

Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski"
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DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE



ABSTRACT

On dissertation on:

"Mechanisms of controlled voting in the Roma communities in Bulgaria 1991-2021".

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Prepared by: Anita Simeonova Stefanova

Scientific supervisor: Prof. Stoycho Petrov Stoychev

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Author's name, surname, family name: Anita Simeonova Stefanova

Theme of the dissertation: 'Mechanisms for Controlled Voting in Roma Communities in Bulgaria 1991-2021'.

The dissertation contains 246 pages and includes an introduction, three chapters and a conclusion. The literature used consists of 233 sources in both English and Bulgarian. The appendices (3 in total) are in a separate book body. There are 16 graphics.

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The defense of the dissertation will take place at from hours at The materials are available in Room 324, Block 4, Blvd. "Tsarigradsko shose", No. 125.

Jury composition:

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Reviews:

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2- General characteristics of the dissertation

Relevance

The issue of corruption in the electoral process is topical and this is evident from its presence on the public agenda, in the media space and regularly during election campaigns it becomes an occasion for frequent political discussions. Its importance is clearly present in the reasons for changes to the Electoral Code, and this is an argument of every political party. Usually, one or another initiated change is related to the reduction of controlled and bought votes, such were the compulsory voting, the purposeful complication of the electoral process by the introduction of machine voting in polling stations with more than 300 voters and, subsequently, the return of the possibility for voters to choose between paper and machine voting.

There is a tendency for certain vulnerable groups of the Bulgarian population to become the main object of pressure to vote in elections contrary to their political convictions or without political leanings, whether due to the proposal to sell votes or due to the threat of certain types of sanctions. These are major deficits in the electoral process that place population groups in social and economic marginalisation, and the problem appears to be becoming civilisational.

The problems with the Roma communities are not only not being solved within the framework of the political and economic transformations that started 30 years ago, but on the contrary they are deepening to the point where they have become a civilizational problem. The existence of negative social attitudes and poor economic conditions prevent the full integration of some Roma groups into Bulgarian society. In fact, these are a prerequisite for them to give up and withdraw from the political process and to respond to the proposals of political parties for economic voting.

Although many attempts have been made to involve them in social and economic activities, they have been ineffective, and as a result, some Roma groups have become a tool for achieving certain political goals, such as winning and controlling public resources. None of the existing and existing parties aiming to represent Roma voters have been able to achieve significant results in the direction of solving Roma problems and their effective integration into the political, economic and social life of the country. Some of the main parties include Roma candidates in their lists to secure the votes of the Roma electorate, but this does not guarantee a solution to the problems of segregation of Roma communities.

In recent years and due to declining turnout, their votes have increasingly been needed to win local elections, where the choice is a majority and every vote counts, but they have also prevailed in elections for MPs. On the other hand, the inability of political parties to mobilise the electorate is

due to the increasingly frequent feeling of lack of trust in political formations, the inability of voters to identify with them, as well as the general apathy that has reached a large part of Bulgarian citizens. Political parties try to fill this vacuum through vote buying and other dishonest practices in order to secure the votes of the Roma electorate as well, thus turning them into a tool for winning elections. Of course, this is possible thanks to the increasingly low voter turnout of the last 30 years. A key role in this process is played by informal Roma leaders who act as intermediaries between parties seeking the votes of Roma voters.

The aim is to obtain qualitatively new knowledge about the trends and mechanisms related to controlled and bought voting in Roma communities in Bulgaria for the period 1991 - 2021. The period that the developed text covers is not random. It is so long precisely in order to be able to trace the mechanisms of controlled voting used in Roma neighbourhoods from the beginning of the democratic changes until 2022. As we have already mentioned since the dawn of democratic change

Roma citizens have faced a number of challenges. Over the years, more and more people of Roma origin have become the object of controlled voting, and the mechanisms and organisation of the whole process have adapted according to political and social reality. If at the beginning of the transition the pressure on how to vote was probably not so significant, in the last 15 years it has been a tangible problem that threatens the fairness and transparency of the electoral process.

Object and subject of the study

The object of this text is the Roma communities, which have gradually become a socially, politically and economically marginalized group over the last three decades. The lack of education and quality employment has made some of these groups highly dependent on informal community leaders, and thus they have become subject to various forms of control. This paper will examine in detail the root cause of the deepening process of strong alienation and encapsulation of sections of this community. The focus is on the characteristics of parts of Roma communities as well as the different economic strategies they use to survive. Key is the role of informal leaders, who take over the functions and responsibilities of institutions and become an unavoidable factor.

The subject of the dissertation is the mechanisms of controlled voting that are used on parts of Roma communities in Bulgaria. Over the last three decades they have changed and adapted,

resulting in a permanent undermining of the electoral process and voters' rights. Whereas in the early days of the establishment of vicious practices, the time to organise took approximately two weeks before the elections, now the process starts a month to two before the vote (Transparency International, 2019: 13).

Tasks of the dissertation

In general, the stages we go through to achieve the aim of the text and confirm the hypothesis could be divided into three. The first step towards the achievement of the goal is related to the clarification, specification, deepening, methodological justification of the essence, nature and structure of the research object- controlled and bought voting in parts of Roma communities. Of course, this is where the conceptual apparatus that will serve as the basis for the whole text comes in. Without clarification of basic concepts, terms, and processes, we could not achieve the goal. The second key task is related to the analysis of the actual situation of the subject of the study, namely the Roma community. An entire chapter is devoted to the characteristics of the Roma population, the economic strategies it uses for its survival, and the prerequisites for organizing a controlled vote in this group. It is important to distinguish the type of organization and way of life in ghettoized urban structures, in lively areas with those in depopulating settlements. The types of informal leaders in Roma communities and their role in controlled voting are discussed in detail. One of the tasks is to conduct interviews with such leaders immediately prior to elections. A key task is to conduct research on the results in selected Roma polling stations in the period 2005-2021, where trends and influences of specific political formations can be clearly traced over the years. As a final task, we set out to prove or disprove our main hypothesis, summarize the findings, and derive recommendations to mitigate the phenomena.

Main research question

The main research question addressed in the dissertation text is related to the expanding scope of the phenomenon of vote buying and selling over the last 30 years in some Roma communities and the results in terms of vote redistribution in the respective Roma neighbourhood. If after the year 2000 there were Roma parties in the political space that in some form represented the interests of Roma voters, they are gradually losing their power to represent them. The vacuum thus created has been skillfully exploited by the main political actors, who are permanently pushing out the Roma parties.

Within Bulgarian society, the bought and controlled vote is not just an attempt at electoral manipulation, but a civilizational problem that would be difficult to overcome with cosmetic normative changes and situational actions in the neighborhoods two weeks before the elections. The solution to the problem requires, on the one hand, civic intolerance and, on the other, a multi-sectoral approach to counter and combat.

This paper makes the assumption that the political market for bought votes in Roma communities is the result of demand by political parties and organized supply by some Roma community leaders who use their authority and control mechanisms over particular groups of voters. These mechanisms and the authority itself are based on social, economic, cultural, etc. preconditions, the effect of which is amplified by the actions or inactions of the state and in particular of the law enforcement authorities, which fail, regardless of the reasons, to establish the application of relevant legislation on a significant part of the ghettoised population in Roma communities.

