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adissertation

on the topic:

**Direct Democracy as a Tool for the Activation of Civil Society
(Bulgaria Case 2013-2017.) (The Role of Information for the Civil Activity
in the Three National Referendums)**

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CONTENT OF THE DISSERTATION

Introduction.....5

Chapter One

THE CITIZEN – A KEY COMPONENT IN THE DEMOCRATIC STATE

1.1. The referendum – an expression of direct democracy.....10

1.2. Civil society in the leading role.....14

1.3. Basics of interaction between citizens and the democratic state.....18

1.4. The call to the confused democracy.....23

1.5. The informed choice – a discourse in the discourse of values.....27

1.5.1. Voting in a referendum – information approaches.....32

1.5.2. The uninformed awareness – a dispute with literature.....33

1.6. Direct and deliberate democracy – arithmetic and value arguments.....37

1.6.1. Is the effort worth it or it is costly?.....44

1.6.2. Can things get better?.....47

1.7. The limitation of alternatives in the majority referendum.....49

1.7.1. The referendum in the theory of the games.....53

1.7.2. The majority principle in the Bulgarian context – the 43rd and 44th National Assembly.....54

The idea of civil authority instead of a summary
.....56

Chapter Two

POLITICAL PARTICIPATION BEYOND ITS CONVENTIONAL FORMS

2.1. Political participation as a commitment to democracy.....59

2.1.1. The unconventional civil repertoire.....60

2.1.2. The unconventional participation in the context of additional value.....63

2.2. Democracy of protest – a discourse about the discourse "for" and "against".....66

2.2.1. Overload and uncontrollability.....70

2.2.2. The enemy, stimulator for the civil resistance in 2013.....73

2.3. The active citizens, expression of democracy from the bottom to the top.....	77
2.3.1. The subscription list – democracy from bottom to the top without a political enemy.....	78
2.3.2. Dinko-type of self-governing deformations – the new enemies.....	80

Chapter Three

THE THREE NATIONAL REFERENDUMS IN THREE DOMESTIC POLITICAL CONTEXTS

3.1 The referendum in 2013 – a tool for political opposition.....	86
3.2 The referendum in 2015 – in the context of protest discontents.....	91
3.3 The referendum in 2016 – the concept of the show on the arena of direct participation.....	95
3.4 The volatile context in referendum type of decisions – our case.....	100
Summary.....	100

Chapter Four

THE MESSAGES IN THE CAMPAIGNS FOR THE THREE NATIONAL REFERENDUMS – a tool to minimize direct participation to the level of procedure.

4.1 Discourse about the manipulative discourse in politics.....	106
4.1.1 The myth – an emotional stimulant in politics.....	107
4.1.2 The myth of direct government in the idea of autonomy.....	108
4.2 Justification of the problem – Preferred providers of information from citizens /the relationship between civil activity and the information provided in the explanatory campaigns/.....	111
4.3 Design of the study.....	114
4.4 Hypothesis 1: The information provided in the explanatory campaigns stimulates uninformed political participation	115
4.5 Hypothesis 2: The drive to win over the political opponent determines the information that is provided in the campaigns.....	127
4.6 Hypothesis 3: The emotion sparked by manipulation and rationalization determines the outcome of the three national referendums.....	131

4.7.Hypothesis 4: The large volume of general and manipulative sentences fills the media space in the explanatory campaign and neutralizes the meaningful information that is much less.....	134
4.8.Conclusions from the content analysis of the four hypotheses of the study.....	144
4.8.1 The link between populism and direct democracy.....	144
4.8.2 The thin against the thick ideology – the referendum in 2016	147
4.8.3 The unharmed less harmful political misinformation in the context of the referendum topics.....	152
4.8.4 The passive citizen as a tool for protection in the face of mass misinformation.....	153
<i>Instead of a conclusion: Critical remarks.....</i>	<i>155</i>
 <i>Appendixes:</i>	
<i>Appendix No. 1</i>	
<i>Content analysis P1, P2, P3.....</i>	<i>159</i>
<i>Appendix No. 2</i>	
<i>Content analysis/quantitative procedure/:.....</i>	<i>168</i>
<i>Date: P1, P2, P3.....</i>	<i>.....</i>
<i>Media: P1, P2, P3.....</i>	<i>.....</i>
<i>Author: P1, P2, P3.....</i>	<i>.....</i>
 Bibliography.....	 187
Notes.....	209
<i>Media in the content analysis.....</i>	<i>214</i>

I. Relevance of the problem

In today's debate on democratization and improving representative democracy through expanding citizens' opportunities for participation on important community issues is increasingly more relevant. In this context, in the Bulgarian political discourse, civil activity in direct consultations and in its unconventional forms is increasingly defined as a medicine for Bulgarian democracy. The Institute for Direct Participation in Modernity – the referendum, was implemented three times in the period 2013 – 2016 in our political life. The practice of these referendums in the Bulgarian case is no different from generally accepted understandings – in order for there to be democracy, citizens must be active, and the opportunities for participation in direct consultations express such activity. Citizenship can be thought of in another way, beyond the understanding of activity, and in the field of values – in the sense that civil actions bring in to the democratic process. And many define the discourse on the awareness and rationality of the main actors, in the face of citizens as much more substantial. Besides citizens, democracy can be thought of differently – not as a procedure that is the result of civil activity, but as a result of human originality.

The first survey on voter awareness was in 1960 with the title "The American Electorate" with authors AngusCampbell, Philip Conners, Warren Miller and Donald Stokes. In 2009, Rick Schenkman published a study entitled "How Stupid Are We?", showing that American voters don't have basic information about how the democratic system works. The last survey in this field was a few years ago, in 2017 by political scientists Christopher Achen and Larry Bartels. They also proved the existence of ill-informed voters in their realistic theory of democracy under the title "Democracy for Realists: Why Elections do not Produce a Responsible Government." Unfortunately today as some political scientists claim, "the existence of ill-informed voters is a central part of the intellectual heritage in political science" ¹. The misinformation of the voters is a current issue today, although it was first investigated in the distant 1960. Democracy is not advancing in the field of awareness today, as it has before. It suffers from a lack of informed voters. In our reality there is also available data that undermines the idea of informed choice.

¹Page, B. and Shapiro, R. *The Rational Public. Fifty Years of Trends in American's Policy Preferences*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. 1992

With the current paper I will show the deficit of an informed vote in the three national consultations. Direct consultations in Bulgaria conducted between 2013 – 2016 show an increase in the field of activity (electoral activity in direct consultations is increasing), but this survey will look for an answer to the question, which is located in the other field: if the information provided in the explanatory campaigns for the three national referendums implies informed political participation.

Before activation of democracy at the level of direct participation, civil activity must be informationally motivated in a different way, than the motives and arguments that the general public receives in ordinary election campaigns and in protest actions. In the referendums, the citizen directly decides, he does not authorize anyone to decide on his behalf, and does not express dissatisfaction, asking to authorize early. Direct consultations need meaningful and informed civil activity for democracy to work, not just through activity. The information provided in the national referendum campaigns shows the opposite, that we live in a democracy not of awareness but of activity. In other words, the referendums in our country increased the possibilities for civil activity, but the information in the explanatory campaigns weakened the foundation of democratic governance – the informed citizen. Andrew Sullivan warns that "Democracies end up when they are too democratic"². Jerit and co-authors write: "In a democracy, knowledge is power."³ If we think of democracy outside the field of activity, it is a controversial claim that an active citizen is more useful to democracy than passive. In our political context (the law on direct participation – the optionality of results in a particular civil activity) the passive citizen protects our democracy from the introduction of topics on which either it is not voted or questionable and manipulative information has been provided.

The messages in the 2013 protests are also one of the highlights in the paper, because they can hardly be defined as political participation beyond understanding the activity. In them, political discontent was also expressed in the creation of witty slogans. The slogans were directed primarily against the image of the enemy in politics, that is, Carl Schmidt is a good

² Andrew Sullivan. *Democracies end when they are too democratic*. [online] in New York Magazine, 02.05.2016 [Viewed 11.10.2020] Available from: <https://nymag.com/intelligencer/2016/04/america-tyranny-donald-trump.html>

³ Jerit, Jennifer, Jason Barabas, and Toby Bolsen. *Citizens, Knowledge, and the Information Environment*. American Journal of Political Science. 50 (2), 2006 p.266

prophet in his understanding that politics operates on the axis of friend – enemy. Their difference with the explanatory campaigns for the referendums is that the active political actors produced the slogans for the referendums, and in the protests the slogans were also the product of discontent citizens. But despite the differences between the creators of the messages, the information provided in them was no different. This suggests that civil activity in protest actions is reminiscent of the activity in direct participations. In both cases, citizens are more influenced by the competing political actors and their participation is the result of influencing them – the spontaneity of democracy from the bottom up is lost. The similarity of civil slogans in the 2013 protests to the messages of political parties in the referendums reveal that citizens act as political actors in campaigns do: obviously they are used to proceeding that way, and the influence exerted on them leaves a lasting imprint on their political actions.

In this paper I will also give an example of spontaneous civil activity, which is not under the influence of political messages (the bottom-up subscription list), then the activity itself does not produce messages but requires the relevant institutions to solve a specific problem. In them, democracy enjoys its democratic moments in which citizens lead the initiative, guiding the institutions towards solving a particular problem. Democracy rarely enjoys such civil actions, covering the understanding of modern citizenship as a corrective to the democratic state. Civil actions are in most cases limited to the desire for correction to the personnel composition of the governance. Citizens participate in politics on the basis of the sustained notions of "friends" and "enemies" of the political landscape, and these same "friends" and "enemies" offer information that helps them not to leave the orbit of these images. And in the referendums the picture does not change.

