



My Own Private Public Library

Julia Roneⁱ

Department of Social and Political Sciences,
European University Institute, Florence, Italy
Email: julia.rone@eui.eu

Abstract

The present paper analyzes the emergence of Bulgarian digital libraries with pirated literature as a form of compensation for the failure of both the state and the market to provide easy access to electronic books in Bulgaria. These grass-roots digital libraries can be understood best through an analysis of the dichotomies between formal and informal economy, law and ethics, commercial and non-commercial interest, bricolage and engineering. Sharing of books online in Bulgaria has its historical precedent in the sharing of cultural objects during socialism and is part of the larger logic of informal economy as a form of independence from/resistance to the state. While many of the books in these electronic libraries are uploaded in infringement of copyright, the creators and users of the sites defend them on the basis of what is ethically right and claim that they contribute to the spread of knowledge. The paper emphasizes the rhetorical force of the word 'library' which is being appropriated by both commercial and non-commercial actors. Without underestimating the value provided by many of the grass-roots digital libraries discussed, the analysis leads to the question whether the bottom-up collaborative strategy for digitizing books is the optimal one in terms of the variety of titles offered and the overall coherence of digital archives. In short, should sharing replace more traditional state policies in the field of culture?

Buildings falling down and web sites springing up

In the summer of 2012 I was walking around Sofia, the capital of Bulgaria, with a friend of mine when we saw an old building almost falling apart. Its windows were dirty and the paint was peeling off the walls. "This was once a branch of the city library", my friend explained, "I used to come here to read in the 90s. And I stole so many books – it's funny how easy it was to do it in those days". This fleeting recollection about book-stealing in combination with the dilapidated appearance of the building is in many ways indicative of the general condition of libraries in Bulgaria after 1989. During the post-socialist 90s the state withdrew active support for culture, the municipal library system collapsed, and in 12 years 2400 out of 9347 libraries were closed down (Union of Librarians and Information Service Officers, 2004). In addition, many libraries saw their collections progressively diminish due to negligence, theft, or poor preservation conditions. The dynamics of public opinion in the early years of the transition period were such that talking about a coordinated state strategy for libraries was considered suspicious. The mantra was a combination of deregulation, decentralization and privatization. In the current paper I claim that the rise of grass-roots electronic libraries in Bulgaria in the first decade of the 21st century could be seen as an attempt to compensate for the

withdrawal of the state and should be situated in the context of wider economic and political changes.

Grass-roots electronic 'libraries' on the Bulgarian web strive for legitimacy by using the Web 2.0 rhetoric of sharing. They claim to be made by users for users in the name of the public interest. I would like to explore this rhetoric and tease out the inherent contradictions in it. Digital 'libraries' can be understood best through an analysis of the dichotomies between formal and informal economy, law and ethics, commercial and non-commercial interest, bricolage and engineering. Can a platform for sharing of pirated books be accepted as a public library? What kind of rhetorical strategies underpin the notion of a 'library'? And finally what kinds of actors fill the spectrum of the book sharing economy? In order to answer these questions I performed mapping of the Bulgarian web and identified popular web sites offering digitized books. I distinguished between: 1) collections of books existing online with free access, 2) online bookstores, 3) collections of public institutions, providing free or paid access. While public institutions offer only legal content, private-initiative online libraries and bookstores offer both legal content and copyright-infringing content. Often there are interesting synergies between these different kinds of platforms. In addition, I did content analysis of several threads on the legal forum *lex.bg* (Lex, 2010) discussing whether the grass-roots web site 'My Library' (Chitanka.info) can be considered a public library or not. I will present my analysis and observations in what follows.

On books and jars: sharing of culture and the informal economy

According to the popular account, the collapse of state socialism led to the expansion of the 'informal sector' in Eastern European countries. The negative consequences of reform encouraged individuals and groups "to work in and through informal social 'networks' and personal 'contacts' to help each other (often to achieve their legal rights), to derive economic or political benefit (often in the absence of effective institutional development) and to consolidate interpersonal and group obligations" (Pickles, 2008, p.12). Such observations often refer to the so-called economies of reciprocity, remittance based economies and household economies (ibid). The paradigmatic example of informal economies is the case of families living in the city who often work on a piece of land in the country side to secure additional food. The preparation of vegetables and fruits for the winter amidst Soviet style city dwellings has been captured in a beautiful haiku by the Bulgarian poet Georgi Gospodinov: "Behind the concrete building my mother boils summer in a jar".