On the basis of the research conducted, several possible models of how parties try to influence in some sections will be considered. Parliamentary and local elections between 2005 and 2021 are covered as a prerequisite for tracking trends. A key factor is also the power relations between those seeking, in the form of political parties, and the informal leaders who broker, trade and organise the buying and selling of votes. The study focuses on some of the largest neighbourhoods in the regional cities, but also polling stations in small settlements, some with 100% Roma populations, also voting homogeneously and in this respect are of interest for the study. It is important to clarify that the survey is not intended to be nationally representative. In general, due to the heterogeneity and dispersion of Roma communities, it is difficult to derive general characteristics of the pressure exercised. The schemes used for controlled and bought voting are carried out outside the law, which implies the need to hide them and this makes the process very difficult and sometimes even impossible to detect and track. Law enforcement often becomes complicit and thus the scale of the phenomenon is very difficult to ascertain as there is no consensus on taking concrete measures. The end result of this process is a perpetuating trend over the period under study of an increasing number of Roma voters becoming subject to pressure to vote contrary to their political beliefs. There is a more thorough preparation of vote-buying mechanisms, as direct forms of offering money are joined by methods of exercising control through incentives and threats.

Methods of study

In order to investigate the assumption stated above, a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods will be used in this work. This necessity stems from the fact that one scientific discipline is not able to answer the research tasks set in the thesis comprehensively enough, which determines the interdisciplinary nature of this work, uniting political, cultural, social, anthropological, ethnic issues. The research was conducted in several stages, the ultimate aim of which was to trace and analyse how the Roma polling stations under study are controlled and how parties allocate their votes.

Preliminary stage:

- o A review of the academic literature, a historical overview, a desk study and a theoretical synthesis of the research relevant to the topic of the thesis.
- o Selection of research methods for the object and subject of the study.
- o Characteristics of Roma communities- hierarchical structures, economic strategies, informal leadership, dependencies.

Main stage:

- o Conducting detailed field research through the application of in-depth interviews.
- o Study of changes in electoral outcomes in selected Roma precincts.

Final stage.

- o Analysis and synthesis of the examined trends in electoral outcomes.
- o Based on the generalizations, models of the structure of the vote market are constructed.

To achieve the objectives of this dissertation, the methods and approaches used- qualitative and quantitative, are conventionally divided into data collection methods and data analysis methods.

Methods of data collection: conduct 10 pcs of in-depth interviews in the period 2021 with vote brokers, dealers, community tartori. They were conducted in the following localities:

- 3 pcs. in districts. "3 groups of voters, 3 groups of voters, 2 groups of voters, 3 groups of voters, 3 groups of voters, 3 groups of voters, 3 groups of voters. 3
- 2 pcs. 2 in "Hristo Botev", Sofia Sofia;

- 1 pcs. in the quarter. 1 in "Obelia", Sofia 1 in Obele, Sofia;
- 1 pc. in the village of. Bukovluk, Sofia 1 in Kolubkov;
- 2 pcs. 2 in "Meden Rudnik", Varna. Burgas;
- 1 pcs. in the quarter. "1 in Iztok, Pazardzhik.

The interviews were aimed at identifying the organisation and process of control. The choice of conducting in-depth interviews with informal Roma leaders involved in the controlled voting is due to two factors: direct observation and the opportunity for personal assessment, which are important for formulating conclusions from the experience. In general, this type of qualitative method is effective and provides a wide range of statements for interviewees to describe the setting being studied. Through these, the views of the interviewees relevant to the problem posed are revealed. In our case, the interviews with informal Roma leaders provide us with a different and very different view of Roma voters' conceptualisation of political rights, which is refracted through economic strategy and is far removed from understandings of political and civic culture.

b) Methods of information analysis: review and analysis of the collected textual materials (including the periodical press); processing and analysis of audio-visual materials; document analysis; secondary data analysis; processing and analysis of the interviews conducted; processing and analysis of electoral results.

Challenges for the dissertation

A major problem that emerges for the dissertation is the inability to determine the exact scale of the phenomenon, as the process of organizational preparation occurs outside the confines of the law, and the participants cleverly manage to conceal their acts. The lack of a rich body of theoretical and empirical research on the topic is an additional challenge. This dissertation attempts to analyze and structure trends in controlled voting in specific Roma neighborhoods between 1991 and 2022. The elections held during this period are the starting point for the research, allowing the processes to be traced from their inception. This is the reason for the choice of such a long scope of the period. A significant challenge to conducting the study was the refusal of participants to give interviews, which put us in a position of not being able to explore the phenomenon on a larger scale among more representatives of this group.

Limitations of the study

The present text is an attempt to study the political market in some of the Roma communities in Bulgaria. It focuses on some of the largest neighborhoods in the regional cities, the majority of them with 100% Roma population, which show a high degree of homogeneity in terms of party preferences. As mentioned earlier in the text, the selected ten cases exhaust the variety of potentially distinguishable characteristics. The focus is on Roma neighbourhoods located in large regional cities; the text does not consider Roma communities exercising their right to vote in small localities. The text does not set out to analyse in detail the demand from political parties, but looks at the supply of votes by Roma informal leaders and voters. Regarding the 10 in-depth interviews conducted, it is important to make some clarifications. First of all, due to the specificity of the phenomena considered and the fact that they occur outside the framework of the law, it was challenging to woo participants and organizers. The majority of refusals were received after June 2021, when the actions of the caretaker government to counteract the unregulated practices in the electoral process were launched. A challenge is the accuracy of the data in terms of the scale of bought and controlled votes over the years.

The study covers first-order elections, such as parliamentary and local elections. European Parliament and presidential elections will not be considered in this text, as they are second-order elections and parties focus their efforts on them to a lesser extent. The temporal scope of the study is 2005- 2021, with eight parliamentary and five local elections held and hundreds of polling stations examined in total. In this regard, the changes in the electoral code are presented both historically and within the period of the thesis. The study does not focus on the most recent and up-to-date changes in the electoral code concerning the introduction of parallel machine and paper voting, as it is not relevant to the present study.

3- Brief outline of the dissertation

This thesis consists of an Introduction, three chapters and a conclusion. The first chapter is the introduction to the dissertation topic. It aims to conceptualise key processes in the emergence and development of democracy and democratic institutions, as well as the electoral process and the role of political parties as representatives of citizens' interests. This is the place for an explanation of the phenomena of bought and controlled votes, the distinction between the collection and obtaining of votes, the political market and clientelism, as well as the mechanisms used and the

brokers who implement controlled voting. The part is fundamental for the considered parts of Roma communities, which we could classify as more likely to carry out controlled voting.

Chapter two is key as it conceptualizes economic strategies in some marginalized groups, the preconditions for the successful implementation of vicious phenomena, and examines the processes of evangelization of Roma communities and the influence of churches. The types of informal leaders actively involved in organizing and scale are also presented here.

The Roma could be considered conventionally in two divisions - both as individual communities and as a society (a distinct part of it in the respective country). The internal subdivisions of the Roma community influence their group, subgroup, metagroup and preferential identities. In addition, the Roma in Eastern Europe have over the centuries developed a new qualitative level in the complex structure of their multidimensional identity - the sense of belonging to the particular nation to which they belong. This result, inevitably, is part of achieving a higher degree in their civic consciousness.

The first part of the chapter "The Roma in the Period of Socialism" deals with three periods of the policy of the Bulgarian Communist Party (BCP) towards the Roma population in the period 1944-1989. In the former (1944-1958), the Roma were for the first time subject to a targeted policy for full inclusion in the socio-political, socio-economic and cultural life of the country (Stoyanova, 2017). The second period (1958 - 1978) is associated with a policy of inclusion of Roma in the "socialist way of life" through the elevation of their way of life and culture. The BCP also carried out the first "voluntary" renaming of Roma professing Muslim religion and the line of limiting the scope of Roma manifestations was adopted. In the third period (1978-1989), a policy of inclusion of the Roma population was implemented through the demarcation of mixed neighbourhoods, again changing names and further restricting Roma events. In general, during all three distinct periods, attempts were made to address common problems of the Roma population through political enlightenment, education (albeit often in segregated schools), cultural performances, ethnic tolerance, provision of opportunities for, albeit low-skilled and low-paid jobs, domestic arrangements and criminal offences.