A number of authors are of the opinion that it is good for democracy for citizens to be active. But activism needs information that does not polarize or kill democracy as a form of cooperation. Civil activity cannot be treated equally to procedural understandings of democracy and to those in the field of values. Sometimes what is democratic in one understanding is not democratic in another. Civil activity, supporting the legitimacy of the procedure, can delegitimize democratic value – an enlightened understanding of Robert Dahl's criteria for the democratic process.

I.I. General characteristics of the dissertation

The subject of the study is civil activity not in the sense of presence: whether it exists or not but in the idea of awareness, which leads to rational action in politics and is a foothold in the democratic state.

The subject of the study are the applied forms of civil activity in the context of direct democracy and direct intervention of citizens on issues at community level /unconventional activities/. The different form of conventional democracy – participation in direct consultations, unconventional democracy also is often seen in the context of a corrector of the representative system and as a tool for establishing or resuming the relationship between citizens and politics. Civil activity is therefore analyzed in these forms of political participation. It is interesting to establish in these additional opportunities for political expression, what kind of activity citizens demonstrate and what kind of activity in them stimulate institutional political actors, media actors, etc.

The purpose of the dissertation is to establish how direct democracy affects civil activity – if the messages in the explanatory campaigns for the three national referendums produce informed or misinformed activity. What information do participants in the explanatory campaigns offer about citizens' direct consultations and what civil activity this information produces. Does the information provided, as a tool for the implementation of an informed vote, empowers today's citizen or the power of citizens is limited to the field of activity. The aim of the study is also to show that civil actions are dependent on the information provided to citizens. And from here the main thesis in the study is deduced that misinformed activity, not the informed one, determines the outcome of the three national referendums.

Tasks:

1. To explore the theoretical formulations and concepts regarding the implementation of an informed vote in a referendum. Can citizens participate in an informed manner without discussing the proposals for voting, while information on them has been spared.
2. Identifying which unconventional activities, such as attempts to intervene directly in the political activity, imply civil participation not only in the understanding of activity.
3. To analyze the campaign information (113 articles) in the three national referendums and to establish what type of information determines the outcome of national consultations – the information within the meaning of the proposals made, or the emotions, manipulations and insignificant information.

4. To outline the role of populism in the 2016 referendum as a mechanism dividing the public on the voting proposals made, without offering meaningful information on them.
5. To present the possibilities for mitigating the consequences of the uninformed vote in the context of the three national referendums by also proposing a recommendation on shortening the path to informed participation.

In the dissertation *the methods* of empirical and theoretical analysis and synthesis are used. The analysis of the content of the referendum messages is divided into quantitative analysis techniques and qualitative techniques of content analysis. The data obtained are subjected to further analysis and synthesis via combined application of quantitative and qualitative techniques. With the first part of the content analysis, hypothesis 1 was verified: Whether the information provided in the explanatory campaigns stimulates uninformed political participation. On the basis of hypothesis 1, the next two hypotheses were also built, also verified with data from the first part of the content analysis: the second hypothesis – does the aspiration to win over the political opponent determines the information that is provided in the campaigns? And the third – the emotions caused by manipulation and rationalization determine the outcome of the three national referendums. The last two hypotheses were verified by highlighting specific messages for the three consultations in question, with the data in questions 9 and 10 in the content analysis card (9. Availability of manipulation techniques; 10. Availability of rationalization techniques). A discourse analysis of the messages was carried out, which indicated the techniques used to manipulate and rationalize public opinion. In the next part of the content analysis are used quantitative procedures. There are two main groups of indicators by which data is collected: about media (media type, time, author) and about motivation (the amount of information that deters and supports informed activity). With its results was verified hypothesis 4: The large amount of unnecessary information fills the campaign space at the expense of the reasonable information on the voting proposals made. The resulting data are synthesized and summarized in a discourse analysis, in which the results are presented to support the hypothesis studied. The result of each consultation was compared with the result of the other two in the discourse analysis. This makes it possible to outline what type of information, according to the quantitative analysis procedure, prevails in each consultation. It is presented what the trend is regarding the information provided in campaigns – does it change through each subsequent consultation or is it retained.

The empirical survey is based entirely on media publications, mainly from the periods of explanatory campaigns for the three national referendums. What is used is not the information provided by a single media or several media but in the survey a variety of sources of information are included, starting with the national media, smaller news sites, blogs and sites of the initiative committees, made specifically for the explanatory campaign, information from the sites of political parties is also used, in which they published various materials about the referendums, the printed press is also included. The 113 analyzed articles cover a sufficiently large number of information sources, which helps to outline a trend for the information offered to the general public, and not to a specific audience that trusts specific sources. The results provided by the content analysis claim for coverage because if the information is provided by one or several media, they might have concluded contracts with the same participants in the explanatory campaign, then the empirical analysis would be limited to the presentation of results of the dissemination of information by several entities. And the result of the content analysis, due to the diverse sources of information it covers, reflects the information provided by a maximum number of participants in the explanatory activities. At the same time the study does not claim for completeness of the sample. First of all, because of the huge range of messages that cannot be explored in integrity. Secondly, such completeness of the combination of media material does not need to be subjected to content analysis because of the fact that the same arguments and material are republished and disseminated. Thus, the 113 materials surveyed are articles that are "bearing" for the campaign offered in the specific media – they are subject to republishing and additional distribution and their content is authentic to the given media.

I.I.I. Structure of the dissertation

Chapter One: The citizen – a key component in the democratic state

In **the first part** of the Chapter One of the dissertation, the referendums were theoretically framed on the basis of their proximity and distance from direct democracy, while synthesizing the views of Giovanni Sartori and Prof. Antoni Todorov. Direct consultations are then divided into different types depending on which one is at the heart of the initiative, after which the ideas of citizenship from Antiquity to this day are presented.

Giovanni Sartori argues that there is no referendum democracy because under such democracy he understands the use of referendums as the only tool for political decision-making but it is possible thanks to technological progress. For Sartori, referendums are a direct democracy in so far as they do not resort to intermediary institutions in political decision-making and, because referendums can be used in the context of representative democracy, they unite the two types of democracies. Prof. Antony Todorov argues that there is no direct democracy, stating that if it is direct it is not a democracy. He presents ancient democracy as a complex system in which the expression of direct democracy in the face of the National Assembly is limited and supplemented on many issues by the Council and the Court. According to Prof. Todorov referendums are a particular tool of direct democracy. In other words, in each democratic system, the will of the majority is limited by different mechanisms, so that Tokeville's definition of "new tyrant" – the majority, does not appear.

Based on those of both authors – on Sartori that there is no referendum democracy and on Prof. Todorov that there is no direct democracy, the following summary can be inferred: referendums are a particular tool of direct democracy, its variety, in which citizens decide instead of the intermediary institutions, that is, referendums are an expression of direct democracy in the representative system.

In the current paper, I will use the word "referendum" when it comes to the three national consultations in Bulgaria in the period 2013 – 2016, and the phrase "direct democracy" will be used in the context of an addition to the word referendum: the referendum is a direct vote tool, the peculiar instrument of direct democracy in which intermediaries in political decision-making are absent.

Direct consultations can also be distinguished in referendums and plebiscites, although the word referendum is almost always used in daily discourse. In referendums, voters adopt or reject decisions of representative bodies, while plebiscites are organized by the institutions of the representative body on issues formulated by them. In addition to referendums and plebiscites as an expression of direct democracy, there are other forms of direct participation of citizens: citizens' initiative, population assembly. When it comes to the three national consultations in the period 2013 – 2016 placing each of them in one of the defined categories of direct consultations is both correct and incorrect. In some of them, the initiative is started by a representative body (political party) but is implemented through the subscription list of the citizens (citizens' initiative).

Democracy cannot be thought of in isolation from civil society, regardless of whether democracy is representative or unites direct and representative ones. The understanding about civil society as a major actor in the democratic system has undergone various historical changes. In the different historical moments civil society is viewed differently and, accordingly, the expectations to it are different. I have presented a review of the concept of civil society, which begins in Antiquity. And, accordingly, the review starts from Aristotle, who defines civil society as "the highest form of community because it deals with the public interest"⁴. Locke, Hobbs and Russo's civil society theories build on the idea of a public contract on the basis of which the state is created. They are related to the modern age, in which politics and the economy are formed as two separate spheres. Property disputes then arise and people, in order to preserve their property, give up the freedom of the natural state in order to acquire the freedom of law, which allows the preservation of property benefits. This civil society imposes its orientations on the activities of the State, since the person exposed to a natural state requires respect for his attributes (life, freedom of personality, property) and the orientation of the activities of the State are in relation to those requirements. In Antiquity, civil society is equal to the city state, and in the modern age it is closer to the economic sphere, allowing the creation of wealth.

The ideas of Georg Friedrich Hegel have a special place in the development of the concept of civil society, in which civil society takes the next steps towards its autonomy. In Hegel's notion, the citizen leaves his personal space and turns to cooperation with other citizens. Hegel defines this cooperation with the term "bourgeois society". In his theory, Hegel prioritizes the state over civil society because civil action is limited to personal affairs, i.e. the economic sphere.

In the 70s of the 20th century civil society began to be seen as a self-organization that does not identify with the state or the economy. Thomas Carothers and Larry Diamond identified it as an independent entity in the state. Carothers gives us the following definition of civil society: it is "a broader concept involving all organizations and associations that exist outside the state"⁵. And Larry Diamond defines it as "the realm of organized public life that is

⁴Muresan, M., Dutu, P. *Societateacivila-actor* nonstal major, EdituraUniversitatiiNationale de Aparare "Carol I" Bucuresti, 2006 p.20

⁵Carothers, T. *Civil Society, Foreign Polity*, 1999-2000, Winter, p.20

open, voluntary, bound by a legal order or set of shared rules"⁶. That is, civil society from a society that identifies with the city state in antiquity, and in contractual theories with the economy, moves into a new period of development in which the citizen is placed in the understanding about the self-existence in the state, being part of an organization that cooperates with other spheres in the democratic state and does not identify with them.

