Protests and new mobilisations: the emergence of post-communist contestatory citizenship

Anna Krasteva,
New Bulgarian University, Dept of Political Sciences
To plant a green tree in a chaos

• Radichkov in “Turmoil”

Here it comes, a swarm of people and we can’t see its end. As if you would plant a green tree in this chaos and expect it to sprout! You just don’t enter a swarm of people with a green tree!” – to that you say: “and why not? I will enter and I will plant it and as it becomes a big tree, everyone will then say: this tree was planted when there was the chaos, no one believed it will sprout, but it sprouted and look how big it became!

Make cosmos out of chaos
Manifestations:
- “spontaneous”
- “joyful”

At what age starts the political socialization?
Re-inventing citizenship

Communism vs postcommunism

- Belonging
- Participation

Contestatory citizenship

- How
  - types
  - paradoxes
  - characteristics

- Who
  - agency

- Why
The people as source and measure of power (P. Magnette)

Post-communist agora–Rome and Athens at the same time
From the ascendant public citizenship

To the descendant private citizenship

Apathy/Disengagement/Abstention
Difficult discovery of the ‘genre’ of protests
2 strategies for the construction of citizens

Political engineering
- Think thanks
- NGOs

Acts of citizenship
- “To understand how subjects become citizens as claimants of justice, rights and responsibilities” (Isin and Nielsen, p. 18)
Types of citizenship
1. Green citizenship

Greening of the Self
- Post-materialist post-communist values

Greening of Internet

Greening of demands

Symbolic remapping of the city

Spaces of discontent
2. Creative citizenship

- Transformers
- Politics and poetics
- New actors vs new public space
- Urban space - State’s ownership
- Citizens’ appropriation

Politics and poetics
3. E-citizenship

From click democracy to street democracy

Generation Y – from hacker’s manifestos to mobiizations on and offline
4. Contestatory citizenship

Maturity of contestation

Internet in the street “Who is the Net, is red”

2013 – a whole year of street protests
Characteristics

- Temporality
- Aesthetization
- Self-reflexivity
Temporality vs protest’s efficiency

Long and inefficient

Brief and efficient

Civic temporality
Civic appropriation of political time

2 types of pol temporality
Michel Castells

Occupy
Square
Timeless time
Now and future
Present and horizon
Place and project

(Eco-)
Protest
Street
Accelerated

„I want my future today – here and now“
Bgc protestor

Pol temporality – Not determined by Power or Markets, but by Contestation and Protests
Aesthetization of protests – theatricalisation or new agency
Self-reflexivity

The Self as Protester

• “I’m a protester”

Lists/ Open letters

We and the Others
Protestor’s Identity
Paradoxes

Asymmetry
‘Exit’ vs ‘Voice’
The revolutionary myth of youth
(In)Authenticity
Local vs Global
Left-wing vs right-wing
Asymmetric cartography of mobilisations

Eco

Anti-oligarchy
From “Exit” to “Voice”
Albert Hirschman

Post-communist transition
- 3 responses
- ‘Exit’

Contestatory democracy
Digital diaspora – voice in exit
‘Voice’ instead of ‘exit’

“If you do not like it here, leave”
Revolutionary myth vs positive bias

Revolutionary myth of youth

Essentializing youth

Positive bias
(In)Authenticity of protests?

What at the protest square?

Sofia

Concert of Davide Martello in Istanbul

Kiev
Global or National

Two opposite trends

1. From global to national logic

1. National protests vs rapid spreading of the same innovative model across borders
Left-wing or right-wing

Occupy
- Anti-capitalist
- Anti-austerity
- Left-wing

Bulgarian protests
- Anti-oligarchy
- Right-wing
The three “I”

or the formula

of the contestatory citizenship – on and offline
Indignation/Rage

Nitesche

Camus
Cogito of I
I’m enraged, ergo I’m

Stephane Hessel
“Indignez-vous”

Springs
Indignados
Occupy
D. Wolton

The political project of the digital revolution?

Printing - Reformation

Radio/TV – Mass Democracy

Internet

Pyramides

Copy/paste

Hacker manifest

Digital contestatory citizenship
Imagination

Beginning of post-communist democracy = End of history

Mimetism

Lack of historic imagination

“Occupiers = dreamers”

The best way to foresee the future is to create it.
Slogan of students Occupy in Sofia, 2013
Colin Hay
„Why we hate politics?“

Form the politics we deserve

To the levels of political participation they deserve
The three “I” for three causes

- Indignation
- Internet
- Imagination

- Dream
- Change
- Augment
Who

Agency
Networked individual vs Real democracy movement

Not arborescent

Rhizomatic
Dreamers

Utopian project

- The hackers manifests
- “Who wants to dream?”

Creativity
Experimentation
Innovative subjectivity
Why?

Or concluding remarks
New generation of cleavages

WE
Socio-ec cleavages
Post- SWW

EE
Socio-pol cleavages
Post-communism

Socio-cultural cleavages
Attractiveness of symbolic politics

From party politics

From interests

From structures

To symbolic politics

To passion

To mobilizations

From party politics to street politics
Post-communist revolutions

I democratic revolution
- Elites
- Representative democracy

II democratic revolution
- Citizens
- Contestatory democracy and acts of citizenship
New revolution or new citizen?

This tree was planted when there was the chaos, no one believed it will sprout, but it sprouted and look how big it became!

Radichkov

Contestatory citizen as Augmented citizen