

Summaries of the submitted publications by G. Medarov

Medarov., G. (2013). Bulgaria's Postcommunist Debate about the Holocaust. *Global Dialogue* 3(4). International Sociological Association.

The article summarizes the post-socialist debate about the Holocaust in Bulgaria. The incommensurable narratives about the memory of the rescue of Bulgarian Jews and the deportation of Jews from the occupied territories are presented in light of their political stakes, as well as their intertwining with the memory of the socialist regime in Bulgaria. The article also shows the emergence of new critical reflections on the history of the Holocaust in Bulgaria that overcome the over-politicization of memory since the 1990s.

Medarov, G. (2013). Land Concentration, Land grabbing and Land Conflicts in Europe: The Case of Boynitsa in Bulgaria в *Land Concentration, Land Grabbing and People's Struggles in Europe*, edited by Borrás, S., Franco, J., van der Ploeg, J.. Amsterdam: Transnational Institute.

The paper deals with the conditions of possibility for overconcentration of agricultural land use in Bulgaria. After the initial fragmentation of agricultural land in the 1990s, the first decade of the new century has seen the opposite processes. In 2012, agricultural land in Bulgaria is already among the most concentrated in Europe. In addition to these national transformations of land ownership and land use, the article also deals with the specific case of the village of Boynitsa, where the process of overconcentration is illustrated by data from an empirical study conducted for the purpose of the publication.

Medarov, G. (2013). Between (anti)Authoritarianism and Democracy: the Possibility for a Liberal Authoritarianism. in: Annuaire De L'Université De Sofia “St. Kliment Ohridski” issue 104 /in Bulgarian/.

This article traces the sociological conditions for the articulation of political subjectivities in post-1989 Bulgaria from the perspective of Ernesto Laclau's theory of populism. Firstly, it starts from proposing a general understanding for the conditions of various instances of antiauthoritarian subjectifications. Secondly, I move to my main assertion: the post-2001 collapse of the empty signifiers, that were enabling the constitution of stable (liberal) subjectivities, produced peculiar floating signifiers that are opening a space for the convergence between liberalism and authoritarianism. The latter, far from being some kind of a new populist threat to democracy, marks a crisis of the 1990s populisms.

Medarov, G. (2013). “Our Transition is not a Transition”- Everyday Discourses on the Transition in Shumen, in Gruev, M. (ed.) The Transition in Bulgaria: Memories and Reflections, Sofia: Anamnesis /in Bulgarian/

In this article, through a discursive analysis, I examine the relationship between popular narratives of the "failed Transition" and today's crisis of representative democracy. With discursive analysis I mean, without going into the methodological debate, the rejection of the assumption of a (real and/or ideal) essence encoded in the Transition. The concept enters into postsocialist context through the transnational expertise of transitology aimed at describing (and normative guidance) of social transformations and processes related to the construction liberal democracy after 1989 is, however, incapable of monopolizing it and the "Transition" has been involved in all sorts of usages. In the present text I examine one of these uses, specifically the popular claim that the Transition failed, and the relationship between and the current crisis of representative democracy.

Medarov, G. (2013). The Occult and the Transition: Conspiracy Theories in post-1989 Bulgaria. in: issue 7, Piron /In Bulgarian /

The most widespread narratives about the transition to democracy after 1989 revolve around the hidden, which diverted us from the right path, and the hidden itself is revealed through metaphors that anchor the boundaries that make sense of the "divergence" in question, such as the red briefcases, the DS, the Russians, the communists, the Americans, the Rann-At plan, montage, corruption, substitution, fake, Bulgarian/totalitarian mentality, puppets and puppet-masters, and others, whether they are posited as forces, subjects, or events. In the radicalized version of these narratives, Freemasons, aliens, Reptilians, Illuminati, Bilderbergers, secret societies, etc. begin to appear. In this paper, I explore the sociological conditions for the imagining of the transition to democracy in question as having been failed by disparate occult forces, or what in 2013 was popularized as the "backstage transition." I pose the question of the reasons for the emergence of this broad background in the first place, situating my response in the field of scholarly debates about conspiracy theories. In the second part, I consider the relationship between conspiracy discourses and narratives of ('failed') transition.

Medarov, G. (2013). "Our Transition is not a Transition"-- Everyday Discourses on the Transition in Shumen, in Gruev, M. (ed.) The Transition in Bulgaria: Memories and Reflections, Sofia: Anamnesis /in Bulgarian/

The article maps the evasive meanings of the category of transition in everyday narratives about the Transition in Bulgaria. The problematique is presented through an analysis of interviews with biographical accounts of transition in Shumen as part of a larger collective study of transition memory in Bulgaria. The main thesis of the text relates to the impossibility of the expert category of transition to be sustained on an everyday level, where narratives of transition directly turn against official expertise, while retaining some of its presuppositions.