The second part of Chapter One looks at the *basics of interaction between citizens and the democratic state* depending on the functions performed by the citizens in the democratic state. And today's calls to silence representative democracy through the more frequent use of referendums are presented in thesis *The call to confused democracy*.

In the negative interpretation of citizenship is the feeling that civil society prevents the state from regulating all social activity, monopolizing the initiatives and talents of the nation that manifest themselves in society. Michael Foley and Bob Edwards point out that "active civil society promotes democracy by mobilizing civil resistance against the authoritarian⁷state." The positive function of the civil society defines it as a corrective of the state, whenever the need for correction is present. John Keane, Larry Diamond and Ernest Gelner present the existence of a civil society "correction type" as an advantage for democracy.

Whether citizens can fulfil the positive function of a corrector of the democratic state does not depend only of the activity exercised. According to Robert Dahl the procedures of real democracy provide a field for civil expression through: elected through voting officials, free, fair and often held elections, freedom of speech, alternative sources of information, freedom of association, civil rights for all. But in order to achieve the "corrector type" of citizen, reality must imply proximity to Robert Dahl's criteria for ideal democracy: effective participation, equality of vote, gaining enlightened understanding, exercising final control of the agenda, including the adult population.

There are authors who attribute responsibility for achieving not just of civil activity, but of meaningful civil activity to citizens or democratic institutions, or distribute responsibility among them. Jon Stewart Mill believes that democratic institutions should, as a matter of priority, educate the foundation of democracy in citizens. Ralph Darendorf assigns responsibility for meaningful civil action between citizens and institutions by defining these

⁶Diamond, L. *Towards Strengthening Democracy*, Democratic Review Magazine, 1997, book 32, p. 221

⁷Foley, M. and Edwards, B. *The Paradox of Civil Society*, Journal of Democracy, Vol.7(3),1996, pp.38-52

two parties as supply and demand. And in order for there to be interaction, it is necessary to have both sides – both active demand and active supply. For example, it is not sufficient to offer alternative sources of information if there is no demand for them on the part of the citizens. Unlike Jon Stewart Mill and Ralph Darendorff, Ernest Gelner believes that people are formed by the culture in which they coexist and do not have the opportunity to choose a society that satisfies them.

The call to confused democracy begins with the presentation of the first transformation to a democratic form of government that began in antiquity. The Greeks, in particular the Athenians, produced the first democracy as an idea of people/majority ruling as opposed to undemocratic rulers in the face of tyrants, aristocrats, monarchs, etc. The second transformation of democracy is related to the transition from the city state to the national state. This increase in the size of the political community transforms democracy into a representative political decision-making system in which arise institutions intermediaries between citizens and politics. One of the consequences of this transformation is the emergence of representation.

The authors of "the third wave and the new civilization" Alvin and Heidi Toffler propose the third transformation, the focus of which is not the minority and the majority, but the multitude of minorities. According to the "people of the third wave and the new civilization" heterogeneity in modern societies is growing, and the lack of suitable institutions to institutionalize the many emerging conflicts between the many minorities weakens the legitimacy of democratic governments. This will paralyze the political process and hinder timely political decisions. The authors like sophisticated doctors, also wrote a prescription for adjusting modern democracy to the coming changes. The prescription says that "if our chosen intermediaries cannot make deals for us, we will have to do it ourselves"⁸. Democracy is burdened with expanding the opportunities for political participation not of the majority, but of the many minorities. In this context Ralph Darendorf notes that representative governance is not a "convincing proposition." And according to David van Raybrook, the search for new forms of expression of interest is the result of "democratic fatigue syndrome", which is characterized by an obsession with referendums.

There are authors with opposing views to that of the "people of the third wave and the new civilization." José Ortega and Gasquet are of the opinion that the descent of political

⁸Toffler, Alvin & Heidi. *The New Civilization. The Politics of the Third Wave*, publ. Military Publishing House, Sofia, 2002, p. 103

decisions from top down will confuse everything, because it will not be clear who will govern and who will perform. While Bernard Crick doubts that important political decisions can be made by something big and fuzzy as a concept, as is the people.

There is also an understanding of democracy beyond the perceptions of the direct and representative participation of majorities or of the multiple minorities. Ronald Duorkin is with such understanding, who relies on a meaningful dispute around shared values. Where the dispute will be a clash of policy ideas about which policy will satisfy those values to the highest degree. The existence of such a dispute is a prerequisite for increasing the cognitive abilities of citizens and approaching Robert Dahl's requirement for enlightened understanding, which is necessary in the direct involvement of citizens in political matters.

In **thethird part** of Chapter One, *the informed choice is examined in the context of a necessary component for democracy at value level*. Information approaches to voting in a referendum are then presented, on the basis of which a dispute with literature on the subject is proposed: *can voters participate informedly without being informed?* The problem of informed voting in direct consultations has been addressed – in order for such a vote to take place, voters must be able to give an informed answer on the proposed issue.

A number of authors put the informed citizen at the heart of a well-functioning democracy. Since ancient times Aristotle has payed attention in that direction and he defines the goal of the good citizen, which is the preservation of the political community. Plato denies the power of incompetence and appeals for the power of philosophers to improve and develop the political community. The senior liberal Jon Stewart Mill believes voting should be accessible to those who show willingness to inform themselves about the issues that have arisen. The more contemporary authors Ian McAllister and Hanspether Chrissy also acknowledge that in order for democracy to work, citizens need to be informed.

The following concerns of David van Reibrook are well-founded: "whether citizens called upon to make important decisions about the future of their society, do their best in the dark room, behind a curtain, having neither any obligation to inform themselves nor have any particular opportunity to discuss with others before that?"⁹. David van Raybrook also adds that we cannot be sure of voters' awareness even if a fair and balanced campaign is carried out without lies. And regarding referendums we cannot be sure that voters are voting for one of the

⁹Raybrook, R. Dear President Juncker in: *The Great Regression (International debate on the spiritual situation of the time)* , publ. Criticism and Humanism, Sofia, 2017, p. 57

proposed options, because very often in them answers are received about questions that are not asked.

The syndrome of democratic fatigue that leads us to the use of referendums as a tool for direct participation raises the question of the need for an informed citizen to cure this syndrome. In political literature there are three information approaches to participating in a referendum. In the first, citizens take care to inform themselves, gathering information about the pros and cons of the proposal made, which puts them in the role of independent and thinking people. In the second approach, citizens do not rely on detailed information, but use short information paths/heuristic signals. Arthur Lupia, Richard Johnson, Paul Sniderman and Popkin are defenders of this approach as a tool for implementing an informed vote without the citizens being fully informed. Lupia and Johnson believe that by using heuristic signals citizens can vote in the same way they would vote if they were fully informed. According to Larry Bartels, the lack of information cannot be compensated by the use of heuristic signals. The emerging criticism to this informed participation approach is based on the fact that little empirical evidence is available that heuristic signals are the short path to an informed vote.

One important information shortcuts for interpreting the political world, according to Ian McAllister, is party identification because modernity places great demands on voters about the information they need to process. Roger Cobb, Charles Elder, Christopher Achen and Larry Bartels are of the opinion that party loyalty is a limited approach that cannot achieve an informed state without voters getting informed.

In the latest approach to informed referendum voting, citizens make retrospective assessments of past events. According to Fiorina Morris and John Kay, assessing past events citizens can make good decisions about the future. This approach is more often used in ordinary elections. But in our case it is relevant for the national referendums in 2013 – 2016 because at the heart of the consultations for institutional and media actors, for which voters have retrospective information, and they were also the basis of the information provided in the explanatory campaigns. In contrast to the optimism at stake in the retrospective assessments, Christopher Achen and Larry Bartels in their book "Democracy for Realists" : Why don't elections produce a responsible government?" show how voters reward politicians based on their short-sighted retrospective of the economy, and when they rate their incomes, voters focus on them a few months before the election. The authors believe that doing retrospective assessments in politics is analogous to driving by relying only on the rear view mirror, i.e. the result both in driving and in politics will be the same.

The **fourth part** of Chapter One presents arguments at a value level about the need for discussion forms of democracy. The value arguments are opposed to arithmetic arguments, which show the impossibility of realizing this need. Theoretical arguments are proposed "for" and "against" the controversial forms of democracy in the context of the efforts that are in the power of the modern citizen – *Is the effort worth it?* In light of the great efforts put on today's citizens by the discussion democrats, a proposal was made *on how things can be* improved in the field of awareness.

Criticism to the heuristic signals and retrospective assessments, which challenges their effectiveness in implementing an informed vote, is a prerequisite for shaping the call of the deliberative Democrats to transfer the discussions from the representative bodies to the citizens. In the direct democracy of Antiquity, such discussions were possible due to the small size of the political community, which reached several thousand people, of whom not all were citizens, i.e. not all had the right to participate in community governance.

Sheila Benhabib and Jürgen Habermas present arguments in favor of controversial democracy, drawing ground on legitimacy. For them, legitimacy in the democratic system must be the result of discussing matters of public interest. Other grounds that discussions prefer focus on the concepts of dignity and respect. Ronald Duorkin defines dignity as an opportunity for people to make their own decisions about their future because they have equal intrinsic value. And for Charles Larmore, citizens should have the opportunity to consider the solutions they will be affected by. Christopher Lash has alternative views, despite the suggested arguments from the previous authors. According to him citizens should not participate in discussions and deliberative Democrats offer one citizen, competent for everything, who can be found in only a simple closed-door community.

