

Bulgarian Protests Before and After the Internet: Reasons and Issues

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ABSTRACT: The primary critical indicators of civil society are the freedom to express dissatisfaction or the desire for change, as well as various forms of charitable giving. Is the Bulgarian society active and vibrant, or is it maintained only artificially and seemingly? Is it able to organize in a short period and work hard for targeted social changes? How the online environment catalyzes these processes.

KEYWORDS: social movements, protests, media, communication, social networks

I. INTRODUCTION

As the word "protest" implies, organized forms of discontent and disagreement with the actions of the authorities serve as a kind of litmus test for any given society. Under the strictures of a political regime, civil society is doomed.

The Ruse protests

Civil society was destroyed in Bulgaria under the communist regime, and the People's Court repressed any attempts at protest or right-affirmation. In light of this, the nonviolent protest against the contaminated air in Ruse on September 28, 1987, is genuinely heroic. Six women spearheaded the protest by mobilizing their fellow citizens via various platforms, including personal phone calls, work, parties, trade unions, and social media. To attend the nonviolent demonstration, each of them needs to stir up 20 families. On September 28, Tsonka Bukurova, Vyara Georgieva, Dora Bobeva, Stefka Monova, and their assistants - Evgenia Zheleva and Albena Velkova managed to bring 500 people in front of the party house, who silently held placards with the inscriptions: "Peaceful demonstration for air", "Chlorine - no!", "We want a healthy generation", "Clean air for our children", "Rousse, is it a doomed city?"^[1]

As a result, several mothers who were worried about their family members and children's health dared to bend the iron hoop of the regime, resulting in the first protest in socialist Bulgaria.

The protests in Jebel

During the socialist regime, another group of women initiated the May protest in Jebel, which was another symbolic protest. They planned a silent protest in the area of the police station, where the local resistance leader to the Revival Process was taken into custody. Following his release, the protest expanded to include thousands of people as activists knocked on doors in an attempt to persuade people to come together in honor of their relative's passing. More than 10,000 people flocked to the city center on May 19, 1989, when the city was closed off at night. According to Vildan Baryamova, they mistreated and forcibly removed people from their homes before throwing them into the street.

The victims of abuse frequently experience heart attacks, some sustain severe injuries, and medical professionals are not allowed to assist them. On that troubled day, Avni Veliev - the chairman of the Human Rights Support Society of Vienna-89, created at that time - was expelled. This is the first mass peaceful protest of the Turks in Bulgaria, with the only demand - to immediately return their names. On May 20, Northeastern Bulgaria rises - Pristoe, Kaolinovo, followed by Dulovo, Ezerche, and Medovets. 8 people were killed... The imposed martial law in the ethnically mixed areas freezes life there - militia and units of the Internal Troops block all roads, institutions, and hospitals." [2]

Mikhail Ivanov claims that this is the second time that Bulgarian Turks have demonstrated against the Revival process. The first occurred during the compelled renaming that started in 1984. On December 24 and 25, a total of about 3-4 thousand people protested in the village of Mlechino and the village of Benkovski in temperatures of -20 degrees. Heavy clashes began between the protesters and the law enforcement agencies. In the clashes around the village of Mogilane, three people were killed, including a one-and-a-half-year-old baby. In the following days, more demonstrators were killed and many were arrested. On December 28, 300 women organized a protest for the release of their husbands from detention.

The protests in Yablanovo

The fiercest resistance was on February 19 in the village of Yablanovo. The protest is organized by the mayor, who distributes free bread and wood to the families of the village a few days before the actual protest, and the men of the village arm themselves with axes, knives, and homemade bombs. On February 19, early in the morning, the local community center's siren alerted the public to the start of the protest. Fire engines, tanks, and armored personnel carriers were sent after the demonstrators, who attempted to disperse with powerful jets.

"In Yablanovo and the neighboring villages, there was a violent altercation with the demonstrators. The majority of the men suffered beatings, a few sustained injuries, one man was killed in the village of Filaretovo after being run over by a tank, and numerous others were detained, severely tortured, and either sentenced to different prison terms or sent to the concentration camp in Belene (a total of 517 individuals from all over the nation were imprisoned in Belene in connection with the "Revival Process"). [3]

The Ekoglasnost protest in 1989

On November 3, 1989, a protest march was held in Sofia, organized by the association "Ekoglasnost," against the construction of water cascades that threaten the Mesta and Rila rivers. On the square in front of the temple monument "St. Alexander Nevsky," about 2-3 thousand people gather. Ivan Bakalov remembers the events of that day:

"The procession stops in front of the enclosures. The petition was read again. Slabakov, Beron, Karakachanov, and two others passed through the cordon and carried to the parliament a thick stack of sheets with 11,500 signatures in support of the request to stop construction in Rila. The crowd sings "Dear Motherland". I will remember the faces of the militiamen from the cordon; they look confused and guilty. The activists of "Ekoglasnost" are coming back. Beron says: For forty years, this is the first petition submitted to the National Assembly.