The second part, "Roma after 1989", focuses on marginalisation, which by its very nature is a complex multilayered concept, bringing together various effects such as lack of development and resources, social distance and isolation, clientelistic ties, oppression, cultural disintegration and

alienation from public regulations. Poverty, unemployment and discrimination are prerequisites for socio-economic and political exclusion and lead to adverse consequences at the personal level but also at the community level. As victims or survivors of the post-socialist period, Roma find themselves in the position of presenting themselves in negative roles. The media also contribute to the ethnic identification of offenders and criminals in domestic offences, and thus more publicly shape and stigmatise the image of Roma. One of the most prevalent themes of Roma-related media narratives is that of Roma crime. Another current mythologeme is that of Roma as 'political sell-outs'. This image is linked to the perception that Roma traditionally sell their votes to whichever political party offers a higher price than the others during elections. The media feeds this belief by pushing the idea that corruption and façade democracy happen because of the less educated and lack of public engagement of Roma who sell their democratic rights for money and personal short-term gains. Thus, Roma are represented by the media not as citizens, but in the role of unworthy recipients of civil rights who willingly participate in the establishment of already established practices of political corruption in Bulgaria (S.E.G.A 2022 Foundation: 21-24).

In general, spatial segregation and concentration is blamed on the Roma themselves, and the reason is sought in their "herd mentality" and their desire to live together separately from others in order not to be imposed by the demands of society and to be away from institutional control. Conversely, there is no focus on the unwillingness of the majority to live together with Roma, which is a major prerequisite for the situation currently observed in some large cities. There is also an overlooking of the guilt of the institutions that left Roma neighbourhoods in the 1990s and, through their inaction, served as a catalyst for the ghettoisation of these neighbourhoods. In addition, there is no mention of the state's culpability for illegal construction and its failure to improve housing conditions (Tomova, Stoychev, Ivanov 2020: 86).

The next important section within chapter two is related to the processes of evangelisation of the Bulgarian Roma. After the onset of democratic changes in the country, the processes of spreading the Gospel among the Roma community encompassed large scales. Hence the necessity of examining these processes in more depth and analysing the trends of these phenomena and in what way it influences the identity of this group. There are several categories of Roma in our country, depending on the religion they profess: Orthodox, Catholic, Muslim and Evangelical. The overall

process and results of the acceptance of evangelical baptism by Gypsies has been called Gypsy Evangelicalism/Protestantism.

One of the main characteristics of the process of evangelical conversion among the Roma is in fact its massiveness after the democratic changes. Through the same massiveness, conversion contributes to the closure of Roma within their own community and the deepening of marginalization (Benovska-Subkova, 2003: 253-284). According to Ilona Tomova, there is an immediate link between the "marginalization" (lagging behind in all social spheres) of the Roma and "evangelization" (the widespread spread of Protestant churches among them). She looks for the reasons for the widespread influence of evangelicalism among the Roma primarily in the socio-economic situation in the country. Religion represents a pillar for preserving the psychological equilibrium of thousands of Roma who live in poor conditions but with the hope of a better life (Tomova, 1998: 343). According to Pamporov, evangelization provides a social chance in individuals otherwise threatened by the processes of ghettoization and social anomie (Pamporov, 2006: 324). The increased control over alcoholism, drug use and domestic violence, combined with the emotional and real support offered by evangelical churches to people in need, integrates the representatives of different gypsy communities in large cities.

Initially, preachers try to "educate" different qualities in Roma to be "good" Christians. However, once they take over the leadership role, they begin to run the churches in their own way and practice and preach the rules and dogmas of the religion as they see fit. The authority of the Roma clergy is based on maintaining good relations with the head pastors of the Bulgarian congregations, as the opposite would lead to isolation and lack of advantages. Within the neighborhoods, however, the Roma spiritual leaders are the true leaders and the Bulgarian pastors do not challenge their authority. The pastor is the most important figure in Roma churches, as he is the head of the house of prayer and is the religious leader of the community. He has a universal role as he combines two functions - that of a religious leader and a public figure. A very important condition for the preacher is that he should possess the necessary authority and influence among his community. As they depend on his charisma, as well as on factors such as education, family status, personal example, behaviour in the society and church, contacts with other churches and preachers (Slavkova 2003: 172-175; Slavkova 2006).

Authority is a moral category that defines the preacher's religious and social position. Above all, he possesses it for the reason that he is perceived to be God's theologian and God's chosen one. Personal qualities are of particular importance since he has been able to attract people's attention because of them and lead a group of people after him. The continual segmentation of churches is an example of the preacher's authority manifesting itself in the house of prayer and the emergence of new churches are common. In terms of the qualities a pastor should possess we can distinguish the need to be a good speaker (Weber, 1992: 268), wisdom and intelligence. Also to be familiar with the Bible and to be able to quote passages while making comparisons with real-life events. The pastor usually exercises an implicit control over the behaviour and morality of the laity in their daily lives through his sermons in church. Currently, pastors with higher religious education are few and far between in Bulgaria. Regarding secular education, it is more common for spiritual leaders to have primary or secondary education, with a small percentage having higher education. Some pastors are even illiterate and usually memorize passages from the Bible. A larger proportion of preachers have secular occupations, such as workers in private and public companies, employees in government institutions, musicians, farm workers, etc. Owning one's own business is considered prestigious, as is registering one's own NGO. In general, for the majority of spiritual leaders, involvement in NGOs and politics is incorrect, as the pastor should be fully committed to spiritual life and service (Marushiakova and Popov 2004: 71-100).

Some have no interest in politics and don't vote, while others, on the contrary, choose to follow the political career path and become popular after being included in lists for national or local elected positions. The church, led by its pastor, plays not only a religious but also a secular role through such activities. After the adoption of evangelical baptism in the social life of Gypsy groups, a significant change occurred in approaches to problem-solving, in the social behaviour of believers and in the role of the pastor (Gay y Blassco 2004: 255-272). It is possible that the same has an impact on the political orientation of the laity.

In the last official census, 69,852 (1.7%) identified themselves as Protestants, but unofficial information suggests that there are more. The answer "other Christian" was chosen by 13,927, or 0.3% of those who answered the question (NSI). Various sources give unofficial figures which vary widely: from 24,651 to 80,000. According to some estimates, about half of Protestants in Bulgaria are Roma. The number of evangelized Roma is, a controversial issue insofar as it is used

as an argument in the competition among pastors for access to prestige, resources and power. The increase in the number of churches with an ethnic Roma background and the multiplication of Roma evangelists, tends to be seen in the aspiration of the church community itself and pastors in particular to recruit members from this ethnic group (Slavkova, 2007). This whole process P. Ignatov defines it as "gypsyization" of the BCC. This is how he defines encapsulation in ethnically homogeneous churches. The same author believes that after 1995 a whole new generation of pastors, Roma, for whom education is not essential, have entered Bulgaria.