The simple linear connection between economic crisis and informal economy is however rejected by such authors as Adrian Smith, who claims that informal practices were already widespread during socialism and should therefore be understood within the context of locally embedded historical and cultural continuities. Moreover, it could be argued that it was precisely through informal practices that socialism was 'domesticated', transformed from within (Creed, 1997). Smith invokes the concept of 'economy of jars' to describe the way in which various products enter into systems of reciprocal gift giving: "The 'economy of jars' is a deep-seated set of cultural/economic practices, which blurs the boundaries between the categories of the 'economic' and the 'cultural'" (Smith, 2004). In a society in which everything was controlled and formalized by the state, people withdrew into the private sphere of consumption and exchange as a form of retreat and silent opposition. The greatest ideological battle was fought in the private sphere of consumption (Mineva, 2010). It has become commonplace to explain the collapse of socialism with shortages of goods and the censorship of Western cultural products. There are legendary stories of people exchanging cassette recordings with rare and supposedly

'immoral' Western music, access to which was always a source of prestige and cultural capital. Books that had been forbidden also found their ways in through informal channels. Thus, it becomes clear that the contemporary practice of sharing books online has a historical precedent, thereby reflecting, more generally, the importance of informality in Bulgarian culture and economy. A similar argument drawing historical connections between file sharing and the sharing of cultural objects during the socialist period is made in the report prepared by Polish authors on the circulation of culture and the social distribution of content (Filiciak, Hofmokl & Tarkowski, 2012).

Grass-roots digital libraries can be understood as an expression of the opposition between formal state politics and policies, on the one hand, and informal, under the counter, reciprocal relations between private persons, on the other hand. It is important to emphasize that as a social phenomenon this type of informal exchange is not simply a reaction to crisis. Illegal downloading and uploading of materials in the contemporary context occurs both in poor countries and in the wealthiest ones. Jonas Andersson, for example, relates the phenomenon of file sharing to material abundance and the so called post-material values in an attempt to explain the origins and impact of Swedish file-sharing (Andersson, 2011). While older materialist values reflected existential insecurity and expressed public concern for issues such as economic endurance, rising food prices, or crime rates, a post-materialist society is no longer concerned with economic issues, but rather with political participation, freedom of speech, environmental protection and sharing of culture. In this sense, it could be argued that the sharing of cultural objects is a complex phenomenon of acquiring independence from/resisting the state whose explanation goes beyond economic factors.

Finally, a note of caution is necessary. It is risky to equate the informal economy under socialism with the sharing economy glorified nowadays. A good example of the discourse surrounding the economy of sharing is the lament by the journalist Neel Gorenflo that: "As collaborative consumption goes mainstream, it risks losing the very thing that attracted people in the first place, the unique and even transformative social experiences made possible when you interact with helpful strangers". He goes on to explain the competitive advantage: "When I met Sarah to pick up her car, DaffodillPickle, we struck up a conversation about aquaponics, she gave me an impromptu tour of her aquaponics setup on her balcony, and then sent me on my way with fresh strawberries she picked for me on the spot. That made my day. That's never going to happen at Hertz because this kind of intimacy can never be scaled" (Gorenflo, 2013). The author does not realize that the intimacy that he deems so significant is already a mediated intimacy - an intimacy achieved through a technical platform. In this respect it differs greatly from the kinship or neighbourhood based intimacy of informal relations in socialist Bulgaria, for example. And that is why one cannot draw direct parallels between the economy of reciprocity and gift-giving under socialism and the volunteer work and gift-culture on online sharing platforms. The mediation of Internet changes radically the scope and nature of informality while preserving its potential to delineate a zone of freedom from state control.

On laws and ethics: If it looks like a library...

Apart from the distinction between formal and informal economy, another dichotomy that can help us understand better grass-roots digital libraries is that between law and ethics. In what follows I shall take one particular case – the electronic library *Chitanka.info*, known also as 'My Library' ('Моята Библиотека') and the issue of its legal status. 'My library' was created in 2005, when Borislav Manolov, a Bulgarian living in Germany, decided to upload his own personal library on the Internet. Since then the library has grown in

popularity with tens of volunteers digitizing and uploading books in Bulgarian. There are no banners or ads on the website, all contributions are voluntary, and while there are indeed pirated books, there is also a significant percent of books which are already in the public domain. However, in 2010 the Bulgarian Cyber Crime Unit closed down the site and confiscated all servers associated with it due to alleged infringement of copyright. A fierce public debate followed the police action against *Chitanka* and led to the restoration of the web site.