25 years have passed since then. Today, the incident seems insignificant. But I put these lines together to show what a fear it was and how unusual it was to protest. The very chant, "Democracy!" was shocking. It was as if the air around me had frozen. The militiamen in front of the parliament watched with respect and incomprehension of what was going on." [4]

The first democratic protests

One of the first reactions of the nascent democracy was on December 14, 1989, when a living chain of students surrounded the parliament with demands for the autonomy of the universities and the cancellation of Article 1 of the current Constitution - for the leadership role of the BKP. The media - then represented by BNT

and the newspaper "Rabotnichesko Delo" - called them "a mob of extremists" and "a threat to order in the country". Petar Mladenov utters the famous phrase, "Let the tanks come."

During the stormy year of 1990, two occupation strikes broke out in Sofia University in Bulgaria. The requests are for an investigation into the election frauds that led to the victory of the BSP, and the removal of the then director of the television Ognyan Saparev, as well as the resignation of president Petar Mladenov because of his scandalous remark. On July 6, Mladenov resigned, but the tension did not subside.[5]

The fire in the Party House started on the night of August 26, 1990, after a warning by Plamen Stanchev, a member of the "Civil Discontent Initiative" movement, that he would set himself on fire if the five-point symbol representing a foreign country was not removed from the Party House. The negotiations between the poet Radoj Ralin and the MP Yosif Petrov on the square with him were fruitless. At 9:15 p.m., Bulgarian TV stops its regular broadcast and broadcasts an appeal by Radoj Ralin and Yosif Petrov for President Zhelev to intervene and for everyone to stay at home, but the effect is the opposite: people flock to the square, and Konstantin Trenchev issues an ultimatum: if the five-beam is not removed, the building will be attacked. The investigation interpreted this as a sign of an assault. [6]At 9:30 p.m., the gathered people rushed to the entrance of the BSP club with screams and threats, and by midnight, the entire building on "Moskovska" Street was in flames.

On January 10, KT "Podkrepa" convenes a rally in front of the National Assembly with a request to vote on a Declaration of National Consent, the most important point of which is the holding of early parliamentary elections. "The majority refused, and people began to flock to the square. The radio stations, especially "Darik," broadcast directly from the rally; in the cafes and other places in Sofia, it was heard from loudspeakers, and in a short time, tens of thousands gathered in front of the National Assembly." (G. Daskalov). [7]

The protest of Bulgarian National Television

On January 17, 1997, during the protests against the management of Zhan Videnov, over 300 employees of BNT elected a 15-member strike committee and announced a 7-day warning protest, On February 1, an effective strike began; the programs of Channel 1 and Ether 2 were interrupted. Channel 1 stops broadcasting after "Panorama". The management of BNT undertakes not to interfere in the work of the news broadcasts and not to take a position on the selection of the guests in the shows. Reports are broadcast from road blockades near Dupnitsa and Sandanski, blocking intersections in Sofia, at Asparuhov and Danube Bridge, at the protests in "Neftohim", Bobov dol, etc. [8]

The result: After the BSP returned the mandate to form a government, on February 12, 1997, President Petar Stoyanov appointed a caretaker government headed by Stefan Sofianski. One of the first decisions of the official cabinet was to introduce a currency board in Bulgaria.

Analysis of protests that occurred in an online environment

Even before the birth of Facebook, the resources of the Internet were used to initiate and activate protests. Primarily through e-mails, online groups, forums, chat rooms, etc., activists manage to bring together like-minded people for protest actions and expressions of dissatisfaction.