Medarov, G., Tsoneva, J., Nikolova, M. (2014). Politics without Politics: "Us" and "Them" in the Protests and the Crisis of Representation. Sofia: Foundation "Media Democracy" / in Bulgarian /

The collective monograph looks at the protests in Bulgaria in the period 2013/2014. They are placed in the context of the broader crisis of representative democracy and its conditions in the post-socialist situation. The protest movement is therefore compared with analogous movements of this period internationally. The Bulgarian protests and their different waves of this period are subjected to a discursive analysis, showing the conditions of possibility for the emergence of peculiar mixtures and overflows between populist discourses and notions of civil society.

Medarov, G., Nikolova, M. (2014). "Struggles over Interpretation in Biographical narratives in Academic Dissidence in the 1980s. In: Piron, 8

This article offers a discursive analysis of the biographical accounts of participants in academic cultures of dissent in the 1980s. It problematizes categories such as totalitarianism, dissidence, power, and resistance in relation to the academic cultures in question.

Medarov, G., Marinov, M. (2015). „The Rhetoric of Volen Siderov and the Rise of Ataka“. в: Fred Leplad (ed.). The Far Right in Europe, London: Lighting Source.

The article analyzes Volen Siderov's rhetoric. It examines his public appearances, his journalism and the books published by Siderov. The transformations of the influential Bulgarian journalist and politician are traced in order to problematize some simplistic notions about the relationship between liberal governance and Siderov's rhetoric.

Medarov, G., Tsoneva, J., Hristov, M., Kassabov, O. (2015). Entrepreneurial Spirit and Spectral Entrepreneurs: Expert Knowledge, Neoliberal Governance and Social Suffering, Sofia: KOI Books /in Bulgarian/

The collective monograph introduces the concept of spectral entrepreneurs. The notion refers to those small-scale businesses, a significant portion of many local economies in segregated communities, but not limited to, that often operate at the edge of formality. They can be

treated as entrepreneurial insofar as their economic rationality entails (and is self-narrated by the spectral entrepreneurs themselves) reinvestment of profits, austere ethics of limiting personal consumption in the name of the enterprise, innovation and risk-taking. These findings contradict the dominant paradigm in Bulgaria (espoused by media and politicians) that presents ethnically segregated communities as defined by a "culture of poverty", inhabited by an "underclass", characterized by risk-aversion, inability to plan, careless spending, criminality, laziness, welfare dependency, patriarchal conservatism, as self-enclosed and radically different from the mainstream. Such negative imaginaries of the local culture have been used to justify punitive measures against local businesses, e.g. the destruction of infrastructure (kiosks, workshops, etc.) by municipal authorities, especially as media stunts before elections. The concept is applied in the analysis of a number of case studies of spectral entrepreneurs with a focus on their personal biographical narratives. The focus of the empirical research is on spectral entrepreneurs in various marginalized communities throughout Bulgaria.

Medarov, G. (2015). "Communism is Evil". *Sociological Problems*, 1-2, 227-251

In this article, I examine the rhetorical mechanisms functioning within the scientific practices of the production of a politically efficient Truth about communism. My main argument is that there is no such thing as a "totalitarian paradigm", but rather a totalitarian inclination. My focus of interest is how, despite the impossibility of internal systematization, it is possible for anti-communist interpretations (those interpretations that think via the category of totalitarianism and try to articulate a moral "judgment"), to appear as a totality. The totalitarian inclination can project coherence only secondarily, i.e., by the very assertion that there is a communist "essence" that could be understood as "evil". This "essence" might function efficiently only if it remains empty enough in order to be able to homogenize internal heterogeneities. In my article, I also problematize certain moments in the revisionist critiques of the totalitarian "paradigm". My argument here is that revisionists risk totalizing something that is far too fragmentary and unsystematic. In other words, revisionists might miss the rhetorical mechanisms of the totalization of the anti-communist scientific practice and thereby

underestimate their capacity to produce truth. Such truth, as I show in the end of my article, might function subversively.

Medarov, G. (2016). „When is Populism Acceptable?“. *Contemporary Southeastern Europe* 3(2): 67 - 86.