The arithmetic arguments, as opposed to the applicability of the discussions all over the national state, present the consequences of the enlarged scale of the political community. The large number of citizens makes discussions not applicable, because the time for political decision-making will increase significantly, as will the number of decision-makers. The arithmetic arguments are set out in "Consent Calculation" by Buchanan and Tulloch outlining the problems facing the optimal form of government, which involves a compromise between "external" and "internal" costs. External costs arise when the group makes a decision that is unfavourable to a given person (for example, when the smoker has to pay a fee on cigarettes). Internal costs or policy decisions in the community include the time and effort required to participate in the decision (the time spent participating in public discussions). In other words, the benefits of decision-making through discussion will be ultimately disproportional with the

costs incurred in a multimillion-democracy. In this respect, Robert Dahl and Giovanni Sartori express similar views that direct democracy of discussions in ancient form is not applicable within the national state.

The efforts that modern citizens have to make to take a stand, a product of the discussions, are presented by James Fishkin as an exercise in reflections. In them, citizens in small groups of 15 people will take over the discussion from the end of the media debate and try to unravel the unanswered questions. Then the debate will shift to a larger group, a kind of population assembly, that way, according to Fishkin, a thinking democracy will be achieved. Christopher Achen and Larry Bartels are of the opinion that human beings are too committed to their lives – they have children, grown-up parents to look after, they have to go to work and they are unlikely to have time left for such an effort. People rather prefer not the state of the independent thinker, but the "rational ignorance" as per Anthony Downes, keeping their¹⁰ information costs as low as possible. According to Yuval Harari, "even if we are too committed to feeding and dressing our children and ourselves, the consequences of our absence in important decision-making will not fail to affect not only on us, but also on our children"¹¹. The effort is worth it but it's also costly.

Due to the inapplicability of the discussion form of democracy in modern times and insufficient empirical data on the effectiveness of heuristic signals, the question arises: How can things be improved in the field of raising awareness? Jon Stewart Mill offers the following answer to this question: "every citizen should pay voting tax and pass an educational test at the polling place before they can vote, and a few more votes should be given to educated citizens to offset the votes of the more numerous but less educated workers" (i.e., Jon Stewart Mill suggests sacrificing Robert Dahl's criterion of¹²equality in voting. Dahl may not mind, because he himself admits that there is no democracy that fully meets his criteria. Brian Kaplan in "The Myth of Rational Voter" recommends reducing the role of democracy and increasing the role of the market because "people have more motivation to be rational in their economic decisions when they act as producers, consumers, employers, and democracy leads to sub-optimal results

¹⁰Downs, A. *An Economic Theory of Democracy* (Harper, 1957)

¹¹Harari, Yu. *21 Lessons of 21st Century*, publ. East-West, Sofia, 2019, p. 7

¹²Mill, J. Representative Government in: H B Acton (ed), *Utilitarianism, Liberty, Representative Government* (J M Dent. & Sons, 1910, 1972 ed) p.283

– stupid policies stemming from the stupid preferences of the electorate"¹³. I argue that Brian Kaplan is wrong, that people will be more rational in political decisions in a smaller democracy, an example of this is clientelism– it reduces democracy as a form of free choice, and thus increases the economy by offering material goods in exchange for electoral support. Michael Sandell in "What Money Can't Buy" provides the following example: in a small mountain village in Switzerland, a group of economists makes a survey of the local population shortly before a referendum on agreeing to build a radioactive waste repository. Let's see what happens: A minimum majority of 51 percent voted "for".... the sense of civil duty overcomes their concern about possible dangers. Economists then add the following incentive to the poll: suppose the parliament decides to build the repository in your area and compensate every resident with an annual cash payment. Then will you vote "for" it? The result: support decreased, instead of increase. The financial stimulus reduces voters "for" by half – from 51 per cent to 21 per cent¹⁴. Most economics do not give rise to civil duty, so Giovanni Sartori distinguishes political from market decisions in the light of the expected benefit. Market decisions are aimed at maximising personal gain and are not applicable at community level, where political decisions are made extending to the whole community. To achieve improvements James Fishkin (*Is the Effort Worth it or is it Costly?*) offers exercises in consideration that require voters to spend considerable time. James Fishkin is willing to sacrifice the leisure time of modern citizens, but people are hardly ready. Jon Stewart Mill is willing to sacrifice equality at odds with R. Dahl's criteria for voting equality. Brian Kaplan's proposal to focus on the economy rather than democracy (economists only increase and decrease things). In this case neither will electoral rationality increase, nor irrationality will decrease. What I propose is: a certain time before voting in a referendum for voters to fill out a test related to the meaning of the proposed voting topics. And voters who have demonstrated a greater understanding of the topics should receive royalties from the state in the form of vouchers, giving the right to a discount on the fees of certain administrative services of state institutions. The effort is worth it, even by offering individual benefits to the more enlightened, so that it starts to be worth it for others.

¹³Caplan, B. *The Myth of the Rational Voter: Why Democracies Choose Bad Policies*, Princeton University Press; Revised edition August 24, 2008, p.275

¹⁴Sandell, M. *What Money Can't Buy. The moral boundaries of the market*, publ. East-West, Sofia, 2017, p.

The fifth part of this chapter also addressed one of the other reasons that make the referendum an inefficient expression of direct democracy. The referendum as a democratic procedure can easily become "tyranny of the majority", according to which by deciding by a majority of vote, there is undermining of those who voted the opposite or of the options other than those preferred by the majority. Majority decisions in the context of inability for dialogue produce solutions with an aggregate zero result. They produce policy according to game theory. At the end of this fourth part conclusions have been drawn as to whether the majority decision-making toolkit is applicable in our case.

A big drawback of majority referendum decisions is that they offer only two possible options for a response – "yes" and "no." Some deliberative Democrats such as Joshua Cohen, for example, are highly critical of aggregate forms of democracy that simply take into account the will of the majority. It is better for them the political decisions to be the product of a deal and bargaining.

Based on the type of democracy that operates in a particular community, whether it is consensus or majority one, according to the classification of Arendt Lipphardt, conclusions can be drawn about the applicability of referendum-type decisions. In consensus democracy political decisions are implemented through deals and bargaining and citizens have many alternatives for choosing from political actors, i.e. their choice is not limited to two options, as in the majority referendums. The "yes/no" majority tool in the referendum is in contrast to the choice made in the terms of multiple alternatives. Because of the limitations of the response options, AnriRussiyon declared the referendum an undemocratic institution. William Riker notes that very often the precise solutions are hidden in additional alternatives and are not an expression of the simplistic "yes" and "no" or "for" and "against."

Political decisions according to Giovanni Sartori can be divided into solutions with an aggregate positive policy result and solutions with an aggregate zero result in the game theory. The games with an aggregate positive policy result are the result of cooperation, bargaining and concessions between the different parties involved in the decision. Such decisions are called commission-type and are the product of dialogue. In them very often what a particular participant has given up is returned to him as a compensation when considering another matter. From this point of view, consensus democracy delivers solutions with a collective positive policy outcome, involving many heterogeneous participants. That is, consensus democracy disperses power, while the majority referendum concentrates power in the majority. The majority principle of referendums is not applicable in the Bulgarian context. If we look at the 43rd and 44th National Assembly, it is clear that the ruling majorities are majorities in the

limited sense of the word because they are constructed by many political actors. And some of the political actors involved in the ruling majority are coalitions, that are also made up of several political entities. Also, in both examples of the National Assembly considered, besides the ruling majority formed, there is also an alternative/opposition, and in the referendums there is no one to challenge the numerical right of the majority. Representative democracy in Bulgaria is a consensus one, and in the representative body is carried out the deliberative democracy, which implies decisions of commission-type with a combined positive policy result. The imposition of non-majority decisions by referendums in a democracy of this type risks the emergence of the new tyrant – the majority.

To summarize this First Chapter, I have *proposed the Idea of citizen's power*. Democracy, apart from people's power, can also be a citizen's power. The concept of people is static, unlike the concept of a citizen. From the citizen today it is expected much more than from the people. Today, the citizen is in the role of corrector of the democratic state. The people limit the understanding of democracy to power, and in the citizen are the grounds in favor of that power. And democracy needs ground in the field of values. Supporters of the heuristic signals are directed in the field of citizen's power, not the people's power, they want to build the citizen at once. The deliberative Democrats are also thinking in this field, suggesting that the debate about solutions should move to the citizens because they will be affected by them. And the majority principle is directed to the people's power, replacing the arguments in favor of power with a purely mathematical exercise.

Chapter Two: Political participation beyond its conventional forms

Democracies, both today and before, need civil participation. Whether the system of government is direct or representative, the citizen involved is a necessary component of the system of government, translated literally as a people's power.

In **the first part** of this chapter the political participation is seen as *a citizens' commitment to democracy, and the unconventional civil repertoire available to today's citizen as a form of additional commitment is presented in the context of the additional value* it brings to the democratic state.

The refusal of citizens to participate in political affairs is an apathy that, according to Kenneth Minogue, is "a version of the original sin of democracy." (Other authors, such as

Sydney Verba Norman Ni, believe¹⁵ that the less citizens participate, the less democracy there is. Benjamin Barber introduces the concept of "strong democracy", which is the product of constantly participating citizens in community-level affairs. There are also authors who believe that participating in politics citizens improve the quality of their participation. Continuous participation leads to better participation in the future. I.e. political participation also performs educational functions on citizens. The authors who emphasize these advantages of political participation are: John Dewey and Carol Pateman.

In a democratic system the opportunities for political participation do not end with the elections, but begin with them. The democracy of unconventional participation, as an alternative to conventional democracy, multiplies the channels for claiming preferences outside of electoral activities. According to Samuel Barnes, today citizens have many channels for claiming their preferences, which in turn have become a "lasting characteristic of democratic mass audiences." (The unconventional civil repertoire includes demonstrations that can be both legal (signing a¹⁶ petition, subscription lists, protests, boycotts.) as well as violent (illegal – occupation of buildings, destruction of documents, etc.). The unconventional participation aims at establishing new forms of autonomous political regulation in relation to representative parliamentary democracy. For Russell Dalton, citizenship cannot be thought of only in the act of voting, because citizens increasingly prefer to use other methods to influence politics. These new expressions of citizenship, according to Pierre Rozanvalon, show that citizenship is changing and it is unreasonable to think that refusing to participate in the vote is a civil apathy. The new citizen urges the ruling representatives to engage their attention in order to provoke sympathy and trust in him, instead of producing a policy in the representative body, seeking consensus. The results of the implementation of certain political programs are manifested in the long term, and the new citizen knocks on the door eagerly.