I would like to draw attention to the discussion whether *Chitanka.info* is a library or not. The legal intricacies of the question are discussed in minute detail on the legal forum *lex.bg*. The owner of the server claims that the web site is a library and therefore is exempted from the accusations of copyright infringement. The arguments for this are: that the entity is completely non-commercial (there are no financial gains whatsoever), that it allows free access to e-books by everyone and that it favours the promotion of learning. The counter arguments are that regardless of whether the website is non-commercial, publishing houses lose money as a result of free access to their books, and more importantly, the website does not meet the legal requirements that specify which institutions can qualify as libraries and which not (Lex, 2010).

Nevertheless, Borislav Manolov, the creator of the site, claims that while legally *Chitanka.info* might not be a library, ethically it is one. A marked contradiction between law and ethics is introduced in examples such as the 'black list' on *Chitanka.info* which includes all publishing houses that have requested that their books be removed from the web site. Such publishing houses cannot request their books to be re-uploaded later. The black list also includes media that have published uninformed and unfavourable articles on *Chitanka.info*. It is obvious that the web site tries to establish an alternative framework of justification, an 'ethical' set of rules which it opposes to the rule of the law. The site justifies itself in this way but at the same makes a political statement that challenges current copyright law. If they look like a library and if they behave like a library, why can't they be a library? The very word 'library' is so important because it is used in opposition to media descriptions of the web site as a 'bookstore'. According to the law the web site is not a library. But it does choose to present itself that way.

The 'present-yourself-as-a-library' strategy is followed by many other players in the e-books field. Thus one can find a somewhat dubious web site called "National Library" (<<http://narodnabiblioteka.info/index.php>>), or sites such as *e-bookBg.com* which calls itself an 'online library', or *Koronal.com*, presented as a 'virtual library'. There is of course also the 'Bulgarian virtual library' *Slovo.bg*. Even though all these web sites describe themselves as libraries, their positions on the spectrum of formal-informal economy, public and private, commercial and non-commercial activity vary greatly. *Chitanka.info* hosts both pirated books and books in the public domain, and is maintained by a team of volunteers. In order to keep its non-profit status untarnished it doesn't even accept donations. *Slovo.bg* does not host any pirated books, but it does host all Bulgarian classics which are in the public domain. It is maintained by a formally registered NGO that accepts donations and has its own online bookstore. *E-bookBG.com* provides pirated books, hosts ads and also provides a link to its electronic bookstore. *Koronal.com* is a library for free essays and university papers directly linked to a web site which provides these types of materials for money.

To sum up, different actors position themselves differently along the lines of the commercial/non-commercial, legal/ethical. The fact that they all use the word 'library' is a testimony to the legitimizing power of the word with all its hidden connotations. In the sphere of e-books in Bulgaria the function performed by the word 'library' is similar to the one performed by the word 'plat-

form' in the context of social media (Gillespie, 2010). In his provocative article 'The Politics of Platforms' Gillespie argues that the term 'platform' is used by *YouTube* "to make a broadly progressive sales pitch while also eliding tensions inherent in their service: between user-generated and commercially produced content, between cultivating community and serving up advertising, between intervening in the delivery of content and remaining neutral" (Gillespie, 2010, p.3). In a similar way the word 'library' is used in the Bulgarian context to elide tensions and obfuscate rifts. It conveys a concept of catering for public welfare that can be traced back to socialist state politics, but it differs radically from it in its opposition to the state and the emphasis on sharing as a practice of individual freedom and circumvention of censorship. It is precisely the role of the state that I wish to discuss in the final section of this paper.

Baby food, chic lit and nationalism

The current fascination with the informal economy is evident in the proliferation of books such as "Stealth of Nations: The Global Rise of the Informal Economy" by Robert Neuwirth, which glorifies "the globe-trotting Nigerians who sell Chinese cell phones and laid-off San Franciscans who use Twitter to market street food" and shows that "the people who work in informal economies are entrepreneurs who provide essential services and crucial employment" (Neuwirth, 2012). The new emphasis on informality can be found also in the field of ICTs for development. Authors such as Richard Heeks insist on the importance of new models of technological innovation. Heeks discusses the potential of "grassroots" (per-poor, i.e. by the poor for the poor) innovation in the developing world and introduces the Indian concept of *jugaad*: "the impoverished quick-fix to get or keep technology working within an environment of relative poverty and resource constraints" (Heeks, 2009, p.15). This focus on the informal economy and ad-hoc solutions in ICTs for development is the result of often justified criticism leveled against failed large scale projects of structural changes in state industry and economy. The hype surrounding the sharing economy is a part of this more general move in the direction of informality. It seems to me that the concept of sharing economy can be interpreted as a radicalization of the neo-liberal paradigm with its distrust for the state and its regulations. But what are the large-scale implications of such an informal approach to the digitization of e-books?

