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Social capital and civic participation in Ukraine and Romania

A very 'sexy' concept in the '90s, social capital continues nowadays its impressive career as one of the major determinants use for explaining the differences in development levels among societies. The bulk of the literature is based on the works of the three founding fathers (Bourdieu, Coleman, Putnam), with some punctual distinctions (bridging versus bonding social capital and missing/negative social capital – Woolcock, Narayan, Collier, Paldam; considering mass protest actions as an indicators for social capital at societal level – Weltzer et al, 2004; etc.). Most of the analyses are describing how social capital is shaped within a particular community or society, but there are several comprehensive approaches trying to identify common patterns and to compare the levels of social capital in different societies (Rose, 1999; Raiser et al, 2001; van Schaick, 2002; B.Voicu, 2005 etc.).

Our paper attempts to combine comparative analysis with substantially describing what is beside the scores describing the stocks of social capital in two East European societies: Ukraine and Romania. The background of the analysis is a comparative study of bridging social capital in Europe, based on EVS/WVS 1999-2001 data (Voicu, 2005). The analysis shows that Ukraine and Romania share similar patterns on most of the social capital dimensions. Both societies are quite large in size, which can raise the question of homogeneity; they have a high proportion of rural (and traditional) population; they have important ethnic minorities, they share the recent experience of the communist regime; they are poor etc. On the other hand Ukraine was part of the USSR, and was not independent in its recent history until the 1990s, while Romania was, at least formally, an independent state during the 20th century.

What we aim is to use existing literature at local level (Ukraine, respectively Romania), as well as the secondary analysis of existing qualitative and quantitative data for the two societies, and punctual observations of everyday life, in order to check if those similarities are to be found in the respective examples quoted in the literature and in those existing data. We focus mainly on the bridging social capital, but some examples are also related to bonding social capital.

A brief review of the literature opens the paper, setting up the main dimensions in which we are interested. A short discussion of the differences between different European regions completes the introduction (based on Voicu, 2005). The core of the paper is devoted to qualitative (& quantitative, when data are available) descriptions of how the comparative data are reflected in the social reality of Ukraine, respectively Romania. Bringing into focus anecdotic examples of how relations and trust are build in smaller or larger communities, we qualitatively describe how often Ukrainians, respectively Romanians, are meeting their friends; if and how they prefer to develop relationships within the kinship; how often they tend to involve in associative life; we discuss the most prominent mass protest actions which took place in the two countries - focusing on the role played by social capital and civic action propensity in the development of the respective phenomena; we discuss (and bring qualitative examples) for the levels of social trust in each society. A common, but flexible grid and structure shapes the presentation of the data for the two

countries, allowing both the description of each society, but also subsequent comparisons. The conclusive part is devoted to discussing the differences and similarities between the two societies.

Defining social capital

Popularized by Bourdieu (1986, 1999), Coleman (1988, 1990), and Putnam (1993), social capital is best defined through its elements. Social relations, membership in associations, generalized trust, trusting institutions, involvement in mass protest actions were used over time to operationalize the concept (for reviews of the literature, see, by example, Portes, 1998; Robinson et al, 1999; Dagsupta and Serageldin, 2000; Mihaylova, 2004, to mention only a few sources).

Considering collective action “as the central reference point in any definition of social capital’ (Weltzel et al, 2004), one may focus on those elements of social capital that contribute to enhancing social development. However, the relatively recent analyses (Narayan, 1999; Putnam, 2001; Woolcock, 2000; Paxton, 2002; etc.) tend to impose the distinction between bridging and bonding social capital as a crucial one. Bonding social relations and trust manifest through developing ties almost solely within the immediate groups of affiliation. They let place for collective action within these small groups, but also close them, making them impenetrable to outside connections. They decrease the informational content of the social ties (similar people have access to similar information, therefore they can not add very much to the initial stocks), foster intolerance and normativeness, decreasing trust in outside groups and individuals. Lack of generalized trust hinders cooperation between different social groups that may share common problems that need collective solutions. Bridging social capital, in contrast, allows access to a greater variety of resources, supports public debate and common solutions to the society issues, fosters individuals’ involvement in society development, and even common socialization and fastens social solidarity creation.