For Mogilino before Mogilino

The organization "Movement of Bulgarian Mothers" arose spontaneously in forums for motherhood and children. Initially, the initiatives were related to collecting food and clothes for the homes of children without parental care, but soon the volunteers were joined by experts from different fields and united around the common goal of improving the conditions in the homes and preserving the life and health of the children in them, as well as the decentralization of accommodation institutions. In addition to numerous charitable actions, the organization regularly sends information to the Ministry of Labor and Social Care (MTSG), the State Agency for Child Protection, and many institutions and organizations about the inhumane conditions in the so-called homes for children. One of the successive letters to the then chairman of the DAPS, Shirin Mestan, was sent at the beginning of 2007 and describes the state of the DOVDLRG city of Trun as follows:

1. The home base is in terrible shape. Basements are flooded. There are moldy walls. The doors and floorboards are broken and gouged. Some of the children sleep on dirty mattresses on the floor. Plastering on many interior and exterior walls is falling off.

2. Despite the above-described state of the home, which is completely unsuitable for the health and harmonious development of the healthy children housed there, the home also accommodates children with disabilities, whose number is currently almost 50% of the number of all children, as until recently, there were no resource teachers or other qualified staff assigned to work with these children. Due to a lack of good care, children with mental disabilities further destroy the already poor base.

3. Child control is greatly underestimated or even absent. As a result, children regularly and massively do not attend classes at the local school. There is also a strong increase in anti-social behavior by children in the DOVDLRG in the town of Trun. The violations we have witnessed are a lack of educators to accompany the children to school; a hygienist appointed as a half-time educator without the necessary qualifications; educators who regularly leave their workplace for personal reasons, leaving children from home as substitutes while they are away; lack of controlled entry and exit of the children in and out of the home territory, as a result of which they are outside at a time too unsuitable for them - late in the evening and at night; children uncontrollably sell their personal belongings provided to them by us and other donors or exchange them for cigarettes! and, alcohol!; the usual appearance of the children is disheveled - they are dressed in dirty and ragged clothes; it is difficult to communicate. However, the most disturbing thing is that we are aware of at least two suicide attempts by children in the home! After a suicide attempt, one of the children was hospitalized for more than a week in the Men's Psychiatry Department of the Medical Academy in Sofia. The doctors taking care of the child contacted us and informed us about quite disturbing circumstances - for example, that the child (at the age of 15) cannot write, his stories about his life in the DOVDLRG in the city of Trun including a strong unacceptable moment, etc.

As with the previous signals, there was no reaction from the institutions after this one. None of the volunteers and experts in the organization were searched, nor was any inspection carried out in the DOVDLRG in the city of Trun.

A few months later, on September 13, the BBC broadcast the film "Abandoned Children of Bulgaria," which reveals the monstrous abuses of children housed in the institution in the village of Mogilino.

On October 9, 2007, "Movement of Bulgarian Mothers" organized a protest in front of the building of the Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare (MLSW) after distributing the film through e-mails and on Internet forums.

There was no reaction from the social minister at the time either to the protest or to the specific proposals for legal changes. "As a result of efforts and after numerous signals sent by non-governmental organizations about the situation in children's homes, concrete steps in the sector were decided on October 19, 2007. MTSP and ASP agree to cooperate with non-governmental organizations:etc." "For Our Children" Foundation, UNICEF, Institute for Social Activities and Practices, ARC Foundation, EKIP Foundation, Bulgarian Association of Persons with Intellectual Disabilities, International Social Services, BHC, etc."^[9]

"Except for a few excerpts on TV7 and one broadcast in the "Red House" only on November 6, the film was not broadcast for three months on any Bulgarian television. In 2008 one TV started a charity show "The Magnificent Six". From January to May 2008, BGN 1,869,788.74 was collected. The amount was used to create an environment close to family for children from the home in the village of Mogilino. The action was carried out with the help of the international organization UNICEF.

Not only for the children in the village of Mogilino, the "rescue" is fatally late. For the children from the town of Trun, it never begins. On March 12, 2008, 67-year-old Asen Iliev shot three children with a hunting rifle in an orphanage in the town of Trun, and then committed suicide. One of the children, a 15-year-old girl, is

dead, and the other two, 12 and 15 years old, are injured. Iliev, who is a former employee of the children's home, was already accused of pedophilia in the 1990s. The murdered girl was a witness in the case against Iliev.^[11]

Bulgarian Jan Palach

In the winter of 2013 national protests against monopolies and the political system began. The protesters organized themselves spontaneously at first through the already highly popular social network Facebook.