Populism is frequently understood as democratic illiberalism. Concrete policies that have been implemented by governing populist parties in Bulgaria, however, have been surprisingly liberal, at least in economic terms. This poses the question whether it is possible to have the opposite of democratic illiberalism, namely, liberal populism. This article investigates the elective affinities between liberal and populist discourses during the Bulgarian Summer protests in 2013. This investigation is done with a strong focus on intellectuals' interpretations as their function is not merely reflective description, but is also formative and prescriptive of political identities. The main argument is that throughout the 2013 Summer protests there was visible tendency of articulation between populist and liberal discourses. They were populist both in the sense of “soft” populism, that is compatible with liberalism, as well as “exclusionary” of ethnic minorities and socially marginalized groups. The Summer protests constructed an identity of a minoritarian subaltern elite, united by its opposition to figures of oligarchic elites, ethnic minorities and illiberal majorities.

Medarov, G. (2017). *Historical Context and Political Steaks in the Discursive Theory of Populism*". In: *Political Research* 1(2), 56-74

This paper traces the main elements, historical context and stakes of Ernesto Laclau's discursive theory of populism as developed by the Essex School of discourse analysis. Laclau's approach is key because it sustains a rigorous theory of populism that is able to rescue the concept from the overly pejorative and pre-theoretical uses of its (mis)use that dominate today. His main argument is that the critique of anti-populism is among the strengths of the discursive theory of populism. To achieve this, however, the theory becomes a general theory of political identification, leading to a new overextension of the term populism.

A possible way out of this impasse is through a reflexive analysis of the historical transformations of the concept of populism itself. In other words, the strengths of the discursive theory of populism can be preserved if it abandons its universal claims (to explain any political identification) and instead focuses on the discursive battles surrounding the concept of populism itself, the populism-antipopulism oppositions, and the historical trajectory of populist problematics.

Medarov, G. (2017). From Liberalism to Authoritarianism. The Bulgarian Case After 1989. Doctoral dissertation

This dissertation applies the discursive approach of Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe to explore the expert, political, scholarly and everyday post-socialist discourses of transition in Bulgaria, as well as related narratives of memory, economy, politics and society in relation to the problematic liberalism-authoritarianism nexus. The main intention is to examine the bases for the formation of liberal political identities in Bulgaria, and their complex (in the sense of attraction and repulsion) relations to democracy and authoritarianism. The literature in political science (trans-ethnological expertise as well as expertise on populism) and the historiography of Bulgaria's socialist past are subjected to empirical sociological discourse analysis. Alongside the expert accounts, everyday accounts of liberalism, transition, its "failure" and the socialist past are subjected to sociological analysis. The main task is to explicate the conditions of possibility for the crisis of liberal democracy and the concomitant crisis of political representation. These processes are mirrored in a broader international framework to show that it is not a question of some Bulgarian exceptionalism.

Medarov, G. (2018). "Masons in Parliament! Political economy of conspiracy theories the debate about the judicial reform in Bulgaria" , Critique and Humanism, 48: 147-164 (in Bulgarian)

The article proposes an explanation of the social conditions of and the political effects from widespread conspiratorial discourses in Bulgaria today. The approach is based on a

generalization of Moishe Postone's use of Marx's critique of political economy to articulate a critical theory of modern antisemitism. My main argument is that it is possible to deploy Postone's thesis, regarding the personalization of abstract domination in modern capitalism, more generally, that is without limiting it to the analysis of strictly antisemitic conspiratorial discourses. What interests me in particular is how to adapt Postone's theory of antisemitism to explain narratives about "the Backstage of the Transition" in Bulgaria today, understood as the secretive force, derailing the nation from its "natural" historical course. The concrete empirical focus of the article is the parliamentary debates around the adoption of amendments to the Judicial System Act from 2016. The amendments' stated goal was to limit influences of "secret societies" in the judicial system; during the debates the imagined "Backstage of Transition" was personalized in the figure of "the freemasons".

Medarov, D., McDonald, D. (2019). Which Way Will the Winds Blow? Post-Privatisation Water Struggles in Sofia, Bulgaria". *Water Alternatives* 12(2) 438-458.

The collapse of the Soviet Union in the 1990s gave rise to widespread experimentation with neoliberal policy across much of the former Soviet sphere of influence. Nowhere was this more evident than in Bulgaria which has been a hotbed of neoliberal reform since the late 1990s, including the introduction of a water concession in Sofia in 1999. This paper critically examines efforts to remunicipalise water in the city. We argue that there is widespread support for water remunicipalisation but it is highly fractured along ideological and institutional lines. Bringing water services back in house is a real possibility but a progressive outcome is far from assured, with far-right nationalists keen to make water public for their own cronyist agenda and with neoliberal forces potentially demanding a commercialised public water utility. There is another more progressive possibility, but one that will require sensitive multi-stakeholder coalition-building (including with Romani communities) and longer-term cultural shifts in public service ethos. We conclude by arguing that progressive organisations in Sofia have no choice but to start mobilising now for the kind of public water operator they want to see when the private contract with Veolia ends in 2025.