The bridging-bonding distinction may be largely overlapped with the positive-negative effects of social capital (Collier, 1998). Bonding social capital has indeed, on long run, extremely negative effects (see for instance Banfield’s example of amoral familism). However, for specific purposes, it may catalyze the efforts of small community for solving immediate problems, such as those generated by natural disasters.

This paper considers mainly bridging social capital, but pays attention to the bonding one, too. A brief review of the literature shows out that Eastern Europe has been often described as a place which lacks bridging social capital. Richard Rose’s (1995, 2000) metaphor of hour-glass society which describe the Russian post-soviet society may be applied to some extent to the rest of the former communist block, lacking substantial ties between different social strata. Paldalm’s and Svendsen’s (2002) discussion of missing social capital in CEE also refers mainly to the lack of bridging social capital in the area. Åberg (2000) notes that Western Ukraine is rich in negative (or non-communitarian) social capital.

Figure 1. Patterns of social capital across Europe



Note. The white spots indicate the lack of data for the respective country. Data source: EVS/WVS 1999-2001 data set. (the picture is reproduced from B.Voicu, 2005, with the permission of the editors)

In a previous work, Bogdan Voicu (2005) showed that from the point of view of the levels of bridging social capital, postcommunist societies tend to cluster together in one of the four consistent groups of countries that define Europe. With the exception of the Balkans, the former communist societies share similar patterns of meeting friends, valuing friendship (as compared with the family), membership in associations, trusting people and institutions, involvement in mass protest actions. When considering all the six dimensions depicted in Table 1, the Nordic societies appear to be the richest ones in bridging social capital. The Western cluster immediately follows, but with lower generalized trust and incidence of involvement in associations. Higher sociability, indicated by the frequency of spending time with the friends, separates The Southern and the Eastern clusters.

Table 1. The four patterns of bridging social capital across Europe

	Nordic	Western	Southern Ex-Totalitarian	Eastern Ex-Totalitarian	Romania	Ukraine
% of people <i>spending time with friends weekly</i>	67%	60%	64%	40%	36%	43%
% people considering <i>friends at least as important as family</i>	71%	58%	55%	40%	34%	49%
<i># memberships in associations</i>	1,8	0,7	0,4	0,3	0,12	0,14
<i>social trust</i> (% of people trusting the others)	62%	37%	20%	21%	10%	24%
<i>trust in institutions</i> (factor score of trusting police, press, labor unions, the social services, the UN)	0,37	0,24	-0,21	-0,10	-0,30	-0,24
<i>involvement in protest actions</i> (% of people declaring that they have participated in at least one petition signing, lawful demonstration or boycott action)	77%	62%	32%	31%	18%	26%

Note: The bolded figures indicate the higher scores for the respective dimension (row). Grey background reflects the minimums. *Data sources:* EVS/WVS 1999-2002, computations by B.Voicu, 2005.

Social Capital in Romania and Ukraine

Friendship and meeting friends

Romania

There are many visible signs which qualitatively describe the intensity of the social relations within a certain society. Institutionalized informal settings where people meet, the relations with the in-laws, the way in which ritualistic events – such as the weddings – happen, the importance given by the elites to the public debate, the number, activity, and social image of the NGOs etc.

Socializing with friends proved to be more important for development than socializing with work colleagues, neighbors and family, in this order (Peri 6, 1997; B.Voicu, 2004, 2005). Frequently meeting friends implies the existence of some institutionalized places where people can meet. The traditional set up in the Romanian villages is the bench in the front of the courtyard for women and the local pub for men. The bench decreased its importance over time, almost disappearing in better developed villages, while the pub is more and more a simple place where the main activity is drinking and it is negatively defined by the social representation. In towns, the restaurants could play the role for informally meeting friends and debating the public interest issues. Romania, especially in South and in the East, is a country with very few restaurants. During communism, dinning out was officially labeled as a bad behavior and stigmatized as bourgeois, while the products were scarce. Consequently, the number of restaurants was very small. In the beginning of the nineties, most of the restaurants which did exist outside the downtown, bankrupted. They used to lack clients during communism too, but the irrationality of the communist

system kept them alive. When confronted with the free market, they needed to adjust to the existing demand. Immediate closure occurs, as mentioned, but, almost simultaneously, brand new restaurants flourished in new locations, mainly in the central areas. They attracted especially new generations of adults, since the older ones (and I am not referring the retired persons) lack the culture to meet friends in restaurants. Actually they lacked the habit to meet friends no matter where. Poverty is only part of the problem. Mistrust in the public space (Voicu, 2004; Verdery, 2003) is another: during communist, anyone could be informant of the political police or – as the rumors were saying – everywhere a microphone could be planted. Therefore, the risk of discussing anything in public spaces such as restaurants was too risky. Beside this, the society values were rather traditional, excluding the habit to meet friends when growing older. Family was, and still is, perceived as being more important and much more trustful. The small number of restaurants acts as one of the indicators of low propensity towards meeting friends.