On February 20, Plamen Goranov set himself on fire. Thirty-eight minutes later, Boyko Borisov's government resigned. Mayor Kiril Yordanov was subjected to strong public pressure, which also led to his resignation. In a video recording distributed in the media and social networks, Plamen Goranov states: "*I think that in Varna the main culprit for this protest is TIM*". Plamen Goranov died on March 3, 2013. National mourning was declared. The media called him "a new Jan Palach".^[12] The inspired heroism and willingness to sacrifice led to many self-immolations in different cities of the country.

The protests continued in the following months - in May, non-governmental organizations and civil movements, united in a coalition "For nature to remain in Bulgaria", and organized a protest against Oresharski's government.

In June of the same year, protest actions against the election of Delyan Peevski as head of the State Agency "National Security" were born on Facebook. Just a few hours later, after the announced election, over 10,000 people gathered in front of the Council of Ministers building in Sofia.

Facebook pages and numerous posts with the hashtag #ДАНСWithMe are created, through which information about the upcoming protest actions is spread.

In the summer of 2013, a website and a Facebook page called "Protest Network" were created, which are still active today:

"August 7, 2013, a working group composed of the administrators and members of some of the leading groups in social networks that actively help the public express their discontent against the power of the oligarchy and specifically against the Oresharsky government."

We announce the creation of the Protest Network, an environment for interaction and contact, with the main goal being the resignation of the current government through the growth of protest actions, and the main perspective being preserving the energy of the protest, which has acquired citizenship under the name DANSwithe . The protest network should become a permanent tool for concerted civil participation and control, ready to oppose any government that supports oligarchic structures and corporate interests and acts against the values of freedom, democracy, and civil society.^[13]

The Facebook page regularly creates online events about the protest marches and publishes photos and information from the protests across the country. Numerous videos, articles, and posts from the blogs and social networks of the activists are published on the website, expressing specific arguments against the government and specifying the goals of the protests.

Participants in the protests also regularly publish photos and information on their profiles. Among them is Boris Kolev, who in July 2013 expressed his displeasure with the coverage of yet another protest march by the media, according to which about 3,000 people participated. According to Kolev's photos and analysis, the protesters numbered around 150,000 people. [14]

Oresharski's government did not resign until July 2014 or after 405 days of protests.

Protest movement "The system is killing us"

Along with periodic well-organized or spontaneous protests against the economic and political situation in Bulgaria, one protest in particular stands out for its form of demonstration and its duration.

People with disabilities and parents of children with disabilities have been calling for changes in legislation and policies in the sector for years. After no one heard their requests, in 2018, mothers of children with disabilities registered a civil initiative, "The system is killing us," and together with their children, they started protests in front of iconic institutions in Sofia. Among their goals are the adoption of Lalawn personal

assistance, changes in the way of implementing the policies and programs of the Social Assistance Agency, a new assessment system for disabilities, and the necessary aids and living conditions for people with disabilities.

The System Kills Us protests and marches are announced on the Facebook page of the civil initiative. For its first mass protest on July 30, an event was created on the social network with the following announcement:

"All real Bulgarians who want to unite in this cause and stop the genocide against the Bulgarian people should join us on July 30, 2018 at 5:00 p.m. in front of the National Assembly. At 17 and 30, we will march to the MC and loudly shout, "The system won't kill us!"! Let all the rulers understand that we are stronger than them, and we will fight to ensure a future for us and our children! We are not afraid of provocations and threats! Therefore, we invite all Bulgarians to unite and save Bulgaria! We ask that everyone wear black t-shirts! [15]

6,600 users have indicated online that they will attend the protest and support the demands. At the real protest, however, the demonstrators are many times fewer. In addition to the tent camp set up next to a ministerial council, black t-shirts, black flags, and a skeleton in a wheelchair, parents of disabled children are taking even more extreme forms of protest. In July 2018, the parents left their 18-year-old son in the reception area of the Council of Ministers with some personal luggage and instructions about the specific care he was subject to. The appeal of the parents is to Prime Minister Boyko Borisov to take care of the boy because they have been at a dead end for years due to a lack of funds and specialists for his procedures and rehabilitation.

Despite Prime Minister Borisov's promises, the requested changes have not even begun. Mothers of disabled children are planning another protest in October 2018.