In order to maximize the objectivity, comprehensiveness and symmetry of the study, in addition to examining the processes of evangelization of parts of the Roma communities, the chapter examines the processes of Turcification of some Roma neighborhoods in some cities (Plovdiv, Pazardzhik, Kardzhali, Haskovo, etc.). Bulgaria is home to a Roma community defined by the surrounding population as 'Turkish Roma'. The name has been used since the Ottoman Empire, and is understood in the sense of "Muslims" and represents the mixing and interchangeability of religion and ethnicity in this historical period. The differentiated self-consciousness of Turkish Gypsies varies between Roma and Turkish identities. In some cases they self-identify as "Turkish Gypsies"

Turkish Gypsies are a heterogeneous community with a complex and differently oriented identity (Marushiakova, Popov 1993: 96-97). If in the past distinctions were based on practiced crafts and way of life, gradually these distinctions have been almost erased and there are other markers by which they identify themselves - language (Gypsy, Turkish or both), ethnic identity (Gypsy identity or Turkish) and religious affiliation (former and current Muslims) (Slavkova, 2004: 2- 10).

There is undoubtedly a classification of Roma informal leaders in the chapter. The informal leader in the Roma world has never become one through election or appointment. It is an unwritten rule that a Roma leader comes from a family that is respected and authoritative, both by community members and non-Roma. In some places, there is an entrenchment of one or the other, but it is also possible that there are more informal local leaders; this is a natural process within a competitive environment and is primarily a matter of personal honour and public prestige. With each generational change in Roma, a leader has emerged who can be defined as the informal leader of the family and clan community. Usually, the informal leader established himself as the main

regulator of relations both between individual members of the clan and as its main representative before the other Roma clans on the one hand and the various institutions of official power on the other. Authority is formed on the basis of their personal qualities throughout their life path. It should be recognized both among the community and outside it. Activities outside communities make Roma leaders visible to the general public.

The vision of the Roma leaders is linked to the state of the community at micro and macro level as well as to the potential for development. It is also a prerequisite for the inclusion of Roma issues in local and national policy agendas. The assimilationist aspirations of the majority, with which Roma communities have coexisted for centuries, are also a prerequisite for the emergence of this type of personality. Undervaluing Roma leads to an identity crisis, both for the individual and within the family and the community. This necessitates the emergence of personalities who can win the consent of different tribal communities and assume the role of leaders, mediators, to balance and regulate relations. This is required both internally between the different representatives of the Roma community, but also externally - in interaction with other Roma communities, but also representatives of the majority. The Roma informal leader can be defined as follows: realizes that the strength of family, tribal and interpersonal relations is eroded by the abandonment of traditional rules and ethics of relationships and is therefore the bearer and guardian of the same; introduces and imposes informally, common rules of behavior and ensures their observance by all; ensures peaceful coexistence between the representatives of the different Roma clans and between them and the representatives of non-Roma communities within the neighbourhood/home and the settlement; mediates in the dialogue between representatives of the community and representatives of the institutions; defends the community interest and acts as a spokesperson for the community interest. In fact, if informal leaders are recognizable and authoritative, their behaviour and opinion are likely to positively influence the change of attitudes towards education and integration in the Roma community itself (Nunev and Sechkov, 2009: 5-20).

The attempts for political careers of Roma elites/leaders are linked to their ethno-group origin or belonging, as well as to group protectionism and favouritism of "their own". The informal hierarchy of Roma groups is projected in the representation of these sub-communities in Roma elites or leaders who engage in social or political affairs. In this way, the social networks and

dependencies of the more powerful Roma communities or of the ruling elites/leaders are unceremoniously imposed over other representatives of Roma communities (Mizov, 2008). In the text of the thesis, by 'leaders in Roma communities' here we mean informal leaders who trade votes.

Buying votes and exercising control over free political choice most often happens at the will of the leader of a group, he "bargains" for votes with various party leaders and candidates. It is rare for someone to leapfrog the tartar and bargain individually. The leaders are the ones who make contact and broker the sale itself, thus creating dependence on the political parties.

Often mayors and local authorities remain passive and 'turn a blind eye' to some of the crimes they commit because Roma groups are convenient and their votes are traded in exchange for a certain type of political protection. This has led to tensions between ethnic groups in the country because there remains a sense of injustice and lawlessness.

Due to the fact that Roma groups are under the absolute control of their leaders and vote as one group, their votes are also the most coveted by all those involved in organising criminal networks, mayors and local leaders. Their winning is usually negotiated only with authority and this facilitates the process of organization because Roma are executive and listen to their leader's orders. Those who dare to leapfrog the tartar and "bargain" on their own are sanctioned, threatened or even excommunicated. This maintains a sense of fear among members and is used by leaders to exert control.

Ten in-depth interviews were conducted in the "high season" of controlled vote buying in Roma communities to clarify the trends in vote buying and the mechanisms used. The interviews are substantive in nature as they provide a kind of culmination of the developing trend of vote buying in Roma communities. The local leaders tell how the process of organization takes place - from the meeting with the representatives of the political parties and the arrangements for money to the actual payment with everyone in the chain. According to the interviewees' accounts, it is a practice to mobilize resources for each election for controlled voting, with a focus on parliamentary and even more so local elections. As prices for the latter can be very high. The organisation usually starts a month in advance with the brokers targeting what scale of voters will be covered, finding people intermediaries who are tasked with going round the houses, drawing up lists, a few days before the election to distribute the first part of the money. On election day there are people in

charge of checking whether people have voted. Their role is to observe in the area of the polling stations who has already voted and mark them on the list, and if there are still non-voters at the end of polling day, he visits them to remind them to do so. There is also sometimes organised transport of voters to the polling stations. After the end of polling day and the results are in, the second part of the payment to voters can now proceed.

The motives put forward by the brokers for their involvement in such schemes are crucial. They state the following: 'We here in the neighbourhood are waiting for them to come because they provide money. People are poor and they realise that if they take 4 people from a family for 50 BGN they will get 200 BGN. Do you have any idea how long a family here can get by on that money? They immediately go shopping for months on end. So we look at elections like this, as something to make money out of' (Appendix 1). It is noteworthy that the stated reasons for the brokers and the voters themselves are mainly economic. And the parties' proposals provide them with financial incentives, which are the main motives for not hesitating to participate in unregulated schemes. Voters do not see elections as participation in the democratic process and a statement of civic consciousness. In fact, there is no clear assessment of the value of citizenship and we could speak of the existence of a specific political culture. Elections in Roma communities are mainly seen as an economic strategy that brings a good income to the majority of families in a particular neighbourhood. On the other hand, elections are seen as a tool for blackmail and to achieve goals that are inherently illegal, as a protection for various illegal schemes organised by Roma informal leaders. Thus, the organisation of controlled voting in Roma communities is organised on the principle of "service for service". Roma leaders receive protection from ruling local leaders in exchange for help in mobilising voters. Election Day has always focused a great deal of attention on the techniques used by those involved in the electoral process, such as vote fraud (ballot stuffing or destruction, falsification of election records, buying entire polling stations). In this respect, complaints from international observers at all elections are numerous and indicate violations of an established systematic nature. Often the focus of international organisations is on polling stations in typically Roma neighbourhoods, where the risk of distortion or vote rigging is greatest. Despite the positioning of various observers in high-risk polling stations, there is no real result. The brokers over the last 30 years have perfected the best and most covert schemes to buy votes. In this regard, only findings are made after the end of the election

day, but the practices are not stopped, on the contrary, specifically in this minority group, the mechanisms of controlling the vote are increasingly spread from election to election.

As an illegal activity, vote-buying is largely hidden from public view and is carried out to circumvent public rules. Most of the steps involved are not easily observed (Schaffer and Schedler, 2005). In many cases, those engaged in vote-buying come from the same low-income backgrounds as the voters targeted by their efforts (Aspinall, 2014: 58).