Meeting friends in other public spaces which facilitate informal interactions, such as voluntary associations is also low, since such associations have a very low incidence as compared with other European societies.

Turning back to the rural areas, one may raise the question of the usual lawn, where people used to meet and to debate about the public problems. For Romanians, the respective place has an almost mythical character, as part of the traditional rural society, after its description as such in a famous novel¹. Meeting there was institutionalized and the respective lawn, located somewhere, in the heart of the village, played the same role as the Roman plaza did in the Roman Republic. Nowadays it seems that it almost disappeared as institution. Paradoxically, this happens especially in the most traditional villages.

Without excluding the private space as a place for meeting friends, let note that it has less capacity to enhance public debate and to really act as a place for meeting friends. First, the size of houses is low, and can not accommodate more than few people that can meet. Second, it is traditionally devoted mainly to meet family. Third, the mentioned culture of not-meeting friends after young adulthood, acts in this case too. Quoting a Romanian sociologist, one may say that “In rural Romania the networks are based on and built around kinship relations” (Lăzăroiu, 1999: 42). I would add that urban areas do not differ very much.

However, neither rural, nor urban is homogeneous. If comparing Western villages with Eastern ones, one can note a higher propensity to involve in community actions and to cooperate with the rest of the world, as well as a higher tolerance in the Western Romania. Public space is used more often for debating the local problems, while more symbolic actions – such as fêtes and celebrations – occur, offering the villagers the opportunity to meet, to strengthen their ties and to reinforce their in-group and inter-group mutual trust. Specific institutions – such as the Saxon-type *Nachbarschaft*², the “popular assembly” gathered at the request of the community leaders, the

¹ I refer Marin Preda description of “Poiana lui Iocan”, in the novel “Moromeții”. “Poiana lui Iocan” is nothing else than a lawn, located in a courtyard of the village where the novel’s action happens. People use to meet there, smoking and drinking, and discussing about everyday life, public issue, naïve philosophy etc.

² In Romania, the institution of *Nachbarschaft* (neighborhood) exists mainly in the (former) Saxon villages. People with similar status from a certain village form such a *Nachbarschaft*, usually grouped depending of their position in a certain

above-mentioned lawn etc. works for sustaining such a relatively higher associative life³.

The wedding parties have an important symbolic role in describing a society. In Romania, the accent of such a party lies on pragmatic social exchange and conspicuous consumption: lot of food and loud music contribute to setting up a bad environment for conversation. Normally there are a lot of participants, with the average around 100. They have to eat and to watch each other, since the music do not allow discussing any subject. The gifts (usually money) offered to the new couple are in many cases announced to the public, as in a contest, underlining both the pragmatic and the conspicuous features of the event. Probably if the people would really feel a need to schmooze with the others, there would be some room for conversation.

As Fukuyama (1995) stressed on, the structure of the business management and the rules for selecting employees differ among societies, depending on the type of social capital to be found in the respective social environment. In Romania, the importance of the family/kinship networks in developing business seems to be very high. For instance, within the top 300 wealthier persons yearly sat up by the *Capital* journal⁴, in 2004, 4 out of the top 10 position were taken by persons who run businesses within the immediate kinship. Among the remaining six persons, 4 had a long experience of living abroad or acted as partners for Western companies. None from those which run business within the family and are in the top 10 experienced longer period of time living in Western countries.

