national levels.⁹⁸ This election campaign, though insufficiently successful, marks the latest stage in the development of the green parties in Bulgaria for the time being.

Electoral analysis is not subject to this study. Yet, with a view to the development of the green project as a political opportunity for the future, it would be interesting to cast a glance at the electoral results of the *Greens* Party from the latest elections.⁹⁹ As it has be-

⁹⁶ According to the election results published by the Central Election Commission, the *Greens* Party won 21,841 votes or 0.52% of the overall number of voters. http://rezultati.cik2009.bg/results/mandates/rik_00.html 2009. For the capital city the results are as follows: constituency No. 23 - 4774 votes or 2.10%, constituency No. 24 - 3127 votes or 1.65%, and constituency No. 25 - 2513 votes or 1.26% of the overall number of voters. http://rezultati.cik2009.bg/results/proportional/rik_00.html, visited on 08.07.2011.

⁹⁷ For further detail see: <http://www.vesti.bg/index.phtml?tid=40&oid=2524633>, 10.10.2011. See additional information about the 2009 elections in: *2009 Elections: MEP Elections, General Election, Local Elections (2009)*, A.Krasteva and A.Todorov (ed.), publication of the New Bulgarian University, Sofia.

⁹⁸ At a press-conference on the 28th of September 2011 in the Bulgarian Telegraph Agency, the party announced the beginning of its election campaign under the motto "Think globally, act locally – cast your ballot for the Greens!" The candidate for Sofia City Mayor, Andrei Kovachev, outlined his priority, namely: *"a secure and legally provided civic participation in the sessions of the Municipal Council"*. The candidate for Bourgas Mayor, Daniela Bozhinova, also laid the stress of her campaign on the direct participation of citizens in the governance, which should "become a working principle on the local and national levels in Bulgaria". For further detail see the website of the *Greens* Party at: <http://www.zelenite.bg/4019>, visited on 10.10.2011.

⁹⁹ No analysis of the green parties' performance at previous elections will be made here mainly because of the reasons pointed out further on in the study, namely that running elections before was not any serious attempt to uphold the green political project, since it was rather a desire to use green messages as an instrument for achieving other ends.

⁹⁵ The major principles of the *GREENS* are: *"defense and protection of nature and the environment, assertion and observance of human and civic rights, consolidation, development, and improvement of democracy as a principle meant to govern both society and the state, social justice as a priority of state governance, sustainable development of the economy and the state, high quality, modern, and accessible healthcare and education"*. <http://www.bulgariangreens.org/ustaw>, visited on 05.10.2011.

come traditional for the green parties' profile, this electoral cross section indicates that it is mainly the younger, highly educated voters of a high professional status who predominantly live in larger towns (mostly in the capital city) that support such green organizations.¹⁰⁰ The lacking basis for comparison does not make it possible for us to draw any categorical conclusions about the possible future developments. Nonetheless, with a view to the typical features of the Bulgarian political context at the time being, namely: unstable government, receding party membership and a general withdrawal from the "traditional" political parties of the transition, the rapid rise of new formations and their fast marginalization on one hand, and on the other – the unstable electoral behavior of voters and the high degree of disapproval concerning the functioning of the political and governmental institutions among broad strata of Bulgarian society,¹⁰¹ we can still map out some observations and formulate certain hypotheses, without any claim to their being exhaustive. These observations concern the typology of the green parties in this country, while the hypotheses concern the future of an authentic green project subject to implementation within the current political system.

First and foremost, the brief review of the Bulgarian green formations indicates the existence of two types of green parties, which can be described as follow:

¹⁰⁰ 2009 Elections: MEP Elections, General Election, Local Elections, op.cit.

¹⁰¹ According to data compiled by the Bulgarian representation of Transparency International, i.e. the Transparency International Association, over the last six years Parliament and the government rank highest in the corruption index surveys and are thus qualified by people as the institutions, which have been affected by corruption to the highest extent. For more information see the source: Transparency International, http://www.transparency.org/policy_research/surveys_indices/gcb and the Transparency International Bulgaria Association <http://www.transparency-bg.org/?magic=0.3.2.1>, visited on 29.09.2011. A survey held for the European Values Surveys by the Open Society Institute – Sofia in 2009 for its part indicates that the authorities and the institutions of power enjoy the lowest confidence rating among Bulgarian citizens in comparison with all other EU member countries. For more information see the source: <http://www.opendata.bg/opendata.php?q=44&s=4&c=36&i=530&t=2&sel=2>, visited on 28.09.2011.

The first type of parties or formations (such as the *Green Party*, *Green Bulgaria*, the *Green Alliance*, the *Conservative Environmental Party*, etc.) were set up mainly on the basis of provisional and opportunistic motives, such as running elections, competing for a larger share of the electorate, positioning to the purpose of gaining access to elected office, or European subsidies, or grants-in-aid, or some other sort of legitimacy (e.g. representation on the European level, creating a positive image among the international "green" community), and their major objective is to become part of the country's governance and be assigned a certain office. They exist in the shadows, within the framework of broad and – in certain cases – unprincipled coalitions, and voice environmental goals and values mainly on the programmatic level, rather than on the level of political action. Their purpose rather is to get integrated within the system. For this reason, however, this kind of formations can hardly rely on electoral support, having in mind the typical traits of the green electorate described above, and in a broader sense – the traits of the active electorate, which either refuses to vote, or hesitates, or is disappointed with the party system altogether.