It should be noted at the outset that in Bulgaria there is currently no comprehensive state strategy for digitization in place, and existing efforts to create such a strategy are sporadic and insufficient. While there are several projects for digitization financed by the EU (Bojadjev, Lunin & Grigorov, 2013), they focus almost exclusively on the country's historical heritage, Church-Slavonic manuscripts from the 13th century being a case in point. The unique access of Bulgarian public libraries to such rare documents makes them important actors in the preservation of cultural heritage. At the same time, since these works are already in the public domain, the question of copyright is not relevant. The tricky issues arise when it comes to more contemporary texts. Journals and magazines, archival documents and classics of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries have been partially digitized by libraries. But what if someone wants to read contemporary Bulgarian fiction online? One possible solution is to visit one of the many web sites that publish debut texts of authors. But what about access to books by more established authors? Or scientific books? In these cases, the answer is more difficult. A possible solution could have been provided by the market but, in reality, there is still no market for e-books in Bulgaria. Moreover, books in Bulgarian are still not allowed on *Amazon*. The total amount of Bulgarian e-books being sold legally in May 2013 was approximately 1000 and these were all newly published books (Bogdanov, 2013). Digital access to orphaned books or books in the public domain (which

are not Church-Slavonic manuscripts) takes place neither through state libraries nor the market, but only through the practice of sharing online.

But because sharing is informal, illegally ethical and spontaneous, it has resulted in less than systematic results. Thus, although the collection of *Chitanka.info* aims to be extensive, it inevitably favours chic lit and science fiction: the most popular genres among volunteers engaged with digitization. Another popular online collection contains recipes for baby food (Biberon, 2013). Several pro-nationalist sites have extensive web archives of historically significant documents. And photos from the distant past have been collected in 'museums 2.0' as a result of private initiative, thereby constructing a new bottom-up vision of heritage (Kazalarska, 2012). The very fact that such informal, de-institutionalized collections have appeared shows that there is considerable interest in the topics they deal with. At the same time, there are no universal standards for digitization and no prospects of achieving any systematicity in the enterprise (Bojadjiev, Lunin & Grigorov, 2013). There is no dialogue between the collections, no hyper linking, no underlying unity. What is observed is not a universal library, a repository of human knowledge (Kelly, 2006), but rather a patchwork, the work of *bricoleurs* – people who make do with whatever is available in the absence of an overall plan or strategy. I invoke here the concept of *bricolage* proposed by Levi Strauss in relation to mythological thought. Strauss distinguished between the engineers' creative thinking which creates plans, and proceeds from goals to means, on the one hand, and mythical thought which re-uses available materials in an ad-hoc manner, on the other hand. Levi-Strauss's distinction can be used as a metaphor to underline the inherent 'bricolage' nature of sharing. While such an approach is not inherently good or bad, it is questionable whether it is the best approach to digitization of books in Bulgarian language. Obviously this is not an easy question to answer but it is an important one and is often overlooked in discussions about sharing.

In addition, the fact that *Chitanka.info* lacks funding and relies on goodwill provides it with an ethical justification but makes the process of web digitization slower and more laborious. There is a considerable shortage of people and time. Is this the most efficient approach to digitization? Furthermore, many web sites call themselves 'libraries' following the example of *Chitanka.info* and parasitize on its good reputation, while at the same time benefiting from private financial gain.

Sharing: who cares?

In conclusion, I would like to question the pervasive rhetoric of sharing that has captured contemporary political and social thought. Sharing is good. Sharing is caring. But is it enough? I was provoked to ask this question by a blog post called: 'What the Boston bombing taught us about Internet arrogance?' The author compares collaborative action online with the government's actions and finds the latter to be significantly more effective: "My point isn't to paint the government as perfect, far from it. I get as frustrated by government incompetence and I hate paying taxes as much as anyone. But I'm not so self important to think that I, the Internet, social media, Reddit, the tech industry, and even Anonymous, can solve all of our problems if the government just gets out of our way" (Dao, 2013).