Table 2. The distribution of the richest Romanian citizens, depending on their style of doing business and their background experience

	Top 10	Top 30	Top 50
From which...			
...Do run businesses which involve the immediate kinship	<u>4</u>	<u>11</u>	<u>18</u>
<i>Born in Romania</i>	4	9	14
<i>Born in Arabic countries</i>	0	2	3
<i>Are/were living abroad (Western countries)</i>	0	0	1
...Do not involve family in their business	<u>6</u>	<u>19</u>	<u>39</u>
<i>Have only Romanian experience</i>	2	11	30
<i>Are/were living abroad or are born in Western countries, or are partners of Western companies</i>	4	8	9

Source: Own computations according to *Capital top 300, November 2004*.

neighborhood (they live on the same street/s, for instance). The Nachbarschaft plays the role of instance for solving community problems as an expression of communitarian solidarity: it helps those which are in need when hazard occurs; it has line sets, plates and dishes, tables and benches which are used at weddings, funerals, local festivals etc.; it decides in some communities actions such as repairing or building roads and ensure the community participation etc.

³ See Voicu & Voicu (2005) for the description of a set of six Romanian rural communities and comments about the differences in capital social levels due to different degrees of modernization and East-West location. Some other communities described in the Romanian sociological literature fit the model: Fulga (described in Berevoiescu, 1999), Comişani (Lăzăroiu, 1999; Lăzăroiu & Lăzăroiu, 2000), Greaca (Ocneru, 2000), Moşna (Berevoiescu & Stănculescu, 1999); Voineşti (Mihăilescu, 1997; Mihai, 2001), Căndeşti (Pop & Rughiniş, 2000; Mihai, 2001), Biertan (Tufiş & Tufiş, 2000), etc. Informal meetings, public debates over the local issues, collective action for producing the public good, developing cooperative projects without the intervention/initiative of external actors (such as the Romanian Social Development Found) are to be found in better developed as well as in the Western areas.

⁴ *Capital. 300 cei mai bogați români*, no. 3, November 2004.

The examples may continue if investigated the rest of the top, with the limitation that starting with position 31 the details about how they run their businesses are very scarce. Overall one can notice the huge proportion of the businessmen running at least part of their business with or even within the close kinship/family. This may be another good sign of bonding social capital at societal level.

Going further, a short comment may be devoted to the Internet communication. Its incidence is rather low in Romania, even as compared with other ex-communist societies (Hollanders, 2003; B.Voicu, 2004). However, the interest of this paper is not about how many people use Internet, but how they communicate using the e-technologies, as a rough indicator of their skills to communicate. A society rich in bridging relational social capital is a society in which people are able to communicate, which implies the ability to clearly state the messages and the skills of approaching unknown partners (which is frequently the case on the Internet). I have firstly considered the messages received by the Research Institute for Quality of Life between 1st of December 2004 and 31st of May 2005, from Romanian citizens, excluding any kind of official communication (from other Institutes, from Romanian Academy, or from Romanian or international agencies) or spam. The focus was therefore on personal communication of the individuals with the respective organization. 24 e-mails were considered: 7 lacked a clear statement of the aim of the respective communication; 14 (more than a half) lacked any salutation formula; in 8 cases the name of the sender was not specified. Only in 7 cases (less than a third), all the three indicators of good communication skills were present. This may be a rough prove of how frequently the respective individuals (all younger and better educated than average) interact with other people/organizations.

Ukraine

The situation in Ukraine is not very much different from that in Romania. Socializing with friends usually happens in private settings, at homes, rather than at institutionalized places such as restaurants. The reasons are much the same as in Romania: in the first place, not every Ukrainian can afford dining out regularly. Another important reason is the lack of culture of dining out, as in the former Soviet Union, besides being expensive, this was also seen as “bourgeois” and inappropriate. Finally, outside of large cities, especially in rural areas one can hardly find a restaurant with an appropriate level of service; rural bars are often places of heavy drinking and consequent violence.

Meeting friends is important for Ukrainians and is one of the most frequent pastimes. For example, in the study reported by Panina (2004) respondents were asked what leisure activities they performed during the past 7 days. 52.6% of respondents reported that they were visiting friends and 35.6% said they received friends at home. Compare this to the percentage of people who visited restaurants, night clubs, etc: 4.8%, visited cinema: 2.7%, theaters, concerts, museums: 2.2%. This is a stable tendency over the period of 1994-2004.

Friendship is significant for Ukrainians not only as means of socializing and leisure. Friendly favor often allows solving everyday problems, such as finding job, finding a good doctor, getting discounts, borrowing money, etc. While the overall level of social security is low and the

infrastructure of broken, a favor from a friend can help resolve a situation in the easiest way. For example, if one needs a loan, one would rather not approach a bank, where interest rates are often prohibitively high and conditions for loan approval are quite strict, but rather ask his friends.