There are also authors who question the value of unconventional civil activities. Bernhard Wessels notes that democracy is the only regime that allows challenging its legitimacy and rules of existence. Benjamin Barber's "strong democracy" may be strong enough to challenge its existence. Gerardo Munck believes that democracy allows not only the quality of the regime to be assessed but also the conventional description to be revised.

¹⁵Minogue, K. *Creed for Democrats*. Times Literary Supplement, June 18 1999. p.8

¹⁶Barnes, Samuel H., Kaase, Max, Allerbeck, Klaus, Farah, Barbara, Heunks, Felix, Inglehart, Ronald, Jennings, M. Kent, Klingemann, Hans D., Marsh Alan, and Rosenmayr, Leopold *Political Action*. London/Newbury Park, 1979, p.149

For example, Sydney Tarrow doubts the value of collective action when exercised by people who do not have regular access to political institutions and defines them as a form of "controversial politics" because trying to resolve a particular conflict inevitably produces another, where there was none. Sydney Tarrow's thesis is connected to Alvin Toffler's thesis on the transition of democracy from mass democracy to mosaic democracy. Mosaic democracy has been defined by Toffler as a time of key minorities, in which when a small group finds itself in a proper strategic position, at some point it can put pressure disproportionate to its size. The unconventional activities of the small and noisy groups can disrupt the democratic ideal of equality by making the government focus on their interests in order to deafen the noise and ignore the interests of other groups. As Francis Fukuyama also acknowledges in "The End of History", the problems in modern democracy stem from the incomplete realization of the norms of freedom and equality.

The assertion that in order for there to be more democracy, there must also be participation, supports the legitimacy of the regime. But if civil activity is to fulfil its functions as a corrector in relation to the state (John Keane and Ernest Gelner), replacing conventional participation with unconventional is not a sufficient condition. In other words, if the additional does not add additional value, it cannot be considered as an addition (accumulation of democracy at a value level) but vice versa – as a quantitative surplus without qualitative accumulation.

The second part of Chapter Two focuses on protest actions in the most common focus of them in their motives for the emergence of – "for" and "against" specific political actors or figures. That is why the protest activities evoke what Giovanni Sartori's defined as a state of *Overload and unmanageability*. In this section are cited the messages from the 2013 protests, which show that the *enemy is a stimulator of the civil resistance*.

Giovanni Sartori believes that to exercise power, there must be someone on whom to exercise it. From this point of view in protest activities arises the question: Over whom do the people exercise its power? The answer may be this: the people exercises power over the people. And Vande Donk gives a similar answer: "the protest is the politics of the powerless"¹⁷. Verta Taylor and Ella Van Dijk think in an alternative direction and they do not define protest

¹⁷Vande Donk W., B. D. Loader, P. G. Nixon and D. Raucht *Cyberprotest. New media, citizens and social movements*, New York: Routledge, 2004, p.12

as an powerless entity, but as a form of extraordinary collective action to challenge the actions of the institutions and for forcing them to accept the movement's agenda.

According to Michael Lipsky, in most cases the protests are engaged by relatively powerless groups, and their success depends on attracting the attention and activation of other groups and political parties affected by the current political situation. This is also E. Shatschneider's idea of expanding the conflict. For example, public protest as an unconventional tool aims to draw the public's attention to the complaints of the actors in question and creates controversy where there has not been any, in order to gain the public's support in confirmation of their concerns.

Most protests are expressions of distrust to the representative system and arise when a sufficiently large or sufficiently noisy part of society becomes active against the government or part of it or on a specific topic. Like the topics in the referendums, in which it is simply answered with "for" and "against" without excessive strain. The formation of disagreements in a large or very noisy part of society against the government creates prerequisites for a change in the political situation, which involves in the dispute also the powerless political formations. They prefer to position themselves on the side of those affected, which coincides with their own goals. Prerequisites are created for the formation of sentiment in society "for" and "against" the status quo, similar to the national referendums in 2015 and 2016. Society is once again divided into two camps – "for" and "against", on the issues in the referendum, despite the absence of the possibility for direct participation.

The protest makes it possible for physical presence of people with the same preferences. Unfortunately, however, the protest gathering is not like a meeting of the population in Antiquity. The protest assembly does not prefer debates but simply prefers not to agree. The protest is a policy without a debate of those convinced of their infallibility. In most cases, the policy of protest is an anti-politics policy.

The people don't always believe in its infallibility. People demonstrate a double standard regarding their infallibility. An example of the contradictory public sentiment regarding the infallibility of people's sovereignty is the outcome of Brexit. Many Bulgarians working in Britain were worried about the consequences affecting their residence there, when Britain left the EU. In this case, the result of the actions of part of the common will was expressed in concerns, not in calls supporting the unmistakable people's power and direct democracy. However, the case with the national referendums in Bulgaria is the opposite.

Whether it believes in itself or not, the people do not demonstrate the "thinking democracy" as defined by James Fishkin. Attendance democracy in vain puts pressure on the protagonist's expectations to present himself in a different light.

In the next part of the chapter, protest actions are presented as the state of *Overload and unmanageability*. Vilfredo Pareto, Gaetano Mosca and Walter Lippman divide society into classes and in the delimitations of all three there is the column of the non-governing people. In "Democracy Theory" Giovanni Sartori also concludes that democracies are governed. Those governed increasingly do not accept this position and aspire to a ruling democracy, i.e. they want their interests to be the focus of the government more often, not just before the election date. The protests allow for attention to those who are governed, but according to Sartori, they are not a moment of more people's power, because it may turn out that the power the governing entities lose does not go to the governed, and the result is negative for both sides in the conflict. Giovanni Sartori sees this condition as a state of overload and unmanageability.

Michel Fuco correctly defines true discourse as the root of the governance process and democracies can be governed when such discourse is present. The messages in the 2013 protests reveal the existence of a small-scale discourse until the time of "for" and "against".

In the next part there is a discourse analysis of the messages from the protests in 2013 against the government with Prime Minister Plamen Oresharski. All messages give a negative argument for political participation and in them the image of the political enemy as a stimulant for civic activity is always present. Even the counter protest in defense of the government builds its support based on the denial of another institution - in this case it is the President. Umberto Eco, Carl Schmidt and Friedrich Hayek note that the main driver for mobilization of participation is the construction of an obstacle (an enemy), which must be combated.

In the protests the contradiction arises: when the will of the people triumphs in them, will democracy triumph as well? In their book "How Democracies Die" Daniel Ziblatt and Steven Levitsky give a negative answer to this question. According to them, democracy dies when a political opponent is presented as an enemy to the public. The authors give a precise diagnosis of one of the diseases of modern democracies:

"the polarization of society, which is inevitable when political opponents begin to be perceived by the general audience as enemies. The politics of war, if only verbal, like any war has its price. It destroys

unwritten norms of tolerance and restraint and dismantles democracy as a form of cooperation."¹⁸

In order for there to be significant public energy leading to changes in the system, it seems that citizens do not need to have positive qualities and cooperate, whereas political actors to have negative ones. The profit from the situation will always be for the political entity with less negative qualities, because the worse the enemy, the more ruthless the people will be.

In **the thirdpart** of Chapter *Two*, *The Subscription list, as a form of bottom-up democracy* shows that there are practices of different unconventional civil activity in which citizens really solve specific problems. The opposite example of the subscription list is *The Dinko-type of self-government democracies*, which intensify a problem by extending it to another known problem of the friend/enemy axis division in politics.

In *The Subscription list – democracy from bottom up*, I have offered examples of a different civil engagement that does not function on the friend-enemy division axis. Some authors see citizenship as active and passive. Passive citizenship is linked to the rights and obligations of citizens from above. While in active citizenship individuals identify their own interests and try to achieve a better future. According to Chantal Muf, with active citizenship, democracy functions from top down, and in the passive variety it is the opposite. The examples of subscription list that I have considered fit into the idea of active citizenship and democracy from bottom up. In them, citizens identify the problem themselves and impose the agenda by taking action to persuade the responsible institutions to solve the problem. I have presented examples of a subscription lists in which citizens have organized themselves to solve small local problems, such as setting up a traffic light on a zebra crossing, on a lying police officer in a certain place, and succeed. These local cases concern a small number of people and in specific cases the institutions mobilize themselves to solve the problem rather than mobilize citizens for political action on the friend/enemy division axis. The problems affecting these cases do not require debate and special knowledge but sober judgment. Precisely because they affect a smaller number and do not suggest a swell because of the local nature of the problems, the institutions concentrate on how to solve the problem, not how to expand the conflict. Such cases bring us closer to Robert Dahl's norm for agenda control and enlightened understanding,

¹⁸Ziblatt, D. & Levitsky, S. *How Democracies Die*, publ. Siela, Sofia, 2019, p. 178

because these problems require common sense, not expertise. These activities also fall within the column of Colin Crouch's democratic moments, in which citizens seize the initiative from the institutional actors.