In the online event this time, only 1,700 users declared their support, and at the real protest and the ones that followed it, they were again many times less. People passing by the demonstrators commented the following:

"We do not know the demands and intentions of these women." "How can we support them?! They will push the government, and we have no one to choose!"; "They were paid by the opposition!" etc. The comments online are even more extreme and offensive. Among the reasons for not supporting the protest, the following stand out the most: "Protests in Bulgaria are flawed"; "I don't believe anything will change"; "The protest sounds political, so I don't support it"; "You are not properly communicating exactly what you want, and your requests are incomprehensible"; "I don't see how my participation in the protest would help"; "Our whole society is now desensitized." Users also write, "We support you even if we are not there," and offer expert help such as lawyers, psychologists, PR, social workers, communicators, journalists, and bloggers.

In the following days, more and more popular personalities and bloggers published posts in support of the mothers of children with disabilities, in attempts to explain the unbearable conditions in which they live, and to motivate online users to physically attend the organized protests.

Popular personalities from social networks are included in television shows and appeal for support for the protests. Society is slowly beginning to realize that no one is immune to being in the situation of these people or their children, that the system is equally killing everyone. The protests are enjoying more attendance and are increasingly boldly asserting their demands. This provokes the authorities so strongly that a deputy prime minister utters the unforgivable. On October 16, 2018, after a meeting of the National Council for tripartite cooperation, where a draft Law on People with Disabilities prepared by the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy was discussed, Valery Simeonov called the protesters "Silky women with supposedly sick children": "This law was started as an attempt to please one group of scheming women who speculated with their children, manipulated society, putting these supposedly sick children through the roof and rain, without an ounce of motherly feeling, care for them," commented Simeonov and added that "the bill was conceived in sin". [16] The obvious reference to superstitious beliefs - that children with disabilities are conceived in sin, that they are the punishment of their sinful parents - is unforgivable when uttered by anyone. However, uttered by the Deputy Prime Minister of Bulgaria is not only unacceptable but also an advertised policy towards segregation and discrimination.

The mothers of children with disabilities react extremely violently to this statement and their protests are with a new specific request for the immediate resignation of Valeri Simeonov.

The media and society recognize the cause of the resignation of the deputy prime minister and increasingly openly and actively begin to support the protests. Protests are daily and with different locations and forms - demonstrations in front of the Council of Ministers; an appeal to send messages personally to Valeri Simeonov, by publishing his email address; blocking of intersections in Sofia; motorcades to Boyko Borisov's home. Protests are also organized in other cities in the country. Along with demands for the deputy prime minister's resignation, "The System is Killing Us" are also calling for "the resignation of everyone" because of clauses in the Personal Assistance Act that "cripple" him.

After a month of continuous protests, Valeri Simeonov resigned, although he stated that he did not deny his words. In December, the new laws - for the disabled and personal assistance - were finally adopted and the mothers stopped their protests, removing the tents in front of the National Assembly. The Bulgarian Health Committee announces them as Person of the Year.

The civil initiative "The system is killing us" periodically renews its protests and reminds itself—in 2019, they insist on unifying the conditions for children raised by relatives and in foster families. Later, they reacted to the appointment of Valery Simeonov as deputy head of the National Assembly and again demanded his resignation, as well as the resignations of all 118 deputies who voted for his new post. In 2020, the initiative was included in the anti-government protests.

Meanwhile, there is a split in civil society. Mutual accusations and attacks began, and some of the mothers were reported to social services for not taking enough care of their children. Among the victims is Ina Marinova, who a few years later will raise thousands in the online group "Buy a gift from the mother of a child with a disability.2022,". [17]At the end of 2018, there were two civil movements: "The system is killing us" and "The system is killing us all." Despite the categorical positions that their movements and activities are not political and their clear distinction from politically formed ones, in the fall of 2022, "The system is killing us" announced that they are entering politics as a citizen's quota of "Stand up, Bulgaria" and removed the tent, which until that moment had stood on duty and as a warning in front of the Council of Ministers building. Among the reasons for entering the electoral race, the mothers share the following: "We have exhausted all our options to fight from the square. This is also the result of the huge pogrom and disappointment from those who present themselves as new; from them, we met with such neglect that one of the children was left to collapse. No one was found to let him inside in the warmth. Here, every day, we encountered the soullessness, the looks, and the indolence of 99% of all these people's representatives... Everyone promised—on the first day of the last National Assembly, we stood there and talked to absolutely every chairman of every newly elected party. Absolutely everyone promised that they would support us and that they knew about our problems. If everything was fine, we wouldn't be here." [18]

The accumulated insult of the mothers of children with disabilities from the missing or completely wrong policies is huge and long-standing, such as in a Bulgarian municipality, which years ago, instead of giving them money, gave them work clothes with which they could take care of their children as their assistants. "Stop messing with us" were the slogans of the protests after this municipal decision.