Membership in associations

Romania

Estimating the number of Romanian NGOs is a tough task. Overtime they were used as tools for various means: for instance, during the mid-nineties, the law allowed NGOs to import cars legally avoiding the custom taxes, if the car would be used for the NGO's activities. Many "foundations" were founded for importing cars for the founding members at lower costs and never actually had any activity. Some others were simply founded, but as they lack founding, they have no activity at all.

Keeping in mind this limitation, let note that the estimations of the total number of registered NGO's varied at the end of 1999 between 7.000 and 30.000 (M. & B. Voicu, 2003: 155). No matter if the NGO is active or not, the maximal figure was lower than the corresponding one from the rest of the ex-communist countries except for Bulgaria, Albania, some former Yugoslav societies and the Slavic part of the NIS. When reporting the number of voluntary associations to the size of the population, the distances grow. According to L.Ilie (2004) in 2000 Romania had a lower number of non-profit associations per capita than all the other EU candidates, except for Bulgaria. The differences maintained in the beginning of the 2000s (see Table 3).

Table 3. The incidence of the NGOs in the ex-communist societies (2003)

Society	NGO's	Inhabitants per NGO	Society	NGO's	Inhabitants per NGO
Estonia	19.653	71	Georgia	4.348*	1.012*
Slovenia	18.000	111	Armenia	3.565	1.066
Hungary	62.000**	163**	Romania	17.373	1.289
Czech Republic	58.000	178	Moldova	2.880	1.493
Croatia	23.800	181	Ukraine	30.000	1.607
Slovakia	20.000*	270*	Serbia	4.000*	2.057*
Lithuania	12.000*	292*	Kazakhstan	4.000	3.700
Russia	450.000**	318**	Albania	800	3.875
Macedonia	5.100	392	Kyrgyz Rep.	1.050	4.762
Montenegro	1.550**	419**	Belarus	1.980*	5.000*
Bosnia-Herzegovina	7.929	429	Tajikistan	1.250	5.040
Latvia	5.000**	460**	Azerbaijan	1.400	5.857
Bulgaria	8.000	875	Uzbekistan	3.000	8.467
Kosovo	2.000	925	Turkmenistan	270	20.741
Poland	41.000	942			

Sources: USAID's NGO Sustainability Index reports: Levinson & Stuart (2002), Stuart (2003), Anderson & Stuart (2004). Notes: *data for 2002; **data for 2001. The number of NGOs is the either the number of official registered non-profit associations or an estimation of the respective figures, where it was not available.

Many of the active associations are rather leader centered than associative. The members

expect that the elected/named leader should do everything. Decision is not consensual, and the work follows similar patterns, with a much higher charge for the elected officers. Volunteering is also rare, and this supports the maintaining of the higher number of tasks for the leader and almost no duties for the regular members of the associations. Foundations, many founded or inspired by Western/international partners, are different, since they use paid employees which have clear responsibilities, but they act similar in the low frequency of recruiting volunteers.

The entire society developed overtime a non-participatory culture and some mistrust regarding NGO's: in November 1998, some 22% of the population declared to have "much" or "very much" trust in the NGOs, while 51% expressed "few" or "very few" trust⁵. 27% of the respondents could not decide what to answer, probably due to their low familiarity with what NGOs are and do. The figures recorded in 2001, 2003 or 2004 were similar, with the precaution of the changing measurement methodology. For instance, in November 2004, 19% expressed trust in NGOs ("much" or "very much"), 55% mistrust them ("low", "very low", or "no trust at all"), and 26% were undecided or refused to answer⁶.

The precaution attitude towards NGOs supported and was reinforced by the NGO's rejection by the Government during the 2000-2004 mandate. During the 2000-2004 mandate, I have noticed many government officials expressing, in private discussions, their belief that the NGOs are a source of wasting national resources, and they should not be encouraged to exist. A similar attitude was to be noticed in public interventions. On the other hand, the most active NGOs were opposed to the respective Government being closer to its opposition from the beginning and they had a similar position towards the Social-Democrat party since early 90s. The situation changed in 2005 when some NGO leaders became part of the Government, as they also did in the precedent Governments of the center-right coalitions (1996-2000). This political enrolment of the NGO movement did not contribute to the image of the civic society as independent actor between the main political forces. More, it hindered the development of the non-profit sector reducing access to financing from the public budgets. Only in 2005 contributors had the right to choose directing part of their taxes to the NGOs. Until the respective moment, the available grants come mainly from international donors and EU founding.