Dinko-type self-governing deformations are the opposite example of civil activity, which still leads us to the familiar friend/enemy divide. In Dinko's case – the force hero's offensive on the capture of refugees, seized the powers from the legitimate institutions, destroying the idea of representative democracy to indirectly resolve conflicts through institutional power. In the discourse analysis of the articles related to Dinko's manifestations, the media present him in the light of the positive character, which creates the feeling that the institutions are not coping. Unlike the "new hero", the new enemies – the refugees still lead us to the old ones. The "Dinkovs" in politics were born – examples of this are the fight of Volen Siderov in a 24-hour cigarette and alcohol shop and the actions of Valeriy Simeonov in Sunny Beach related to noise checks in places of entertainment. Those public persons, who are part of the institutional force, prefer to seize the powers of another institution, i.e. instead of order they prefer arbitrariness. Their focus is not on the damage they do to institutional democracy, but elsewhere – to the audience, to seeking its attention through non-traditional manifestations. Ivaylo Dichev explains this phenomenon with "the abundance of media and the lack of central control of authorities over information flows, which puts the battle for the attention of the audience in the center of an already competitive market"¹⁹.

Dinko and Dinkovs examples are the opposite examples of bottom-up democracy, when society does not require decisions from institutions, but decides to act for them.

In the context of replacing institutional power with a non-institutional Jean - Jacques Rousseau says that if a robber surprises us and tries to force us to give him our purse of money, we are not obliged to obey him. The gun he also holds is power but we must obey only the legal authorities, because power does not create a right.

In Dinko's case, the friends and enemies are not political, but they are still at the heart of politics. Public sentiment is again against the "enemy" (the refugees), which this time is not political but the effects are political. Which democracy is preferable – the one with the "new enemies" and the "new heroes" or the one with the well-known ones? In the deformities of self-government, society has no choice – then the ruling of power appears, denying institutional authority. The actions of the legal institutions go unnoticed against the background of

¹⁹Dichev, I. *Cultural Scenes of the Political*, publ. Prosveta, Sofia, 2019, p. 95

illegitimate actions. The second are a prerequisite for ignoring the first by the general public, because they manifest themselves less often and are presented in a more attractive way by the media. They are a resource from which something must be gained at the moment.

Chapter Three: The three referendums in three internal political contexts

The Third Chapter aims to show in what internal political context the three national referendums took place and what are the motives of the initiators to provoke a direct consultation at the specified time. I will present what arguments the defenders of the opposing theses in it use in the explanatory campaign.

The referendum in 2013.

The first referendum was held in 2013 at the initiative of the Bulgarian Socialist Party (BSP), around which an initiative committee is formed, which collects the necessary signatures for the production of a direct consultation. The issue on which citizens are entitled to exercise a direct vote is: "Should nuclear energy develop in the Republic of Bulgaria by building a new nuclear power plant?"

In 2005 with a government led by "the Bulgarian Socialist Party (BSP)", the Council of Ministers designated project Belene Atomic Power Plant as a project of national importance. By decision of the same year, the Council of Ministers approved a proposal of the Minister of Energy for the construction of a nuclear power plant on the Belene site. In 2011, after two years from the first reign of the political party GERB passed, the same declared that it may not continue the construction of the power plant in Belene. And in 2012, under the same government of the political party GERB and their partners from the Blue Coalition, the Council of Ministers annulled the decision for building a nuclear power plant in Belene and the same decision was supported by the current parliament. Political party BSP, through the triggered referendum in 2013, tried to stop a decision of the government, part of which is their main political opponent then, party GERB. In the 2009 parliamentary elections political party GERB wins first place in the election race using mainly anti-corruption rhetoric, while political party BSP remains second and in opposition.

Three committees are registered for participation in the "against" awareness campaign – Borislav Sandov of the PP Zelenite registers "Green Alternatives against Belene"; Maria Kapon of the PP ENP established the BelyaNe Committee and PP DSB also joined the "against" explanatory campaign with a committee headed by Ivan Ivanov. On the arena of the awareness campaign there are three entities which defend the "against" thesis and one entity that initiated the referendum, defending the opposite thesis. On the one hand, the initiators, by deterring the government decision, wanted to demonstrate the victory they failed to achieve in the 2009 general elections, and on the other hand, the committees around the Blue Coalition sought to generate as much support as possible to legitimize their decision. The campaign for this consultation is built on the following arguments: on the one hand, the opponents of the project use the winning anti-corruption rhetoric from the previous parliamentary elections, and its defenders try to generate support, stepping on the social discontent during the winter period. In the explanatory campaign for this referendum the political entity, whom the initiators of the consultation wanted to oppose (GERB), does not participate officially. Before the consultation, political party GERB also took the following "insurance" – changing the issue of the direct consultation, from which the Belene project in particular was excluded. Unlike the active participants in the campaign – the committees around the "Blue Coalition", who rely on the narrative of the corruption project and the committee around the BSP, offering social relief with lower bills, GERB, taking the specifics out of the question (the Belene project), wants to discourage other positions because they talk about the specific project.

The referendum in 2015.

The second analyzed referendum, which took place in 2015 is also the result of the protest waves that arose in 2013 and was intended to provide the discontented with the possibility of institutional expression other than the opportunity provided by ordinary elections. At the beginning of 2013 in the winter months social protests arise due to the high electricity bills, and in the summer of the same year there is another protest wave, which is against the government with Prime Minister Plamen Oresharski. In January 2014, President Rosen Plevneliev summoned the National Assembly for a referendum to be called in order to restore trust in the democratic institutions. In February 2014 the legal committee in the parliament then rejected the initiative of President Rosen Plevneliev for a referendum. An initiative committee has been set up to begin collecting signatures for three questions about the production of a referendum. The actual signatures collected by the Committee were not enough and the committee is not given additional time to correct the inaccuracies. The current president then is

a former minister in the first cabinet of PP GERB, who is currently in opposition – the government at this time (the BSP and DPC coalition) fears that the proposed referendum will serve their political opponent.

After the fall of the coalition government between the BSP and DPC and the holding of early parliamentary elections, PP GERB formed its second government together with the coalition alliance Reformist Bloc and PP ABV. This parliament resumes the debate on the President's proposal for a referendum. Two of the questions did not gather support from MPs and in the Referendum in July 2015 the parliament decides to vote only on the issue: Do you support being able to vote remotely electronically in elections and national referendums?

This referendum was held together with the local elections, which largely influenced the awareness campaign, stimulating the participation of many political actors in it. For this referendum, there is a significant increase in those taking part in the explanatory activities compared to the previous referendum. There is a noticeable active involvement of many political parties – 35 political parties plus coalitions, in which more than one party participates.

On the campaign arena, there are two opposing theses. "The two opposing theses in the campaign – "Yes" and "No", express the attitudes towards the political participation of citizens and the "status quo" and the established parties and their ways of making policy. In the "Yes" thesis camp were those who argued that electronic voting would allow Bulgarian citizens abroad to participate actively and that electronic voting would limit electoral corruption and the controlled vote. The "No" thesis argued, that electronic voting would deepen the problems with electoral²⁰fraud".

The campaign for this referendum includes the then ruling coalition (GERB, Reformist Bloc, PP ABV) and defends the position "For" it. The opposition in the face of PP BSP does not take formal part in the explanatory campaign. This also created a premise of opposition based on another distinction: smaller political formations opposed larger ones, speaking against them although both types of participants mostly defended the same thesis (The claim that the electronic vote scares the status quo often appears in the campaign). In other words, what is

²⁰Stoychev, St. *The 2015 Referendum in Bulgaria*, East European Quarterly, Central European University, December 2015, p.317

important for the participants in the referendum campaigns *the political opponent, not the proposals made for direct participation.*

The referendum in 2016.

The 2016 referendum is known to the general public as Slavi's referendum. In July 2015 the host of "Slav'si Show" - Stanislav Trifonov, announces on air in the show that in September he will begin a subscription list for a national referendum for a change in the political system. The show created an initiative committee that began collecting signatures on the topic aimed at changing the political system. After the approval of the questions by the National Assembly, the President referred the matter to the Constitutional Court to rule on three of the proposals made and they dropped out of the consultation because of constitutional contradictions. After the cancellation of some of the questions the show reacted sharply, denying any institutional authority, even in one of the broadcasts the photo of the President was demonstrably torn on air. It is interesting to note that the show calls for the introduction of a majority vote through the referendum, while denying it at the same time – for the President of the Republic of Bulgaria is elected by majority.

Most political parties, including mainly the larger ones, are passive about this referendum and this makes its initiators from Slavi's show a major source of information. The campaign led by the show reduced the three proposed voting topics to one question. The show states: "And the one question that sums up the six questions we want to put to a national poll is: "Do people support pigs to rule?" (based on Orwell's novel "Animal Farm")

In the next part of this Chapter Three, I have examined *the volatile context of referendum decisions* based on Giovanni Sartori's theoretical framework, in which decisions are distinguished to those with a permanent and others with volatile context. The context is volatile when there are separate, unrelated problems. That's the case with the referendums. All three national referendums have put voters on the path to making decisions in a volatile context, because voters are burdened with making several decisions at community level at once – while part of the decisions are direct and the other indirect, two of the referendums were carried out together with the ordinary elections.

An example of a controversial decision taken in a volatile context is the support for the introduction of the electronic vote given by most voters in the second referendum analyzed. It could be seen as a contradiction to voters' support for reducing the subsidy to political parties

to 1 BG lev for an actual vote in the last referendum. With their last act of voting, citizens wish to reduce the funds received by political parties, and with their act of voting in the previous referendum on the introduction of the electronic vote, the funds may increase upon its introduction – as election activity increases, political parties will also increase the amount of funds they receive in the form of a subsidy from the state. Another such example is the support of voters on two of the proposed themes of the 2016 referendum – the issues of reducing the state subsidy and the introduction of compulsory voting in elections and referendums, received great support. But the two supports are in contradiction – the first aimed at reducing the funding of political parties by the state, while the second – the opposite (the mandatory vote will increase it, the parties will get more votes and more funds). Taking into account the non-binding character of the results of the three referendums and their transfer to the National Assembly, the contradictory, detached decisions of the electorate can produce an outcome contrary to their wishes. For example, if the National Assembly decides only on the introduction of a compulsory vote without making changes to the amount of the state subsidy, the parties will increase the funding they receive from the state. The volatile context of referendum decisions, producing contradictory responses, leads us to another answer – voters, voting in favor of their preferences, sometimes vote directly against them.