Protest success in the context of slacktivism

Ivaylo Dinev categorizes the protest in two main forms: negative and positive. In the positive protest, according to Dinev, the demonstrators are motivated not only to voice their dissatisfaction with specific policies but also specific proposals for change and working solutions. It is a protest for some change. On the contrary, a negative protest is against someone or something. The protesters primarily aim to convey a "negative message. A message that carries within itself the idea of deterring a certain policy... Often this dissatisfaction is only in the shades of apoliticalness, i.e., against everything political." It is a protest against. [19]

Not surprisingly, most protests in Bulgaria are negative. Their success largely depends on whether the protest will be transformed from a negative to a positive one, i.e., will suggest workable solutions and changes. The protest of the mothers of "The System is Killing Us" is one of the few that is not just against the status quo but offers concrete measures to change it. Their positive protest eventually managed to end with the adoption of two new laws. Moreover, if we refer to the positive and the negative in the context of activism and slacktivism, we will find the natural desire for activity, creativity, and work here as well. The basis of the demands of the mothers from the very beginning of their protests is that neither they, their children, nor any person with disabilities in Bulgaria should feel arrested in their own homes, without the opportunity to express themselves and develop. Greater public engagement probably could have helped to bring about these changes much earlier and on a much larger scale. Lack of empathy, awareness, outdated understandings, and superstitions are some of the reasons for insufficient support. Among the others are the doubts that the protests in our country achieve anything, downplaying personal involvement, insufficient motivation for action, and the concern that any protest serves political interests.

Despite all this, the protests of the mothers of "The System is Killing Us" can rightfully be ranked alongside the above-listed protests in world history initiated by women that fundamentally changed the status quo.

Not only the mothers' protest but also the protests in 2013, 2020, and 2021, the subsequent protests in defense of the new government, the demonstrations against the war in Ukraine, and the gas crisis - all these examples from our newest democracy show that a very large part of our society is no longer "retired" but working full-time.

The protests of recent years have been successful due to several factors:

- Unambiguous specific causes
- Clearly defined goals and well-articulated steps to achieve them
- Properly communicated messages
- Transparency about protest organizers
- Lack of centralization in the involvement process: everyone spreads the cause equally with others and attracts supporters
- Good organization and vertical structure (Dinev, 2012)
- Maximum use of digital technologies in the involvement and realization of the protest
- Using all the possibilities of social networks—creating pages, events, groups, posts that cause reactions and shares, hashtags, badges for profile pictures and covers, etc.
- Real-time broadcast and live connection between protest organizers, audience, and media

How do we support protest action?

A large proportion of respondents, regardless of their age group and education, indicate that they support protest actions and have even participated in them. 51% of respondents have participated in protest actions outside the Internet, while 30.8% admit to supporting them only online, 5.4% have organized protests, and 19.9% do not support protest actions.

Those living in the capital and regional cities mainly indicate that they have participated in protest actions, while those from small towns and villages are more likely to support them. Curiously, the respondents from small towns and villages who support and who do not support protest actions are almost equal in number.

Among the free responses, the prevailing opinion is that support for the protest depends primarily on its demands.

The next question gives more information about the types of protests that would be supported by the respondents.

What type of protest would find more support?

The main answer given by the respondents is against social injustice (regardless of the age group). In second place are protests against encroachment on nature and in third place are protests against the government.

Regardless of the type of protest, the largest number of respondents indicated that they participated, followed by those who only supported them online. The largest share is those who participate in protests against the government (70.2%), followed by those for a change in legislation (59.4%). A relationship was found to exist between the variables “What kind of protest have you supported or are you more likely to support?” and “Do you support protest action?”.

To determine whether there is a statistically significant relationship between the variables "What protest have you supported or are you more likely to support?" and "Do you support protest action?" " correspondence analysis was conducted using the *SPSS software* . In this analysis, the response "Against Covid" has been moved to "Other," and the response "I do not support" has been dropped. The purpose of these changes is to consider only active respondents.

The levels (categories) "Against social injustice" and "Against encroachment on nature" are close, i.e. there is a close relationship between them and also between "Against the Government" and "Others". The remaining levels and categories are distinct from those above. A relatively close relationship in the levels of Do you support protest action? ' is seen under 'I only support them online' and 'Other'.