Medarov, G. (2020). „The Contradictory Images of Totalitarianism in Contemporary Bulgarian Historiographies“. в: *Psihlogia Sociala* 46 (II)/2020.

The article proposes an explanation of the widespread memory anxieties related to the socialist past in post-1989 Bulgaria and the role of mainstream historiographical research. It focuses on publications and the public interventions of the independent Institute for the Studies of the Recent Past (ISRP), founded in 2005 to counter alleged tendencies of “tacit rehabilitation of the Communist regime”. My main argument is that the dominant frame of studying and teaching history of socialism, namely through the notion of totalitarianism, and its promotion by mainstream academic research projects such as those of the ISRP, contain unsurpassable contradictions and enhance existing anxieties about social memory and national identity.

Medarov, G. (2020). The New Coronavirus and modern governance of hypermodernity, *Heterodoxy* 1-2/20, 369-389 (in Bulgarian)

This article offers an analysis of the controversies of expert coverage of the new coronavirus in the first half of 2020 in the media. It is about the public uses of this expertise and the production of managerial knowledge at this particular historical moment in Bulgaria. The main thesis of the text is that through the contradictions in question, one can observe the gap between modern idealizations of the mathematizability of nature in the context of a supermodern crisis.

Medarov, G. (2021). Towards a Reflexive Theory of Crisis. In: *Sociological problems*, 1, 110-130

The article proposes a reflexive theory of the conceptions of the capitalist crises. Reflexivity entails acknowledging that the notions of crisis do not simply and transparently reflect its essence, but can themselves reflect into that essence. Firstly, I study the productivity of the appearance of the crisis and argue that the nature of the crisis is not given before its practical representation. Then I introduce the non-classical dialectical logic or what can be called an

organon of the theories of mediating structures. Lastly, I apply the proposed theoretical construction in the analysis of the conditions for the appearance of the current environmental crisis as a necessary and not contingent effect of the nature of capitalism.

Medarov, G., Tsoneva, J. (2021). "The Thorny Crown of Labour", in Collective (Eds.). Labour Out of the Frying Pan Into the Fire: Notes from the Pandemic, Sofia: KOI (In Bulgarian)

The article provides an overview of the relationship between the coronavirus pandemic, the anti-epidemic measures and the effects on social and labour rights in Bulgaria. The main argument is that the pandemic and the controversial measures against it have led to the amplification and hardening of some social inequalities in Bulgaria, while case studies from other countries show redistribution as a result.

Medarov, G. (2022). „The Roots of the Moralization of Politics in Post-1989 Bulgaria“. в: Gagyi, A., Slacalek, O. (Eds.) The Political Economy of Eastern Europe 30 years into the ‘Transition’. London: Palgrave Macmillan (International Political Economy Series).

The article raises the question why, despite the relatively very high levels of social inequalities in Bulgaria, there is no political representation or movement trying to reduce them. The paper analyses the social conditions of possibility for the widespread depoliticization of society and the rise of moral-technocratic discourses that deny ideological divisions in the search for moral experts in post-1989 Bulgaria. The technocratization and moralization of political rhetoric is analyzed in relation to the practice of non-voting in elections and the more general crisis of political representation in Bulgaria today.

Medarov, G. (2022). Crises in Official and Popular Festivities: on the Cases of Gabrovo, Varshets and Kosti [in Bulgarian]. Problems of Postmodernity 1: 7-31

The article analyzes the potential of local festivals to serve as an instrument to overcome crises in three particular case studies, namely Gavrovo's Festival of Humour and Satire, Varshets' Resort Mineral Water and the Balkan Mountains Festival and Kosti's fire dancing. The analysis is based on the results of an empirical research conducted in the summer of 2021 within the project “Local festivals: a resource of local communities for crisis management,” supported by the Bulgarian National Science Fund. The main argument is that in all of these cases the festivals cannot be subsumed under the logic of coping with economic underdevelopment. Nevertheless, the festivals have a direct effect on coping with the coronavirus crises both in terms of the practical realization of its irreversibility, as well as in terms of using it as a medium to renegotiate local contradictions and conflicts. Lastly, the article demonstrates the efficacy (and limits) of Bakhtin's theory of the carnivalesque for the understanding of local festivals' role in coping with crises.