Pressure on voters is intensifying, and is being exerted by an expanding range of actors - GOP representatives, local community leaders, usurers, employers, local government officials, advocates and observers, and members of PECs - and their chosen forms are becoming increasingly criminal. Mayors are also among the most important players, and are almost always involved in one form or another in controlled voting, and even trading. They are often the largest employer in smaller towns because they hold the municipal companies - garbage collection, water and sewerage, forestry, etc., as well as subcontractors or concessionaires (Stoychev, 2018).

The mechanisms for putting pressure on the unemployed and socially disadvantaged by usurers and "employers" are particularly influential because of the fact that they are dependencies on people who have virtually no resources to counteract it. The preconditions for this are low literacy and knowledge of basic rights and institutions, that they live in ghetto structures and are susceptible to manipulation. The isolation of Roma communities is linked to the inability to find other sources of income and low literacy levels appear to be important factors that discourage people from resisting or reporting to institutions.

The specific culture of Roma communities is often associated with obedience to certain rules and traditions. In some settlements, a parallel order and economy has been established, where "business" is divided into sectors (formal trade in goods, illegal trade in cigarettes, prostitution, etc.), a "financial" sector has been established, where moneylenders provide loans at exorbitant prices and live off this activity. This is a prerequisite for the launch of influence mechanisms. When elections are held, the usurer, has a key role in deciding which candidate or party should be supported in the elections, having subsequently controls the implementation of the order and simplifies the debt. In such a system, the usurer is not the only key figure in the neighborhood-he is one of several intermediaries in an established system of control, at the apex of which are one or more informal leaders.

An important instrument in this regard is the withdrawal of funds that are received from the state through debit cards. The practice of withholding debit cards is not new; it is very similar to the system of withholding identity cards. However, in the case of ID retention, the focus is on control in the exercise of voting rights, while debit cards are used as a tool to keep people economically dependent and insecure (Kashukeeva- Nusheva, 2015: 28). In addition to this, illiteracy often poses an obstacle to the preparation of documents for the same social benefits. In these cases, without the mediating role of local informal leaders (Roma leaders, mediators, mayors), they would not be able to benefit from social assistance in the form of money in kind, energy resources for heating. This is again a prerequisite for members of Roma communities to fall into a type of dependency, as this type of assistance is personalised in the face of the mediators who provide key assistance. The possibility of obtaining a disability pension, through a TEC certificate, also falls under the category of social assistance. In return for the benefits received, informal leaders provide instructions on how to vote in elections and secure electoral support from citizens over whom they exercise social and political patronage. Social assistance is becoming one of the tools for creating dependencies and putting pressure on socially vulnerable citizens. This is the reason why social assistance structures themselves become the target of pressure from local political leaders, local government representatives, and informal leaders in communities in an attempt to establish control over constituents (Transparency International, 2019: 5).

There is a process of more diligent preparation to exert pressure on groups of the population, adding to the direct forms of vote buying free shopping in shops, payment of extra bonuses to salaries, free refuelling at petrol stations. The organisers of these illegal practices are inventing new and more veiled forms of vote-buying, such as registering advocates and observers who not only exercise control over the members of the CEC but are also legally bought voters; providing energy benefits in kind; forgiving debts; buying votes through intermediaries on the pyramid principle.

In order to make it more difficult to detect these practices, the organisers are becoming more sophisticated and inventive, and the preparation of vote-buying schemes begins months before the elections. Exchanges of favours, provision of material goods, threats and other forms of pressure are resorted to.

From the interviews conducted just before the parliamentary elections in April 2021, we can infer a general feeling among the interviewees that representatives of political formations seek their support in a period of one to two months before the elections. As the mediators tell what is most honestly required of them: prepared lists of votes (Fakulteta, Iztok,); organizing as many people as possible (Obelia); giving explanations (Meden Rudnik, Bukovlyk); organizing relatives and acquaintances (Hristo Botev). They say that the preparation itself starts at least 1 month before the election date, which brings predictability to all participants in the process - political parties and their representatives, mediators and voters. The interviews also touched upon the very mechanisms through which control is exercised. In Q2. "After the gathering of the political representatives with the local leaders, the process of preparation started. The conditions of both parties are agreed (number of voters and financial dimensions, with other non-material arrangements possible) and the work of organising the votes starts. Subsequently, a network of people with specific tasks is put in place: going around the houses and creating lists by polling station, distributing money, checking whether voters vote on election day, transporting voters, paying the rest of the agreed amount. In different cases, different numbers of people are involved, depending on the size of the neighbourhood or the sustainable structures that have been put in place. In the smaller neighbourhoods the organisation is carried out by a few people (Obelia neighbourhood), while in the larger ones (Faculty neighbourhood) by a network of the pyramid structure type or also known as "network marketing".

Regarding whether all parties look for brokers during elections, brokers said there is no uniform approach. The interviewees from quarters "Faculty told us that in previous years several parties had contacted them, while since the 2017 general elections mainly one political party has been interested. An interviewee justified this with the influence of a key figure (Kiro Japoneca) for the quarter. "Fakulteta" and his connections with the said party (GERB). For his part, he said that due to the same person's familial relationship with an influential figure in the district, he was not able to find a suitable person for the job. "Filipovtsi" (another large Sofia neighborhood), the same political formation has influence there as well. However, these particularities of influence and dependencies could only be observed from fieldwork, as they remain in the shadows of official data and results by section. In this way, in-depth interviews are valuable as they provide the researcher with the opportunity to go into much deeper layers and give insight into the

interdependencies of the environment under study. In other localities, interviewees said that several political parties came to seek support (Bukovlak village).

Preparation most often boils down to making lists in advance, involving several people depending on the size of the settlement. The practice is to go round people's homes and make a list of those who can vote within the family. Some realtors say that the key is to convince the oldest member of the family, as he has the decision-making authority. Groupings are made for each section so that it is clear in advance how many votes can be expected: 'I go around from house to house and record families. Their identity cards are not collected, only the details'. Names and address are recorded. The lists are also used for accountability on election day. It's easy to note who has gone to vote and who hasn't, and they may need to be reminded later. "On election day we look at the list and put people around the school to keep track of who goes to vote, if by chance someone has messed up and hasn't gone by the afternoon, we go around to the houses and remind them. Sometimes we take them in groups and wait for someone from the school to say they have voted." Interviewees said that they allowed for the possibility that someone might not keep their appointment or that something might go wrong, but generally "there is no need, when you tell them you will know if they lie to you because you know the people on the committee and then they don't dare not keep their appointment. They are rarely the ones who will do anything other than what you have told them." Asked if there was any way of knowing exactly who had not kept their promise, some of the brokers said it was clear how many votes were expected from each section (based on the prepared lists). It relies on the people in the commission who have a direct influence on the running of the election day, but also the counting of the ballots. In this regard, if any voter requests a new ballot, it is immediately available to the entire precinct election committee. In this regard, if any voter requests a new ballot, it is immediately available to the entire precinct election committee. This may be considered as a sign that the particular voter has not kept his/her appointment. However, it is not always possible for a vote to be traced and for the agents to be clear exactly who has not kept their appointment. Fear prevails in most people and, in order not to get into trouble, they keep their promise and are not arbitrary in this respect.

The answers to the question "Why do you participate in this type of practice?" were interesting. Although they were not identical, for all brokers the reasons were economic or power: "Because the government promises to take care of us besides money. To legalize our illegal houses or to

forgive our bills. Yesterday, some neighbors had their water cut off because they didn't pay. They promise we won't have such problems and most of all for our houses. When they are not regularized and we have to tie electricity and water to common meters and water lines, and you know these common things both poor and rich use and in the end nobody pays them. We want to get our houses regularised and have electricity and water batches. They keep promising that they won't push our houses and so we kind of make a deal with them, to support them for the elections" (Faculty Quarter). Another mediator says that he does it for the money he and his family will get: 'the benefit for me is that I get some leva and my family does too. This is a big income for us" (Obel'a quarter). The same person summarizes that for all participants it is advantageous: "And they get some lev too, it is good for them too and it is good. Everybody is happy. Nobody is running out of steam. We are waiting for elections to come because money is being given."