As a *Summary* of Chapter Three, I have formulated the following: The crisis of mistrust in the representative institutions is at the heart of the referendum in 2015, and also the wear and tear of the usual toolkit for influencing the politics of the 2013 referendum. This has prompted institutional actors to move into a new role – from political party leaders and representatives of society to referendum leaders. The second type of leader aims to show that he trusts society when it doesn't trust him. In this type of leadership, trust is in the opposite direction – from political representations to society. In both cases, referendums are a tool for managing mistrust, not forming one – through the first referendum BSP had to minimize the corruption rhetoric damage, and the second was realized after a series of protests against the two leading political parties in our political system. The third referendum was implemented with an aim opposite to the previous ones – in it the show called the people, not the traditional political actors and it implements a policy that forms distrust to our political system, and not for mistrust management.

Chapter Four: The campaign messages for the three national referendums are a tool to minimize direct consultations to the level of a procedure.

In the last Chapter Four, a content analysis of 113 articles from the explanatory campaigns for the three national referendums was carried out. The content analysis is divided into two parts, applying quantitative and qualitative analysis techniques.

The first part of Chapter Three begins with a theoretical part aimed at manipulations in the political discourse and political myths. Very often, manipulative techniques are used in political discourse to present information that is far from the truth. William Riker defines manipulation not as a kind of persuasion, but as a "fine game of emotions"²¹. The use of manipulations is a means of influencing one group in society over others – for example, the rulers over the governed. According to some analysts, the use of manipulative discourse is a form of exerting illegal influence because manipulators push the manipulated to act against their interests.

Van Dijk distinguishes three layers of manipulation in political discourse: social, cognitive and discursive. "The social perspective involves the abuse of social power to cause social inequality. The cognitive perspective is to control mental patterns for understanding specific problems, along with the creation of biased mental patterns. The discursive perspective includes the characteristics of ideological discourse, which emphasizes the positive qualities of the group²²members" .

In the national referendums between 2013 – 2016, discourse manipulations prevail, where advocates and opponents of voting topics attribute positive and negative qualities to themselves, and society faces the choice of which group to join. Discursive manipulations are realized with the use of cognitive ones, with the second controlling the thinking processes in the field of "for" and "against" specific political groups and the public expressing their desire to join the more desired group.

Mythologisation is one of the tools in politics to simplify conflicts that arise and manipulate audiences. In 1946 Ernst Cassirer warns that myths are not yet defeated and they stalk and wait for their chance and opportunity. The main statement in Murray Edelman's theory about symbolic politics is that people make a decision by reacting to the strongest emotional symbol that gets its meaning from myths. According to Edelman, the myth is "the faith

²¹ Riker, W. *The Art of Political Manipulation*, New Haven 1986, p. IX

²²Van Dijk T.A "Discourse and Manipulation" In:*Discourse and Society*, SAGE Publications, r7 359-3g3. (2006) p.359

maintained by a large group of people that give events and actions a certain meaning"²³. Edelman added that myths are used to build enemies and heroes. Political myths also do not appear by accident, but are skillfully crafted by many cunning craftsmen, according to Ernst Cassirer.

At the end of the theoretical part of Chapter Four, *the Myth of direct governance* is presented *in the idea of autonomy*. According to some philosophers, direct democracy is a true democracy, because it realizes the idea of the autonomy of political decisions. Such a philosopher is Cornelius Castoriadis. He is of the opinion that to really decide means not to allow anyone else decide instead of you. The idea that when the people participate directly in the political process it participates freely and independently, defending its interests, is wrong. I.e. the assertion that direct governance produces autonomy can be challenged. According to Gerald Duorkin, autonomy is not an automatic free choice, because there are cases where a person is seemingly free to act, but is spared information or is presented with a misleading one. In these cases, a person is deluded and his actions are not autonomous. Such is the example of John Locke, "who was put in a cell and convinced that all the doors were locked (when in fact one was left unlocked) and he was free to leave the cell. But since he cannot seize this opportunity when the information was provided to him, his ability to do whatever he wants is limited."²⁴ If more democracy (direct democracy) does not increase citizens' awareness at the expense of delusions, it will be appropriate to talk about political autonomy. But it is possible that quite the opposite can happen. In elections for representatives, voters may punish underperforming politicians, but in a direct democracy, those subject to punishment can dramatically increase their size and make punishment inapplicable. This makes voters dependent on the general electoral body, which does not have the limited term of office but governs forever.

²³Edelman, M. *Politics as Symbolic Action: Mass Arousal and Quiescence*. Chicago: Markham Publishing Company. 1971, p.14

²⁴Duorkin, D. The nature of Autonomy. In: *Autonomy and Bioethics*, publ. Kritika and Humanism, Sofia, 2011, p. 51-76

David Hume says that "while mistakes in religion are dangerous, those in philosophy are only absurd"²⁵. I argue that mistakes in political philosophy can also be dangerous. Such a mistake is that direct democracy is an instrument for achieving an autonomous democracy. In many cases, through the use of referendums, political and other actors transmit their important theme and are willing to manipulate public sentiment to gain a majority. The myth that political autonomy in direct democracy is a myth, is more autonomous than the myth that direct democracy creates independent, unaffected political decisions.

The second part of the last Chapter Four presents the results of the first part of the content analysis confirming the hypothesis: *The information provided in the explanatory campaigns stimulates uninformed political participation.*

The *First part* of the content analysis outlines the following conclusions:

1. The largest part of the information provided is concentrated within the time of the explanatory campaigns, with more talk in the last two referendums starting earlier (before the start of the campaigns). The concentration of a large amount of information in a short time frame provides a limited time to make sense of it before the date of the vote.

2. For the first two referendums, political parties are much more active, with a large number of parties involved in the campaign for the second, which creates the premise of speaking against the political opponent, because he is also on the arena in the campaign for direct participation.

3. The themes in the three national referendums are also a barrier to the implementation of an informed vote because they concern expert issues, and in a month's time it is difficult to create experts in political science and atomic energy. The existential topics are applicable for direct consultation as opposed to expert ones because they require sober judgment rather than expertise knowledge. David Van Raybrook defines referendums expert questions as life-saving heart surgery, and it is unclear for him how such surgery can be performed with a rusty tool by citizens with unspecified competencies.

4. For all three national referendums according to genre characteristic, the highest is the number of analyzed texts, which are a position, and the lowest number is that of information materials. The dominant number of positions taken in the texts for all three referendums shows the limitation of choice as a civil prerogative in the context of more democracy. The

²⁵Hume, D. *A Treatise of Human Nature*, edited Ernest C. Mossner (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1969, originally 1739/40, p.319

intervention defeats the possibility of independent choice and does not predispose citizens to thinking processes.

5. Regarding the volume of articles included in the content analysis, the largest is number of articles with an average volume (up to 120 rows), followed by articles of small volume (up to 45 rows) and the least is the number of articles with a large volume (over 120 rows). Given the expert nature of the proposed voting topics, the lower volume limits the possibility of providing meaningful information and implies the use of manipulative techniques.

6. An alarming symptom is that only 5 of the articles included in the content analysis are with an author expert/analyst, followed by the materials with author a specific journalist from the media, and the largest number of materials is without a specific author. Anonymous "authorities" fill the media space, and it is not clear who is behind a certain material and what he aims at with it. It would be useful after a certain material, the opinion of a specific expert to be set out on it. This is not done, probably purposefully, so as not to waver the desired effect of the material that brings economic benefit (most campaign materials are paid). And in this case we have more economics and less democracy of values (informed, rational choice). Brian Kaplan's thesis is again invalid – most economics can't improve things, especially in terms of direct democracy.

7. In 93 of the texts in the content analysis, an illustration is available, and 20 of the articles are without any picture material. The illustrations in texts for the three referendums depict politicians taking part in the awareness campaign and other images related to this activity. The footage, which concerns voting issues, is emotional, not informative. Moreover, it is relevant to the replacement of the content.

8. As regards the attitude towards the referendum the texts which have specific opinions "for" or "against" the voting topics prevail, and the text in which no specific attitude to the referendums is taken are few in number – 12. The entities in the explanatory campaigns reduce the degree of people's power by deliberately not providing meaningful information, but only instructing how to vote. The number of articles that reflect a negative attitude towards direct consultations is the lowest. The presence of political parties in the campaigns for the first two referendums explains this behavior, because it is impossible political organizations that are in constant competition for the trust of the electorate to have a negative attitude towards the referendum and respectively against the people's power. The same is true of the last consultation in which populism prevailed – for there to be populism there must be a people, through direct consultations populist leaders show sympathy for the people, in order to provoke sympathy to themselves.

9. In 82 of the texts examined, techniques for manipulating public opinion are present. That is, at least one of Noam Chomsky's 10 manipulation techniques is present in each text. The most commonly used manipulation techniques are: focusing on emotions instead of offering food for thought and creating a problem to offer a solution. The least number of manipulative techniques are present in the last referendum compared to the other two, due to the fact that political parties did not participate in the explanatory campaigns. However, the populism that Slavi's Show produced in it replaced manipulations.

10. In the total of 113 texts examined about the three referendums, rationalization techniques were present in 95 of them, and in 18 – there were none. There is the same trend as in manipulative techniques: the rationalization techniques in the third referendum are of the smallest number – political parties did not show the same activity as for the first two consultations, but populism instead silenced the meaning of the voting proposals made.

In **the third part** are examined the specifically used messages in the explanatory campaigns for the three national referendums and the hypothesis is proved that the Aspiration to win over the political opponent determines the information provided in the *explanatory campaigns*.

In the messages presented in the section *The alternative to the informed vote for "who" instead for "what"* it is noted that the alternative of the informed vote (heuristic signals) focuses voters on political opponents (who) instead of on the voting proposals made (what). In other words, voters are urged to vote not on the proposed topic in direct participation, but against the political opponent.