The second type of parties or formations has emerged from authentic civic campaigns and was born as a result of the desire for actions aimed at bringing about both social and political change. In a number of cases, these formations generate public support, which goes well beyond the goals of environmental protection that in turn inflames additional supporters of a highly varied ideological and social profile. At present, this type encompasses only two formations: *Ecoglasnost* (in the initial stage of its existence – from the establishment of the UDF, to which *Ecoglasnost* was a co-founder, up to 1992) and the new *Greens Party*. These two formations have made a claim for bringing about a system change not only on the programmatic and ideological levels, but on the level of organizational and political action as well. Although

they also strive to make it to the corridors of power, this is not their only trait and aspiration. With a view to the analyses outlined above, under certain circumstances, this type of parties does have chances to succeed.

Last but not least, the peculiarities of today's Bulgarian political system create actual prerequisites for an independent, stand-alone and authentic green party to enter the country's governance.¹⁰² On one hand, a brief glance at the electoral profile of the *Greens* Party outlined above indicates a potential for support on the part of the "post-materialistically" minded voters. On the other hand, the ideological vacuum and the political mimicry of parties have begun to repel the electorates of the "traditional" parties increasingly more often. This pushes voters in the direction of supporting "new" and frequently "exotic", ideologically failed, and inconsistent political formations, which rapidly come to disillusion their new-found supporters.

The increasingly more tangible difficulties experienced by the BSP in its efforts to follow a political conduct, which is natural for a genuine left-wing party elected to the country's governance, and the marginalization of the right-wing parties, coupled with the growing discontent with the withdrawal of the state from the social sector and the increasingly louder demands for introducing stricter regulations on the market actors by the state, opens up an opportunity for an electoral breakthrough to be accomplished by a green party of a socially responsible profile, which upholds the rule of law and the inherent public interest. At the same time, the huge decline of confidence in the liberal-centrist formations, such as NSMP, the traditional disapproval of the MRF, and the absence of

an genuine liberal-democratic project, could attract to the green project citizens who are likely to profess views and attitudes with a libertarian bias. The enhanced anti-globalist messages circulating among the young generation in the green movement are another proof to the plausibility of such a hypothesis.

A yet another consideration to this effect is the traditional attachment of certain strata in Bulgarian society to the agrarian political project. Over the last few years, this attachment was manifested in a number of campaigns in defense of Bulgarian agriculture and food safety. Given the strongly marginalized position of the existing agrarian parties, the possibility for these people to be attracted in the capacity of a "green" electorate is a plausible assumption. The green parties, however, must first assert themselves in the public environment, by proving themselves to be genuine fighters against the negative aspects of the system and defenders of public interest.

During the past several years, all green formations make claims on representing "the authentic Bulgarian green project",¹⁰³ despite the significant differences among them. At the same time, individually, they also make claims on the achievements of the new wave in the Green Movement, much like the dissident formations before them did, when, during much of the 1990s, they were arguing about the heritage of *Ecoglasnost*. This conduct cannot possibly be crowned with any serious political results, nor can it make the green political entities more recognizable, unless they launch specific and targeted activities as a proof to the fact that they uphold environmental principles and that their intention is to impose these principles along all the stages of the political process.

¹⁰² Political scientist Milen Lyubenov wrote the following in his article "Parties on the Verge": "Parties will face the challenge of having to catch up with the development of Bulgarian society, which – for its part – may cause some of them to drop out at the expense of new emerging parties. This will guarantee the openness of the governmental formula". Lyubenov, M. (2010), "Parties on the Verge", in: Democracy in Bulgaria in the 21st Century, Collection, Veliko Turnovo.

¹⁰³ In this connection see the letter to the Committee of the European Green Party entitled "Information for the EGP on the 2009 MEP and General Election in Bulgaria", signed by the then leader of "Green Party – the Bulgarian Greens", A. Karakachanov, on the website of the party: http://www.greenparty.bg/index.php?optiAon=com_content&view=article&id=8578%3A-2009&catid=78%3A2010-10-06-07-12-41&Itemid=137&lang=bg, visited on 10.10.2011

There is, of course, a yet another scenario, though not as optimistic as the previous one. The insufficient political and governmental experience of a young green party, combined with the specificity of the post-totalitarian political culture of Bulgarian voters, which pushes them to lend hasty support to new political actors whom they perceive as “saviors”, could lead to the short-term success of such a young green party, followed by as hasty a withdrawal of voters’ confidence. The risks connected with the eventual “melting down” or dissolving of any authentic young green party in result of the need for it to enter into coalitions and make recourse to compromises with the status quo, could bring about the discreditation of the stance, which such a party upholds as a defender of civic interests and the public good.