Interviewees also talked about how election day is run and what their commitments are related to it, "on election day we look at the list and put people around the school to keep track of who goes to vote, if by chance someone got confused and hasn't gone by the afternoon, we go around the houses and remind them and sometimes we take them in groups and wait for someone from the school to say they voted." This is a common practice and was reported by the majority of interviewees (Fakulteta, Hristo Botev, Obelia, Meden Rudnik). Again, another interviewee points out the economic factor for his involvement in these practices. Do you have any idea how long a family here can live on this money? They immediately go shopping for months. So we look at elections like this, as something to make money from" (Faculty quarter). Another broker indicated that his motives for engaging in vote buying related to the principle: 'we do favours- friend to friend gets through.' The important thing is to have support, if you don't have anyone to stand behind you, it's already bad".

As a conclusion of the interviews with the Roma brokers, they were asked whether they thought this practice should stop. The majority of answers were negative: " How can it stop? Are you okay? This is a scary scheme. It's making money. Nobody benefits from stopping it- neither the parties nor the people. One takes the votes, the other the money, and everyone is happy. I don't know why they don't make it legal?" For the most part, these practices are impossible to counter. The key assumption is that the market for bought and controlled votes, as was evident from the in-depth interviews, is largely determined by economic factors and opportunities for influence.

However, the interviews were taken in the period before the regular parliamentary elections in April 2021, when there were no real actions of the law enforcement agencies against electoral corruption practices. In the next two successive parliamentary elections in July and November 2021, actions took place throughout the country, which was a prerequisite for a serious drop in voter turnout in the Roma polling stations surveyed. The brokers' fear of responding to the invitation for an interview only a few months later was also evident. In this regard, we could assume that the measures to reduce the bought vote within two caretaker offices in the period 2021-2022 had a positive effect and we witnessed a significant change in turnout in Roma polling stations (Appendix 1).

The schemes and means are constantly adapting and changing depending on the conditions and situation, this makes their capture almost impossible by law enforcement. The control of the electoral process has expanded its scope to such an extent that it has extended into all sorts of areas of everyday human life - social services, labour relations, health services and a variety of domestic problems. For this, the organisation needs to start at least two months in advance.

In recent years, we can reasonably argue that there has been a shift from direct forms of giving money in exchange for votes to practices that we might define as 'trading in dependencies'. This requires the mobilisation of wide networks of intermediaries who manage to create informal channels of access to institutions. We are talking about those institutions that provide social services at the local level, subsequently playing the role of intermediaries in the electoral process. This mechanism is often used by mayors, local community leaders.

In the third chapter "Dynamics of Controlled Voting and Bribed Voting in Bulgaria 2005 - 2021" the research is presented, which covers the trends in the results of local and parliamentary elections in the mentioned period, and important conclusions are drawn for the dissertation.

The chosen methodology is as follows - Roma sections in several Roma neighbourhoods in large regional cities such as Sofia, Plovdiv, Varna, Pazardzhik, Sliven, Haskovo, Samokov and Pleven were taken into account. However, the focus of the dissertation is on voting trends in Roma neighbourhoods. For this reason, a pre-selection of the polling stations to be included in the study was carried out. Based on it, polling stations where mainly Roma voters vote were selected. A challenge in the tracking was the fact that the polling stations had changed numbers and this required precision in tracking the numbers to avoid errors. One of the factors leading to a section

being selected is that there is a high volatility from election to election, with only one type of election being compared - for example the election of MPs. High electoral volatility is one of the prerequisites for judging that there is controlled voting or vote buying in a particular section. For this purpose, we will track not only the winner, but also how many votes the first and second vote get. A very important clarification about volatility is that it serves to prove our hypothesis, but it is impossible to be the only condition. Because if we only look for precincts with very high volatility we risk not covering those in which a single party has established a monopoly for years. The aim of the analysis is to track trends in vote buying and, in particular, how parties position themselves in the vote market. For each section, the results will be looked at by year, with a summary at the local level at the end and subsequently for each of the two elections.

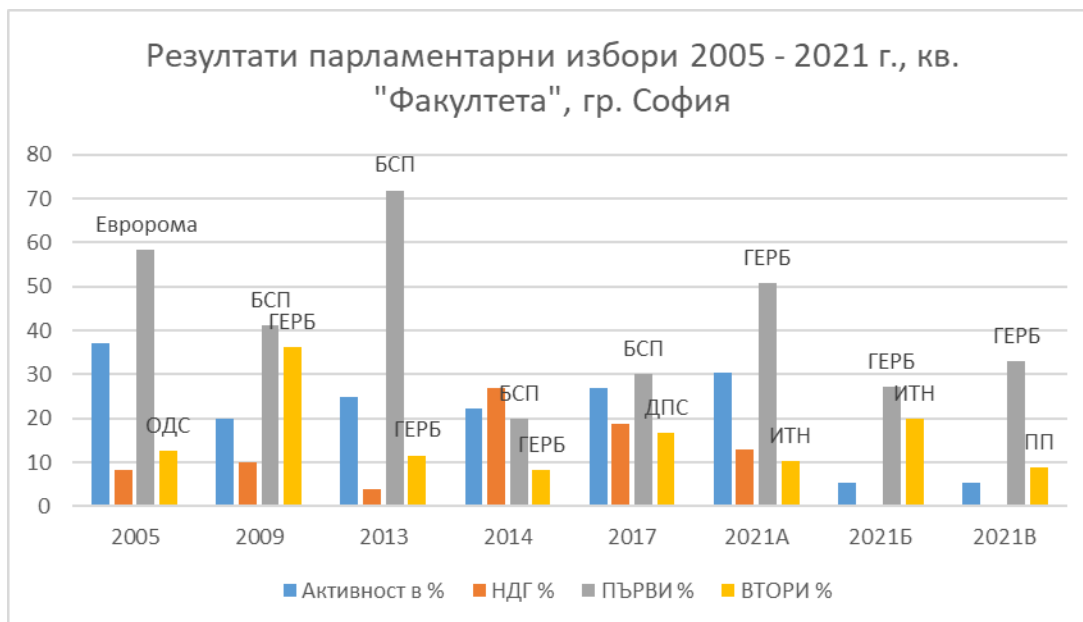
This vote can be dynamic and highly unpredictable, as it is about arrangements and has financial dimensions rather than logical consistency. In addition, these practices most often take place when the primary decision-making role is that of the leader. Other times, however, we have Roma neighbourhoods where it is established that one party has been in control for decades, in which case we lose the possibility of including it in the sample and defining it as risky. In this line of thought, we could not conclude that only deviance brings us information about the risky sections in the country. We would do well to take into account the socio-economic characteristics of each community in which a risk section is located. Based on knowledge of the processes and the hierarchical structure, we can reach information beyond common understandings. It is wrong to make selections solely on mechanical grounds. It is also natural and normal to have a change of preference from one choice to the next of the same type. It is unnatural when there is such an abrupt change in people's preferences within one year and three elections.