Ukraine

Ukrainian society has grown from the Soviet society. In the USSR there were a number of formal organizations, membership in which, although formally voluntary, was a necessary prerequisite for successful career. Starting from Young Pioneer Organization in schools, continuing with the Komsomol at a university, the Communist Party at work, as well as Trade Unions and various professional unions such as Union of Artists, etc., a Soviet citizen was obliged to participate

⁵ According to the Public Opinion Barometer of the Open Society (Soros) Foundation, a biannual research on national representative sample, carried out since 1994 to 2005.

⁶ The low trust with which the Romanian society credits the NGO sector is also of the general mistrust in institutions (see next sections), but it also express the unfamiliarity with the respective type of organizations, both due to communism, underdevelopment and traditionalist thinking about the societal arrangements.

in all these “voluntary” organizations throughout his or her life. Although many of them were conceived with useful goals in mind, bureaucracy often reduced them to a burdensome formality. Thus majority of members considered their membership as unnecessary, but would not leave their organization because it was considered inappropriate and could hurt their careers. As the result, with the fall of the Soviet Union most of these organizations fell apart, leaving their ex-members with a strong belief that any association is a useless formality. Panina (2004) shows that the level of trust to public associations, Trade Unions and political parties remains low throughout the period of independence: 15,2%, 17.1% and 8.5% of respondents trust public associations, Trade Unions and political parties correspondingly.

As Table 4 shows, the structure of involvement in different types of public associations remained almost unchanged starting 1994. the dominant majority (over 80%) do not belong to any kind of association, while most of the people who join an association as members choose traditional organizations, either trade unions (in many the membership is more or less mandatory), or the religious associations.

Table 4. Political & civic involvement in Ukraine: membership in different types of organizations, 1994-2004

	1994	1996	1998	2000	2002	2004
Club	2,0%	1,6%	1,3%	2,5%	1,2%	1,7%
Political party	0,7%	0,5%	0,9%	0,8%	2,2%	1,9%
Public-political movement	0,4%	0,4%	0,4%	0,2%	0,7%	0,6%
Ecological movement	1,3%	0,9%	1,5%	1,1%	2%	1,3%
Public organization, foundation, association	0,9%	0,6%	0,6%	0,8%	0,7%	0,7%
Non-traditional trade union	3,3%	1,0%	1,4%	1,5%	0,3%	0,4%
Artistic union	1,2%	0,4%	0,7%	0,6%	0,4%	0,5%
Sports club, society	3,2%	2,7%	2,7%	2,8%	2%	2,1%
Professional association	2,7%	2,3%	2,0%	2,9%	2,8%	2,9%
Student society, youth organization	1,7%	1,6%	1,4%	2,0%	1,8%	1,4%
Religious organization, church community	3,0%	3,3%	3,9%	5,2%	4%	4,2%
Farmers' unions	0,7%	0,2%	0,3%	0,7%	0,9%	0,4%
Other organization, union, movement	0,7%	1,1%	0,6%	1,0%	0,9%	0,7%
Not member of any civic or political organization	82,2%	86,7%	86,6%	82,9%	83,9%	83,8%
No response	0,9%	0,0%	0,2%	0,1%	0,2%	0%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Source: Panina, 2004: 13.

It is interesting to note that the youth, the most active group of the society and also the one least affected by the Soviet legacy, also shows low interest in public associations. According to sociological research and statistical data, youth non-governmental organizations, despite the stable tendency to grow in number and diversity (for example, from year 1992 to 2000 the number of nation-wide youth and children non-governmental organizations grew from 7 to 97 (Ukrainian Government, 2002: 109), are often limited in the number of members; their majority represent a local level only; most importantly, they are often unknown even in the youth environment. The

percentage of the youth that participate in such non-governmental organizations in the last 10 years remains practically constant at about 2-3% (Table 5).

Table 5. Registered public associations as of Jan 1st, 2004.