Relating this position to the question of digitization of books in Bulgaria, I have to admit that I started my paper with the clear intention of praising *Chitanka.info* for the way they fill gaps left both by the government and the market. My admiration for this web site has not diminished in the slightest while writing this paper. On the contrary, I was pleasantly surprised to find that the team stick to their views even in the smallest details and provide high quality

books through voluntary work. But what I would like to ask is: is that enough? And should we abandon our faith in the state as a provider of public goods?

Obviously, the main debate about *Chitanka.info* is a debate about copyright and whether users are allowed to digitize and upload books without the permission of publishers. But setting this aside, the big question is: who do we want to digitize our books? In a more global context, do we want this to be done by a private corporation such as *Google* or by public entities? As Geert Lovink provocatively puts it: “Google suffers from data obesity and is indifferent to calls for careful preservation or naïve demands for cultural awareness...Google is not after the ownership of Emile Zola. Its intention is to lure the Proust fan *away* from the archive. Perhaps there is an interest in a cool Stendhal mug, the XXL Flaubert T-shirt, or a Sartre purchase at Amazon. For Google, Balzac’s collected work is abstract data junk, a raw resource whose sole purpose is to make profit, whereas for the French it is the epiphany of their language and culture” (Lovink, 2012, p.153). In the local Bulgarian context, what happens to national language and culture when digitization is dispersed among numerous actors with different positionality on the scale of formality, legality and commercial interest? What vision do these actors have of digitization?

The battles over copyright should not distract us from the matter of who should digitize books and how public access to those books should be provided? These are not either-or questions. New synergies can emerge. My only contention is that the current emphasis on sharing makes us dismiss too readily the state as an actor. Is sharing by definition a practice outside the domain of the state? Can it be reconceptualised in the context of public institutions? Can there be a fruitful symbiosis between an overall public strategy and private initiative? The question remains open for anyone who cares enough to discuss.

References

- Andersson, J. (2011): The Origins and Impacts of Swedish File Sharing: A Case Study. *Journal of Peer Production*, issue #0, *Mass Peer Activism*.
<<http://peerproduction.net/issues/issue-0/peer-reviewed-papers/the-origins-and-impacts-of-swedish-filessharing/>> [24.04.2013].
- Biberon (2013): *Български Бебе Център* <<http://biblioteka.biberonbg.com/klasika/>> [24.04.2013].
- Bogdanov, I. (2013): *Наръчник на писателя: продажба на електронни книги*.
<<http://forum.chitanka.info/topic3379.html>> [24.04.2013].
- Bojadjiev, A., Lunin, A. & Grigorov, D. (2013): *Дигитализацията в България – трудности и предизвикателства*.
<<http://sudigital.org/publikatsii/statii/digitalizatsiyata-v-balgariya-2013-trudnosti-i-predizvikelstva>> [24.04.2013].
- Creed, G. (1997): *Domesticating Revolution: From Socialist Reform to Ambivalent Transition in a Bulgarian Village*. Pennsylvania State University Press.
- Dao, F. (2013): <<http://pandodaily.com/2013/04/23/what-the-boston-bombing-taught-us-about-internet-arrogance/>> [24.04.2013].
- Filiciak, M., Hofmokl, J. & Tarkowski, A. (2012): The Circulations of Culture. On Social Distribution of Content. <<http://obiegikultury.centrumcyfrowe.pl/en/>> [18.02.2014].
- Forum Chitanka (2012): Сваляне на новоиздадени текстове.
<<http://forum.chitanka.info/topic2291.html#p13842>> [24.04.2013].