Regarding the parliamentary elections in the period 2005-2021, polling stations in large Roma neighbourhoods located in our regional cities will be considered. Not all of the thirty-one multi-member constituencies into which the country is electorally divided are covered in full, as the idea of the study is not national representativeness, but an analysis of existing trends that have varied over the years due to various factors. First of all, the first of its kind in the country's recent history, a marathon of three successive parliamentary elections held in just a few months. This is a unique situation that allows us to track voter behaviour over a short period of time. The second key prerequisite is the adoption of amendments to the electoral code, which change the voting

technology - from voting with a conventional paper ballot to fully machine voting in polling stations with more than 300 voters. Another fundamental factor for voting in Roma polling stations is the actions carried out during the election campaign to minimize and prevent voting specifically in these risk neighbourhoods. This was most clearly seen in the sharp decline in the No doubt the Covid-19 pandemic also influenced voters' motivation to exercise their voting rights.

One of the largest Roma neighbourhoods in the country is "Fakulteta", located at the edge of the capital's Krasna Poliana district, multi-mandate constituency No. 25. We will make a detailed analysis of how the vote has changed within the Roma neighbourhood - votes cast, invalid votes, winner and runner-up. Roma voters vote in 7 polling stations with the following numbers: 224611059; 224611061; 224611062; 224611063; 224611064; 224611065 and 224611071.

Chart 1.1 Results of the 2005-2021 parliamentary elections, district 1. "Faculty"



*Source: CEC, Results of parliamentary elections 2005-2021.

In the framework of the parliamentary elections held in 2005 in the district of B. "The total number of voters on the electoral rolls in the 2005 elections was 5,313, with 37.2% of all eligible voters casting a ballot. 1153 or 58.29% of the voters from the seven polling stations supported the Euroroma party. The UDF remains in second place with 247 ballots cast or 12.49% of the vote. At the next regular parliamentary elections in 2009, the number of voters increased to 5660, with turnout halving compared to the previous elections, namely 19.86%, and invalid votes increasing

by two points to 10.14% of all ballots cast. In terms of the result, there is a shift of the Euro-Roma from the BSP. One of the reasons for this could be linked to the fact that the Euroroma party joined the Coalition for Bulgaria and this contributed to the first place of the left in the district. "Fakulteta". At the next elections we had a rise in the number of voters again by about 300 people (5908 eligible voters), the share of those who voted also rose to 1473 people or 24.93%. On the other hand, invalid votes were among the lowest for the whole period studied (3.94%). The BSP retained its leading position from the previous elections with 1059 votes or 71.89% of all voters, the second position remains for GERB with 171 ballots cast. In the 2014 early elections, 1,249 people voted out of 5,625 eligible voters, the turnout dropped to 22.20% and the invalidity rate - 26.82% of the total. The first place was taken by DPS with 19.78% and the second position was retained by GERB with 8.33%. The next early parliamentary elections in 2017 saw a slight rise in the number of eligible voters on the electoral rolls to 5,738. There was a rise in those exercising the right to vote to 1,549 or 27%, while invalid ballots accounted for 26.82% of all votes. The BSP is the party that managed to regain its lead from 2013 with 465 votes, while the MRF remains second with 260 ballots cast. In April 2021, there was a drop in the number of eligible voters (5186 people), but the share of eligible voters remained relatively high at 30, 45% or 1579 people, while the share of invalid votes dropped by about 5 points and for this particular election stood at 13.05%. The result of the first political force (GERB) is 50,59 % of all voters, second remains ITN with 10,26 %. The elections in April 2021 are the last elections in which voters have the choice of which of the two technologies to exercise their right to vote - a paper ballot or a machine vote. The next election is just a few months later in July 2021, but voting in this borough has undergone major changes, there are new election rules and compulsory machine voting. There has been an increase in those eligible to vote (5684 people) but turnout has dropped by nearly 25% and is the lowest level measured for the entire study period (5.38%), there were no invalid votes as the vote was entirely machine cast. GERB retains its first position but with 27.12% of the vote, while ITN remains second again with 19.93%. The next election in October 2021 is again by machine vote and the results in the polling station remain similar to those of 3 months ago. There were 5694 eligible voters, a turnout of 5.39% and no invalid votes. The first political force is GERB with 32,9 % of the vote and ITN remains second with 8,79 %. In the examined Roma neighbourhood we have a pattern where one party is the winner in the examined neighbourhood for several elections or even for the whole examined period.

Focus is also placed on the results in the Roma neighborhoods of Fakulteta, Stolipinovo, Iztok, Maksuda, Nadezhda and Bukovlak for the local elections held, which, like the parliamentary elections, represents a primary type of election in its significance parties again invest substantial resources to extract the best benefits in terms of their performance. In the local elections in Bukuluk. "224611059; 224611061; 224611062; 224611063; 224611064; 224611065 and 224611071.

Chart 2.1 Results of local elections 2007-2019, district "Faculty"



*Source: CEC, Results of local elections 2007-2019.

Within the sq. Faculty, the town of. The 2007 local elections witnessed the highest voter turnout for the entire study period with 53.84% (2582 votes) of the voters exercising their franchise out of a total of 4796 voters on the voters list. The proportion of invalid votes was extremely high, reaching almost half of the total 1222 invalid ballots cast, or 47.33%. The first candidate for mayor of the town was. Boyko Borisov, nominated by GERB, received a result of 34.97%, as 903 people voted for him. Martin Zaimov, the second highest vote-getter, received the support of 1,78 % of all voters in the seven polling stations in the district, or 46 ballots. In the next regular elections in

2011, 2282 voters out of 5720 eligible voters cast their ballots, with a turnout percentage measured at 39.90%, while the proportion of invalid votes also remained high at 29.05%. The first in the result is again the candidate of GERB Yordanka Fandakova, who managed to win 308 votes and 23,75 % of all voters. Georgi Kadiev came second with 308 votes (13.50%). At the next regular elections in 2015, the turnout was measured at its lowest in the period studied at 16.14% (994 voters) of the 6157 eligible voters. The proportion of invalid votes 18.17% or 186 ballots also decreased. The first-place finisher retained his position from the previous election, with Yordanka Fandakova winning 322 votes (32.39%) and the second-place finisher being the MRF candidate Andrey Georgiev with 258 votes (25.96%). The next local elections in 2019 we have the highest voter corps in the neighborhood for the studied period - 6448 people, of which 1915 voters (29,70%) voted. The lowest proportion of invalidity was measured at 13.11%. Yordanka Fandakova won her best result for the period under study in the first round, with 1206 voters or 62.98% voting for her, the second best result was Maya Manolova, nominated by the Initiative Committee with 4.91% or 94 votes. At the ballot held a week later, 2187 voters or 33.93% of the 6445 voters cast their ballots, while the invalid votes amounted to 16.28%. The GERB candidate consolidated her first round victory and received 1,700 votes or 77.73% of the vote, her opponent Maya Manolova garnered 241 votes or 11.02%.

There is a pattern of one party being victorious in the surveyed neighborhood for several elections or even for the entire surveyed period.

In conclusion of the analysis and the data presented, we could draw several trends that characterize the controlled voting in Roma communities, mentioned earlier in the text. The Roma population for the most part has no sense of civic engagement with society and does not perceive voting as such an act. The electoral process is not seen as a democratic act, but only as an economic strategy or preservation of the status quo, which is often linked to illegally acquired property or otherwise. In fact, a vicious pattern has been established over the last decades, in which one side (the political actors) and the other (the Roma population) does not want it to be disturbed in any way and tries in every way to preserve it. There has been a retreat from the traditional campaigning characteristic of the election period. They have been replaced by the financing of organised vote-buying and the pouring of large economic resources to control the state apparatus. Breaking such entrenched and long-established practices is very difficult, as it requires one of the two sides to try to change the

situation in another direction. The informal leader in the community who makes decisions both strategically and sometimes in purely domestic terms is key. His role is important when it comes to vote buying. When it comes to the implementation of this type of practices, the local and fragmented principle is the leading one. Each informal leader individually mediates with the parties. Of course, local characteristics and dependencies in certain localities are also key. The results from the surveyed polling stations show that vote-buying is fragmented rather than holistic and national.