The relationship between the individual levels and categories of the considered variables is depicted in the following table:

Table 1. Correspondence table

What protest have you supported or are you more likely to support?	Do you support protest action?			
	I only support them online	I have participated in protest actions	I have organized protest actions	Something else
Against the government	31	87	9	11
Against social injustice	75	118	14	16
Against high prices and poverty	63	55	4	14
Against a change in legislation	33	63	14	9
Against encroachment on nature	61	86	11	11
Something else	13	30	3	3

Relationship between the form and the cause of the protest

Cross-sectional analysis is particularly important here because it demonstrates the relationship between the presence and form of support on the one hand and the cause of the protest on the other. It can be concluded that the respondents who organized protest actions mostly supported those against a change in the legislation. Respondents who participated in protest actions mostly supported those against the government. Supporters of online-only protest actions mostly express their displeasure with high prices. Protests about social injustice and poverty and against encroachment on nature are supported in another form, other than online, by participating and organizing protest actions.

Are the protests successful in Bulgaria?

The majority of respondents believe that the protests in Bulgaria are not crowned with success (65%). Only 15.4% find them successful, and 22.5% have no opinion. The cross-analysis between this issue and the support given to the protests is important.

Among those who do not support the protests and among those who only support them online, the highest percentage believe that the protests are not successful. Among those most confident in the success of the protests are those who organized a protest themselves, followed by those who participated in protest actions. Here, activity has a big role: real participation leads to confidence in achieving the goals of the protest, and this confidence, in turn, leads to greater activity. Respectively, non-participation or support only online is dictated by doubts about the success of the protest action.

What are the reasons for the failure of the protests?

Most respondents could not name one specific reason. Among the other answers, the following are most often found:

"The protestors' lack of persistence, lack of unity, lack of clear demands, awareness and organization; Lots of online support, but little live support; Denigrating the protest and blurring the goals; Weak communication policy, inertia in society, lack of organization, misunderstanding and ignorance of human rights Fear and illiteracy; Weak activity; The saying the dogs bark, the caravan goes perfectly describes the nepukism of most of the rulers of the last 30 years and their reaction to the protests of the people.

II. The main conclusions of these opinions are

1. Users use social networks mainly for information, and information about social causes is mainly obtained from social networks. However, the media continues to occupy an important place as a source of information about social causes.
2. Causes that are emotional, personalized, and shared by a circle of friends gain the strongest support. Treatments for children and adults are the most supported causes.
3. Sharing a cause on social networks is perceived as activity, actual support, contribution to the cause or stated intention to support. However, this is not the case for protests; online-only support is among the main reasons for failure.
4. The online environment not only facilitates awareness and ways to support causes but also provokes the support of more campaigns—through social networks, online donations, participation in online charity actions, etc.
5. It is of particular importance to have reliable and expert information about campaigns for the treatment of children. However, such is lacking both for the donors and for the media that cover them.

6. More awareness, clear causes, and a good communication strategy also prove to be decisive for participation or not in protest actions.

Distrust prevails in the success rate of the protests and the occurrence of the desired change, which directly affects offline participation in them. A change in legislation is the cause that can activate more people to participate. A large percentage of respondents limited themselves to online protesting as a form of expressing dissatisfaction.

III. CONCLUSIONS

In terms of disseminating information about the protest, again, the Internet is the most powerful weapon for communication, especially social networks. The ability to share with multiple friends or groups, create online events, and request participation and support by personalizing profile pictures or certain hashtags certainly contributed to the mass and success of recent protests. But for the first time in the protests of recent years, feedback was activated and successfully used—direct inclusions from the place of the protest, streaming online, responding to comments in real-time, etc. Thus, somewhere between the square and the screen, activism and slacktivism met—people who were actually at the event included those who only showed their support online. They were told that they were important because every reaction, every share, and every comment mattered. During the live broadcasts on the Facebook page of the organizers, for the first time, it was possible to monitor in real-time how many people were at the venue and how many were supporting them online. A new phenomenon emerged that could be called "activity contagion"—users behind screens were physically joining the protest in real-time.

Despite our innate prosociality and ability to self-organize, however, our society needs an accurate compass. And that compass has always been and always will be the media and professional journalism. Combining the right rhythm of journalism with the high-tech tools of the digital environment leads to a quick and efficient implementation of causes and the achievement of their goals. This is what the examined cases show, and the respondents in the survey are also convinced of this, regardless of which side of the causes they are on.

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