- Fuster Morell, M. (2011): The Unethics of Sharing: Wikiwashing. *International Review of Information Ethics*.
<http://acawiki.org/The_Unethics_of_Sharing:_Wikiwashing> [13.02.2013].
- Gillespie, T. (2010): The Politics of 'Platforms'. *New Media and Society*, 12(3), 347-364.
- Gorenflo, N. (2013): *Collaborative Consumption is Dead, Long Live the Sharing Economy!* <<http://pandodaily.com/2013/03/19/collaborative-consumption-is-dead-long-live-the-real-sharing-economy/>> [26.04.2013].
- Heeks, R. (2009). *The ICT4D 2.0 Manifesto: Where Next for ICTs and International Development?*
- Kaneff, D. (2000): Property, Work and Local Identity. *Max Plank Institute for Social Anthropology Working Papers*. [23.04.2013].
- Kazalarska, S. (2012): Музей 2.0? Нова Културна Геометрия: уебмрежовици, културбракониеци, кибергазтатори. София: Изток-Запад.
- Kelly, K. (2006): Scan This Book! *The New York Times*.
<<http://www.nytimes.com/2006/05/14/magazine/14publishing.html?pagewanted=all&r=0>> [23.04.2013].
- Kennedy, J. (2013): Rhetorics of Sharing: Data, Imagination and Desire. *Unlike Us Reader*. Amsterdam: Institute of Network Cultures.
- Lessig, Lawrence (2004). *Free Culture*. New York: Penguin Books.
- Lévi-Strauss, C. (1966): *The Savage Mind*. Chicago: .
- Lex (2010): *forum.lex.bg: ГДБОП затвори библиотека читанка.info*.
<<http://lex.bg/forum/viewtopic.php?f=28&t=42382&sid=56159b4d2304ba19bf397c5dc3219481>> [23.04.2013].
- Lovink, G. (2012): *Networks Without a Cause. A Critique of Social Media*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Magagna, V. (1989): Consumers of Privilege: A Political Analysis of Class, Consumption & Socialism. *Polity*, 21(4), 711-729 .
- Mineva, M. (2010): Consumption – This Political Object of Desire. *Critique and Humanism Journal* (сп. Критика и хуманизъм), 33, 225-235,
- Nadin, S. and C. Williams (2012): Blurring the formal/informal economy divide: beyond a dual economies approach. *Journal of Economy and its Applications*, 2(2), 1-19.
- Neuwirth, R. (2012): *The Global Rise of Informal Economy*. New York: Anchor Books.
- Pickles, J. (2008): The Spirit of Post-Socialism: 'What is to be understood by It?' *State and Society in Post-Socialist Economies*. London: Palgrave MacMillan.
- Pickles, J. (2005): New Cartographies and the decolonization of European geographies. *Area*, 37(4), 355-364.
- Smith, A. (2004): *Informal Work and the Diverse Economies of 'Post-Socialist' Europe* <<http://www.geog.qmul.ac.uk/socialexclusion/pdf/informaleconomies.pdf>> [24.04.2013].
- Stalder, F. (2010): *Relax! Producing Culture in a Weak Intellectual Property Environment*. *Eurozine*. <<http://www.eurozine.com/articles/2011-07-01-stalder-en.html>> [24.04.2013].
- Strahern, M. (1998): Divisions of Interest and Languages of Ownership. In: C. Hann, (ed.) *Property Relations*, (pp.214-232). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Svab, A. (2010): Consuming Western Image of Well-Being – Shopping tourism in Socialist Slovenia. *Cultural Studies*, 16(1), 63-79.
- Union of Librarians and Information Service Officers (2004): *Съюз на библиотечните и информационните работници: За необходимостта от неотложни мерки за решаване на основните проблеми на библиотеките в България*. <http://www.lib.bg/za_neob.htm> [24.04.2013].
- Van Le, C. (2010): Opening the Doors to Digital Libraries: A Proposal to Exempt Digital Libraries from the Copyright Act. *Case Western Reserve Journal of Law, Technology & the Internet*, 1(2), 121-147.
-

ⁱ Short biographical details

Julia Rone is currently doing her PhD at the Department of Social and Political Sciences at the European University Institute. Her research focuses on social mobilizations in defence of Internet Freedom with an emphasis on framing and transmission and diffusion of emotions online. Julia has a keen interest in visual analysis and has monitored online video sites on the Bulgarian Internet as a participant in the Bulgarian Media Monitoring Lab. She has also coordinated the project 'New Youth, New Cultures, New Causes: Interdisciplinary Approaches in Cultural Studies' at the Department of Theory and History of Culture, Sofia University, exploring how young Bulgarians interact with new media. Julia graduated from the Oxford Internet Institute with a thesis on Anonymous Bulgaria. Her publications include: 'The Seducer's Net: Internet, Politics and Seduction' in *Digital Cultures and the Politics of Emotion* (Athina Karatzogianni and Adi Kuntsman, eds), Palgrave Macmillan; and 'Culture Wide Closed: Pirate Monopolies, Forum Dictatorship and Nationalism in the Practice of File Sharing' in *Cultures and Ethics of Sharing*, (Wolfgang Sutzl, Felix Stalder, Ronald Mayer, Theo Hug, eds.), Innsbruck University Press.

Research Interests: copyright, data privacy, social movements, network organization, Internet politics