It seems that the way to establishing an environmental project for public and political development goes through the lasting integration of green priorities into the policy of the government, and this is a task, which requires the commitment of all political parties in the country’s governance. For the time being, the Bulgarian political system and governance are far from such an objective, both because of the lack of political will and the obvious backwardness of the governing political elites as far as their becoming aware of this need is concerned. This is the reason why, for a yet another time, it is mainly the civic society embodied in the Green Movement that must assume the role of a catalyst to these processes, while the hopes for a “breakthrough” of green ideas in the current Establishment will continue to be connected with the synergy between the Green Movement and an authentic green party.

CONCLUSION

The development of the Green Movement in Bulgaria over the past several years represents the cumulative response to a number of social, economic, and political processes and

phenomena, which have emerged at the time of the country’s transition to democracy and market economy and have deepened in the post-transition situation. It is in this sense that the green campaigns have brought to the fore the most essential and painful problems of Bulgarian society, thus turning into a sort of a public vent of public discontent.

This **first aspect** of the Green Movement is an integral part of a broader logic of contesting the status quo, where other actors claim to play as well. This aspect outlines an important characteristic trait, namely: the civic campaigns have the capacity not only to oppose the practices of the status quo, but also reveal its moral bankruptcy. The participants in the civic campaigns perceive themselves as a moral corrective, which has risen against the irresponsibility of the government, the political corruption, the chameleon-like changeability and hypocrisy of the parties. In this sense, the Green Movement marks the return to the “roots” planted by the dissident groups at the time of totalitarianism. Besides, in the last stage of its development over the last five to six years, the Movement has focused the public attention on the most essential political problem for modern Bulgarian society, namely: the rule of law and the equality of all Bulgarian citizens before the law as a guarantee for their freedom.

On the other hand, the Green Movement reveals a **second aspect**, namely: both its genuine political achievements and the public reactions the Movement provokes indicate that the cause of environmental protection remains one of the few public causes that unite the Bulgarian public space. The success of the campaigns is due to a large extent to the fact that the public opinion recognizes them as acts staying the public interest, which thus far has been ignored both by the political and economic actors in the governance of the country.

The Green Movement, however, has a yet another and very significant **third aspect**, namely: it gives expression to deep cultural predispositions inherent in the Bulgarian nation.

The protection and preservation of nature and the state of the environment are emblematic not only in the capacity of a response to existing structural, political, and socio-economic problems; they are the expression of characteristic features of Bulgarian culture as well. The attachment to nature as national wealth and the sense of pride it generates are an important factor for civic mobilization and support. Nature as a symbol of the Fatherland was one of the leitmotifs of the Bulgarian intellectual, revolutionary, and enlightened elite during the epoch of the National Revival in the 18th century. It is one of the marks of national identity in a period when national independence was absent. The hymn of Bulgaria, entitled "Proud Stara Planina" (the Bulgarian name for the Balkan range), is a yet another proof to this effect. In a sense, nature is a genetic part of the Bulgarian "national identification code". At a time when the sympathies for populist and nationalist project are prevailing among the active voters, this tendency could well fascinate people and take some of this nationalist feeling to quite a different direction.

Last but not least, the Green Movement acts as a catalyst to processes, which combine the national peculiarities of the situation in the post-transition period with supranational processes and trends. The Movement manifests a trend focused on the public expression of post-materialist values and culture among certain strata of the middle class, which have their own "environmental", cultural, and political dimensions dating back to the end of the country's totalitarian period.

In terms of culture, these values and culture are expressed in a certain preference for the quality of life, which is inseparable from the quality of the environment, as well as a preference for personal and collective auto-

nomy, and for the indivisibility of ethical and esthetical criteria.

In terms of politics, the same values and culture are expressed as a higher level of civic awareness and critical attitude, as mistrust and lack of respect for the traditional political institutions and forms of political representation, and also as a direct civic action and an enhanced desire and capability for participation in the political process, frequently taking the form of openly manifested participation in various informal, autonomous, and "self-generated" civic initiatives.

The social and economic marginalization of the middle class and its purely "physical" reduction in numeric terms over the last quarter of a century create problems for the sustainability of the trend for more visible public expression of post-materialist values and culture. This situation, however, can be recompensed by raising support among the "materialistically" minded strata of the population. The social base of support for the Green Movement over the last several years and for the *Greens* Party in particular, which emerged from the ranks of this Movement precisely, is a living proof to this effect.

In conclusion, the direction taken towards the consolidation of the Green Movement over the past six years and its attempts for an institutionalized participation in the political life of the country, expressed in the formula "Green Party plus Green Movement", have made a claim for both a genuine integrations within the political system and an attempt for a system change simultaneously "from the outside" and "from within". All these trends create prerequisites and opportunities for raising sufficient support for the implementation of an authentic green political project in Bulgaria in the foreseeable future.

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Imprint

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1000 Sofia, Bulgaria
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All texts are available online

www.fes.bg

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