The following hypothesis, which is also derived from the first and shows exactly how the informed participation is hindered, is: *The emotion sparked by manipulation and rationalization stimulates uninformed political participation, which determines the outcome of the three national referendums*. In the specifically considered *Examples of manipulation and rationalization*, it is noted that not one, but several techniques of manipulation and rationalization are present in specific messages that stimulate emotions, not the thinking processes. Heuristic signals built on the basis of manipulative and rationalization techniques can mislead voters about their preferences, prompting them to participate against them. For example, the active citizen demonstrates some preferences in his unconventional activities, while in direct consultations he participates against them. An example of voter support for a political topic contrary to their preference, is the topic related to the national referendum in 2016 for reduction of the state subsidies of political parties to one lev per actual vote. Slavi's

Show, as the main source of information, did not provide meaningful information to citizens, but simply opposed them through the referendum to the political class. The civil activity of discontent with the current state of democracy is dictated by the desire of the citizens for often and more tangible taking into account their interests, but using the short route of participation provided by the Show, citizens produced an outcome that contradicted their political behavior, destroying one of the pillars of the parties' dependence on society, the subsidy.

The fourth part of Chapter Four *is the second part* of the content analysis, which used quantitative procedures demonstrating the credibility of the hypothesis that the *Large volume of general and manipulative sentences fills the media space in the explanatory campaign and neutralizes the much less presence of meaningful information.*

The sum of the number of manipulative sentences and the number of sentences of "general-talks" type is several times more than the sentences about the pros and cons of the proposed voting topics. The greatest is the volume of manipulative sentences and the sentences of "general-talks" type in the period of the explanatory campaigns, when there is a concentration of information about the referendums. In almost all of the media considered, manipulative sentences and sentences of "general-talks" type are present. But this is not the case with the sentences about the pros and cons of the proposed topics. There are media from the analyzed ones, in which there is not a single sentence of this kind. The highest number of sentences of "general-talks" type and the manipulative sentences for the three referendums is in the articles without a specific author. In the articles written by a journalist from the media and respectively in the same, the number of sentences about the pros and cons of voting topics is the least. In the articles written by an expert/analyst, the reverse trend is manifested, and the sentences about the pros and cons of the topic are the greatest number. The same articles are without manipulative sentences and with minimum sentences of the "common-talks" type. But even if the expert/analyst articles show a positive trend regarding the realization of awareness, they are only 5 of all the analyzed articles, and the information provided in them fades against the background of the information in the articles written by a journalist from the media and articles without a specific author.

The fifth part of this chapter shows *the link between populism and direct democracy*, and for this purpose the messages made by Slavi's Show are analyzed in relation to the initiated by the Show 2016 referendum. The discourse analysis is presented within the frame of understanding populism as a "thin ideology" contrary to the thick party ideology.

The populists, as well as the realization of referendums, need the people. According to Bernard Crick, for populist leaders there must be people who express common will, not

individuals and interests. Cass Mude and Margaret Canovan portray populism as a tool for dividing society into two parts: the people against the elite or the established power structures. Margaret Canovan also says that "when there is too much gap between enlightened democracy and dirty politics, populists tend to move to the free territory, promising instead of the dirty world of the party... the shiny ideal of democracy"²⁶.

The referendum, as a tool for direct participation of the whole community, allows the call made to the people by populist leaders to be given the opportunity for direct institutional participation. The power taken away from the enemy (the political elite) is granted to the people who, in most cases, according to Hanspeter Kriesy, "support the rule of replacing the "corrupt elite" with the direct rule of "honest"²⁷ people".

On the website of "Slavi's Show", in the referendum section, there are 218 articles, accompanied by videos. In 183 of the published materials there are available expressions dividing society into two homogeneous parts – the "virtuous people" and the "bad-natured elite". Populism dominates the 2016 referendum as the main reason for participation in the direct consultation and not the information within the meaning of the voting proposals. This was also helped by the nature of the proposals made by the show, which suggested drastic changes in the political system and were presented as a weapon in the hands of the people, the way they would defeat the political class. In the campaigns for the first two referendums, the public was called upon to punish a particular political opponent, and in the campaign for this referendum the enemy increased its size to the entire political class.

The next part, under the name *The Harmless Less Harmful Political Ignorance*, shows that in our case it is no less harmful. Some authors are of the opinion that accidental mistakes in a large electorate are being cancelled. This happens by spreading the ignorant vote evenly between the options "for" and "against", and informed voters support the better option and determine the outcome.

Reality rarely offers a situation where the ideal type of informed citizen of Alfred Schütz determines the outcome of the race, not the ideal type of the person of the street who has only operational knowledge of recipes. The themes in the three national referendums between 2013 – 2016 unfortunately, only offered recipes for approval. On the subject of the first referendum

²⁶Canovan, M. *Trust the People Populism and the Two Faces of Democracy, Political Studies, Vol.47, No.1, 1999, pp.2-16.*

²⁷Kriesi, H. "The Populist Challenge" *West European Politics* 37(2), 2014, p.636

in 2013 the following counter theses were proposed: 1. Vote against the project, i.e. against BSP and corruption; 2. "The Blue ones" want us to be energy dependent and import electricity, so vote against them. Based on the topic in 2015 the following alternative is proposed: 1. The status quo does not want and fears the electronic vote; 2. The electronic vote will increase electoral manipulation and take away the possibility to choose. For the 2016 referendum there was no alternative. The theses were: 1. Support the referendum against the political class; 2. There was no thesis, or it was very vaguely presented.

It does not matter whether the distribution of political ignorance "for" and "against" the topics is evenly distributed, because the prescribed alternatives do not imply a different type of civil activity.

After the arguments and data provided so far, which reveal the absence of an informed vote in the three national referendums analyzed, it is reasonable to start thinking of the *Passive citizen as a tool for community protection in the face of mass misinformation*. In all three national surveys the threshold for compulsory participation under Art. 23. para. 1 of the Law on Direct Participation of Citizens in the State Government and Local Self-government is not exceeded because of insufficient electoral activity. The results of direct consultations are with non-obligatory character. A passive citizen with his non-participation in direct consultations protects democracy from institutionalizing mass misinformation on expert issues. At certain times, passivity is more useful than misinformed activity. If, in our case, passivity is also an expression of political apathy, Kenneth Minogue is wrong stating that "apathy is the original sin of democracy."

This dissertation ends with Critical Notes instead of a conclusion. Media and awareness campaign participants can empower citizens by providing them with information from experts as a matter of priority, rather than manipulating them and emptying civil activity from content. In our case, manipulation and rationalization determine the outcome of the three national surveys. The information provided in the explanatory campaigns raises precisely these concerns—reasoning does not determine the end result of direct democracy. The participants in the explanatory activities for the three national referendums make citizens less of citizens in the context of more democracy, i.e. in direct participations. In fact, Arthur Lupia and co-authors give us a good idea, if we can sift out the opinion of the expert on the topic that has arisen and follow it by locking up our emotions and our short-sighted retrospective assessments, we may shorten the path to the informed vote. In our case for the three national referendums, the available publications by experts/analysts are 5 out of the 113 articles analyzed. And given the emotional charge of other articles, the expert/analyst articles sink into the vast infinite

sea. Christopher Lash also thinks in this direction and believes that the purpose of journalism is not to provoke public debate but to provide the opinions of the experts that are the basis for the intelligent solutions. So, according to Patrick Cannon, "the collective ignorance of citizens can give way to expertise skills"²⁸. It is much more important then who is behind the words than the words themselves. The words of John Dewey, however, are also important, that democracy is a matter of personal responsibility and it is not important how the masses will act, it is important how I, you and him will react.

Society must protect itself from the manipulative and insignificant information that is a major driver of political activity in the three national surveys. One form of protection is the value of the passive citizen, who hinders the introduction of referendum themes. But this is the protection of non-participation and democracy also needs the protection of participation if we think of it in the field of citizens' power.

IV. Reference for scientific contributions.

1. It is shown that democracy can also be thought of in the field of values, and not only in the understanding of the activity that justifies the procedure. It has been proven that the

²⁸Cannon, P. *The Sunset of Democracy* publ. Obsidian, Sofia, 1995, p. 10

messages in the national referendums in the period 2013 – 2016 show the absence of democracy at the value level in the field of informed choice.

2. A definition of democracy is made, as a form of citizen's power as opposed to understanding democracy as a people's power, which is limited to the words power and people, without providing valuable arguments in favor of those words.
3. An empirical study of the information provided in the explanatory campaigns for the three national referendums was carried out, outlining the trends regarding the information provided in the explanatory campaigns.
4. A specific design of the study was created using content analysis techniques, in which quantitative procedures for the second level of data synthesis are used.
5. A content analysis of articles related to the explanatory activities for the three national consultations was carried out.
6. The thesis is built on the value of the passive citizen, who, in the context of mass misinformation, stops the uninformed activity of the active citizen in the three national referendums.
7. On the basis of the analysis, a model is deducted of how citizens can participate informedly in political life without being informed.

V. Scientific publications

1. The link between populism and direct democracy – the referendum in 2016, Scientific Papers volume 58 series 11, Rouse University "Angel Kanchev" FRI-216-2SSH(S)-07, p. 42-48

2. Politics without political enemy (the period of state of emergency in Bulgaria 2020) in: a collection of reports from the International Scientific Conference at the Regional Library "Lyuben Karavelov" city of Ruse. – "Evolution vs. Revolution or Development Patterns" Vol. 2, p. 302-310

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3. Rationality in Politics is a Mirage, Scientific Papers volume 59 series 11.1 Ruse University "Angel Kanchev" FRI-110-2-SSH(S)-07,p.54-58<http://conf.uni-ruse.bg/bg/docs/cp20/11.1/11.1-9.pdf>