From the analysis we can identify several existing patterns of vote control in Roma polling stations. In a large number of polling stations, we see an approach of clustering several polling stations in one Roma neighbourhood, where a single party takes the vote, and this can happen throughout the period studied. In some of the polling stations an approach of splitting the vote mainly between two parties is observed. With the two changing places from winner to runner-up and vice versa. Interesting phenomena are those political caucuses that are underrepresented at the national level but manage to situationally win in one or two polling stations in a winning result, and this result is not repeated in subsequent elections. There are localities in which deviant behaviour is not observed and the national vote for that particular election seems to be multiplied. There is also a pattern in which a winning party in one election in an entire Roma neighbourhood is replaced by another in the next election. However, these examples are few. It is very important to note that the Roma population lacks a sense of the importance of the electoral process as such, which is a prerequisite for the lack of logic and consistency of actions.

The summaries and conclusions are based on the literature review, theoretical concepts of controlled and bought vote, characteristics of Roma communities, interviews with Roma leaders, in-depth analysis of the election results in the last 17 years, in which local and parliamentary elections have been held. Due to the fact that these practices take place outside the law and the established mechanisms are very difficult to uncover, it is equally difficult to determine the scale of the phenomenon. In general, the importance of each election is assessed to varying degrees.

The realization of the mentioned models in the political market of bought votes is possible due to their clientelistic structure and domestic lifestyle. Clientelism is a persistent and reproducing norm in these communities, thanks to low levels of education. The favouritism of the Roma population varies from neighbourhood to neighbourhood, with a rather heterogeneous approach to influence.

The work to buy votes is at the local level, with a focus on Roma leaders, who act as a kind of bridge between Roma voters living in a particular neighbourhood and political formations.

The last part of the dissertation is its conclusion. It aims to present in a summarized form that the implemented schemes to control the voting of parts of the electorate and the manipulation of the electoral results are significant deficits for the electoral process. Such unauthorised practices deliberately discredit electoral mechanisms, but they also prove to be a threat to citizens' rights and freedoms by hindering the effectiveness of democratic institutions and the functioning of fundamental processes in society. In this way, the sponsors succeed in creating dependencies in large sections of the population, who become the object of pressure to vote contrary to their political convictions.

The dissertation analyses the two phenomena of controlled and bought voting that are carried out within Roma communities in Bulgaria. The mechanisms of controlled voting in the same are thoroughly examined, with an emphasis on the role of informal leaders and the influence they manage to exert on these marginalized groups.

The influence of Roma leaders in vote trading appears to be a key element in the process of implementing controlled voting. The tendency for such local leaders to sell the political rights of entire communities and to be perceived as their representatives and intermediaries in negotiations with the end users of the bought vote - the political parties - is being consolidated. As a result, more and more people are falling prey to the phenomenon of the contested vote and are being deliberately kept in a state of fear and unpredictability about their jobs, their economic status or whether they will be ostracised if they dare to seek justice. Victims often fear testifying or resisting because they feel insecure about their jobs or that they will be held to account. There is a persistent feeling that institutions are powerless against those criminal structures that have financial resources and political contacts. The problem is massive and puts democratic values and civil society in our country to the test.

Emphasis is also placed on the election results in Roma polling stations from the parliamentary and local elections in the period 2005-2021, with the aim of tracing how political formations have managed to influence the electoral process. The chosen period is rewarding from a political science point of view because two types of first-order elections were held and this provides us with a huge electoral base of results to analyse. The analysis provides us with an opportunity to confirm the

hypothesis that the period under study is characterised by a tendency towards fragmentation of control over the vote in Roma neighbourhoods, and that this fragmentation is localised. The data show how voters vote in different Roma communities across the country and which political formations and candidates are winning. In some of the polling stations there is one winning candidate, in other places two political formations split the vote, and in others there is a switch from one political party to another. Interesting phenomena were observed in some places, where out of several polling stations, in one or two of them a weakly represented party won more than 60% of the vote, and this was situational and was not repeated at the next election. All these patterns could be seen as symptomatic of the phenomena of bought and controlled votes. As in different localities and depending on the relations of party representatives with local informal Roma leaders, we can also observe different successes of parties.

The schemes implemented to control the voting of parts of the electorate and the manipulation of election results are significant deficits for the electoral process, the functioning of institutions and the inability of civil society to counteract these phenomena.

As a result, more and more people fall victim to the phenomena of controlled and bought votes and are deliberately kept in a state of fear and uncertainty about their jobs, their economic status or whether they will be ostracised from the community if they dare to seek justice. Victims are often afraid of testifying or resisting because they feel insecure about their jobs or that they will be held to account. There is a persistent feeling that institutions are powerless against those criminal structures that have financial resources and political contacts.

4- Scientific contribution of the thesis

Due to the relevance of the topic, studies have been published in the last year by NGOs that attempt to analyse the scale of controlled voting, but the scope is all polling stations. For this reason the challenge for the dissertation arises - to cover a part of Roma communities for which there is currently no detailed analysis of the scale at which such practices are implemented.

The main merit of this dissertation is its contribution to the expansion of knowledge in an understudied part of political science, which is the controlled and bought vote in parts of Roma communities.

1. The following assumption is made within the framework of the Dickertation, the political market of bought votes in Roma communities is the result of demand by political parties and organized supply by a section of Roma community leaders who use their authority and control mechanisms over particular groups of voters. These mechanisms and the authority itself are based on social, economic, cultural, etc. preconditions, the effect of which is amplified by the actions or inactions of the state and in particular of the law enforcement authorities, which fail, regardless of the reasons, to establish the application of relevant legislation on a significant part of the ghettoised population in Roma communities.

3. A typology is made of the informal leadership in Roma communities (pastors, usurers, NGO activists, entrepreneurs, bakali, etc.) who are key figures in the organization and implementation of the unregulated practices of vote buying and controlling

4. Several models of the structure of the voting market are derived:

- Minimally volatile with one dominant party in all elections;
- Maximally volatile with always a different winner in the period studied.
- Minimally volatile with two dominant parties
- Dominated by local initiative committees;
- Nationally marginal - locally dominant parties

There is a competitive market in terms of vote trading. In some places such a market is present and then we have several parties, in others competition is completely absent and the market is occupied by a single party.

5 - List of scientific publications

- Publication in the collection "Doctoral Readings 2020" on "Trends in Controlled Voting - 30 years after the beginning of democratic changes in Bulgaria" at the link: https://research.uni-sofia.bg/bitstream/10506/2468/1/DOKTORANTSKI_CHE TENIQ__4_2021_PDF.pdf
- Publication in the "Doctoral Yearbook 2020 Volume 5. "The Role of Informal Leaders in Controlled Voting in Roma Communities" at link: https://research.uni-sofia.bg/bitstream/10506/2484/3/GSU_%20FF_DOKTORANTI%20T.%205%202021.pdf;

- Publication in the Proceedings of Doctoral Readings 2021 on "Measures of the caretaker government to limit controlled voting in Roma communities in the early parliamentary elections in July 2021";

- Publication in the collection "Doctoral Students in Science. 5" on "Mechanisms for Controlled Voting in Roma Communities 2017- 2021" at the link: file:///C:/Users/a.stefanova/Downloads/Collection-Doctoral_Students_in_Science_5.pdf

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