

**SPECIAL ISSUE  
INTRODUCTION**



This *Special Issue of Identities: Journal for Politics, Gender and Culture* is result of implementation of a project „Public Capacity for a Just Green Transition“ funded by the Bulgarian National Science Fund under contract КП-06 H55/13 (period November 2021 – October 2025) by a research team at the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology - Bulgarian Academy of Sciences. The main objective of the project is to contribute to tackling the complex task of achieving a “just green transition”. In order to do this, we analyze what is the capacity of the society to influence the formulation and implementation of adequate pro-development policies in the field.

Climate change and environmental problems pose a serious threat not only to the present but also to future generations around the world. Europe is making efforts to mitigate the negative impact of industrial activity proposing a number of measures that have become known as the Green Transition. The main focus in this regard is on changes in the energy sector of individual countries and the need to drastically reduce carbon emissions.

This poses a number of challenges for all EU member-states, including because it relies more on available political experience than on a clear vision of the fairness of the transition, criteria for monitoring and evaluating (in) justice, as well as the lack of concrete policies and programs to achieve it. There is a need to develop policy mechanisms and policy instruments such as adequate decision-making, criteria for assessing the fairness of the transition and procedures for using these criteria. Without effective policy instruments, the practical achievement of a just green transition will hardly be possible.

The articles in this special issue of the journal focus on characteristics of Bulgarian society that demonstrate its capacity to create and implement just and pro-development policies. Using the example of changes related to the green transition, the authors identify significant deficits in terms of essential elements of societal capacity.

The first article examines the public capacity concept as the ability of society to achieve, facilitate or block the achievement of certain, declared as significant societal goals. The empirical results and analysis establish widespread views based on shared values of justice and assessments of realities

along the justice-injustice axis. These values determine the expectations and concerns about the possibility of a just green transition in the country. In this respect, Bulgarian society is much more homogenized and integrated than the deliberate fragmentation policies suggest.

The second article focuses on public awareness and the ability to use information and knowledge to solve public problems as an essential element necessary for the formation, maintenance and activation of public capacity. The analyze reveals major weaknesses in individual awareness, communication environment and civic participation in Bulgaria, raising the possibility of making political decisions that are far from social fairness.

The third article focuses on expert pronouncements about the ongoing Green Transition (GT) in the Bulgarian energy sector and indicates that decarbonization emerges as a new frontier of capital accumulation, sidelining problems of justice—both climatic and social.

The forth article discusses on a project basis opportunities to stimulate civic participation, support the empowerment of vulnerable people and communities, and increase solidarity on issues and problems related to energy poverty and a just energy transition.

The fifth article summarizes the main mechanisms that undermine public capacity and allow the conquest of the state by small groups whose interests are at odds with social justice. Such tools are conquering accountability and control institutions, such as the judiciary, audit institutions, civil society, and media; but also, erosion of education, values and production of distorted, partial, politicized knowledge.

The analyses show that there are a number of obstacles to the implementation of a just green transition in Bulgaria. However, the study also identifies some positive aspects (such as the resurgent interest in justice among society and researchers; rising civil discontent) that give reason to believe that contemporary societies will find the incentives and unifying values necessary to maintain the capacity to uphold justice.

More information about research results within the project and future publications can be found online at project website: <https://zelenprehod>.



[blogspot.com/p/home.html](https://blogspot.com/p/home.html) and the website of the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology at Bulgarian Academy of Sciences - <https://ips-bas.org/>.