Medarov, G. (2023). Global Context of Local Culinary Festivals in Bulgaria. In: Keliyan, M. (Ed.). Local Festivals, Resources, Traditions, Changes. Sofia: Orion Press

Around the world, there is an explosion of local culinary festivals aimed at providing an alternative to the hectic, globalised and industrialised production of mass-produced food. The latter are often perceived as unhealthy, 'inauthentic', of poor quality, destructive of local traditions and customs, harmful to the environment, produced without respect for labour rights and leading to the bankruptcy of local small and medium-sized producers. Bulgaria is no exception to this process, in fact most new and old festivals include in their programme the promotion of local culinary products that explicitly or implicitly oppose the dominant model of fast-food consumption and production. In this paper, I contextualize food festivals within the problematization of social acceleration. The article is a result of the author's work on the project “Local Festivals: Resource of Local Communities for Dealing with Crises”, funded by the NSF of the Ministry of Education and Science (КП-06-H45/5 of 30.11.2020).

Medarov, G. (2023). Propaganda and Public Opinion: Lippmann, Dewey, and Bernays. In: Sociological Problems, 55(1), 142-162 (In Bulgarian)

Public fears of post-truth, hybrid warfare and foreign propaganda are gaining prominence. The purpose of this article is to show such concerns are hardly novel. I will make analogies between the contemporary debate and the problematization of public opinion and propaganda in the United States in the 1920s, juxtaposing the works of Edward Bernays, Walter Lippmann and John Dewey. I examine the incommensurabilities and overlaps in their understandings to extract three types of perspectives towards propaganda: liberal, neoliberal and democratic. Furthermore, I am interested in how to theoretically make sense of the internal contradictions and paradoxes in anti-propaganda attitudes and discourses.

Medarov, G. (2023). Direct and Indirect Discrimination in Marx and Arendt. In: Keliyan, M. (Ed.) Communities and Identities. Jubilee Collection in Honor of Professor Tanya Nedelcheva, 279-293. (in Bulgarian)

This article inquires into the possibility of conceptualizing the relationship between direct and legally imposed, on the one hand, and indirect (and non-legal) discrimination in practice via re-reading texts by Marx and Arendt, dealing with this problem. Their approaches contribute to the understanding of the social conditions, which mediate the appearance of inequalities and discrimination when they are not directly imposed by legislation, that is, in the context of political emancipation. The long-term goal of the aforementioned re-reading is to develop suitable analytical tools for the sociology of practical discrimination after the Cold War in Eastern Europe and Bulgaria in particular. Such tools can be useful for reviewing the so-called intersectional approach in respect to the conceptualization of the social construction of the categories in which inequalities and discrimination appear (e.g. as ethnic difference).

Medarov, G. (2023). Race and Crisis: Critical History of the Production of Communal Difference. Sociological Problems. 55(2), 425-441

In this article I juxtapose the sociology of race of W.E.B. Du Bois and Max Weber. They exemplify an early radical sociologization of race, rejecting the biological and naturalistic presuppositions, prevailing in their historical context. Through this juxtaposition I aim to

derive an approach for thinking about the relationship between race and crisis. By crisis here I mean conjunctures in which the attainment of formal equality is followed by practical inequality, which acquires racialized forms. The latter could eventually become anchored in the legal framework. Both sociologists think in the period between the end of US Civil War and the early twentieth century, when the practical racialized inequalities, following the emancipation, were judicialized in the "Jim Crow" system.

Medarov, G. (2024). „Civil Society“. в: Naum Trajkovski (ed.) Conflicts over History and Memory. forumZFD: Skopje.

The article offers an overview of the everchanging meanings and uses of the concept of civil society in post-Socialist Bulgaria. It contextualizes the notion in the wider debates and transformation of the concept - from early modern philosophy to late socialist and post-socialist politicization of the concept. The transformations of the meanings of "civil society" are juxtaposed to its "dark twin" - populism.

Medarov, G. (2024). Race and Class in Classical and Non-Classical Sociology. Sofia: Orion Press. (in Bulgarian)

This monograph offers a systematic overview of understandings of race and class relations in classical and contemporary sociology. A central thesis is that while early sociology had an understanding of the gradual disappearance of race under the onslaught of modern class distinctions, today's sociology has seen the opposite-a return to the importance of hardened communal and identity distinctions-racial, cultural, civilizational, ethnic, etc. The monograph argues that the relationship between race and class in the history of sociology has always-more been framed as a question of the naturalization and denaturalization of social inequalities/contradictions, even if this sometimes occurs through incommensurable paradigms. A major contribution of the monograph is the introduction of the notion of racialization in the Bulgarian context upon a solid theoretical foundation. In the last part, the notion of racialization is applied to analyze the different regimes of ethnicization of social inequalities in (post)socialist Bulgaria.