	Registered public associations		
	Total	International	Ukraine-wide
Total	1978	399	1579
Political parties	96	–	96
Public organizations	1882	399	1483
Public movements	8	3	5
Associations for national relations	123	43	80
Youth associations	113	8	105
Of them students'	15	–	15
Children organizations	9	1	8
Women organizations	42	4	38
Associations of veterans and people with disabilities	58	10	48
Of the veterans of war	12	–	12
Professional associations	335	45	290
Environment protection organizations	51	16	35
Organizations for protection of historical and cultural monuments	2	–	2
Sports and physical training organizations	241	15	226
Associations for protection from aftermaths of Chernobyl catastrophe	31	22	9
Scientific and creative associations	143	36	107
Educational, cultural associations	162	38	124
Other public organizations	564	158	406
In addition, unions of public associations	76	4	72

Source: Panina, 2004: 110.

Some new tendencies became visible during the recent presidential election campaign of 2004. Important role in the events of the “Orange revolution” that decided the outcome of the vote was played by a grass-root organization “Pora”. This tendency to revitalize public associations is new and requires further research. Currently too little time has passed since the elections for reliable data to appear, thus it’s difficult to judge the stability of this trend. At this point one can only pose hypotheses about its origin and perspective. However, one can’t help but notice that grass-roots organizations such as “Pora” appeared and started massive activities exactly before the election campaign and seemingly disappeared after it. One can hypothesize that their origin is not entirely grass-root and was influenced by the political forces that they later supported and helped to win.

Trusting people & institutions

Romania

During communism, the public place was a place of lying, where one should not invest trust. Through its often arbitrary, therefore unpredictable, actions, the state promoted pervasive mistrust in institutions. One of the consequences was a higher focus of the individuals on horizontal relationships and investing particularized⁷ trust, instead of generalized one (Vasilieva, 2002). In this context, when assessing the political role of the most salient civic organizations from the communist block (such as Charta 77, Solidarity etc.), one may note that they were created as a reaction against the “state-induced mistrust” (Warren, 1999:12), and they mobilized the existing roots of civic action. Meanwhile, in some societies, they paradoxically contributed to polarize the society, and to further reduce the propensity towards generalized trust.

Most of the salient Romanian civic formations, such as the Civic Alliance, The Group for Social Dialog, or The League for Defending Human Rights played similar roles in early 90s, immediately after the communist breakdown. They radically opposed to the first elected governments, which they have labeled as neo-communist, contributing to decreasing trust in the institutions controlled by the respective Government, as well as to decreasing trust between the supporters of the two opposed political coalitions: the “neo-communists” and the center-right “historical” parties. The phenomenon is still present today but at lower intensity.

On the other hand, as Sztompka (1999) coined out, the stability of the law and of the existing institutional system condition the levels of trusting institutions. Repeated changes decrease not only the trustworthiness that the laws shape the “right” direction for organizing society, but also the familiarity of the individuals with the respective regulations. This lack of knowledge and understanding of the system contributes to diminishing the belief that the institutional system may “encapsulate the interest” of the individuals⁸.

Romanian legislation changes very often. Few examples may be relevant. The educational system suffered strong and repeated revisions during the last 10 years. Starting 1999, for instance, the length of compulsory education varied between 8, 9 and 10 grades almost yearly. No significant public debate occurred. In 1998-1999, even the school personnel accused the top-down approach and the impossibility to keep pace with the fast changing legislation (Voicu, 2000), which supported several changes and chocks (decentralization, increasing autonomy, adopting alternative textbooks, demographic decrease of new cohorts of students, exits form the system of well qualified teachers, dissolving some 20% of the rural school units due to lack of students etc.). Another visible example is the tax system. Repeated important changes affected it in 2000, 2003, 2004 and – several times – in 2005.

The situation is generally present in all sectors of governing, and may also be illustrated

⁷ Uslander (2002) distinct between generalized trust (“trusting most people”) and particularized trust, which is directed towards specific groups, usually kinship, colleagues or neighbors. Generalized trust is vertical, while the particularized one is associated which the functioning of horizontal networks.

⁸ Hardin (2002) showed out that trust is directly related with the conviction that the trusted person or entity get have reasons that encapsulate the interest of the individual that put his trust in the respective trusted person or entity.

through the impressive number of so-called emergency ordinances issued by the 2000-2004 Government, as well as by the current one. No public debates preceded the respective decisions, some having high impact on the existing system of laws, issued by the executive power which substituted this way the legislative one.

The political system offers another interesting example of low vertical trust, if investigating the feelings of the supporters of a party towards the other major political blocs. Discussing the role of social capital in democratic transition, Paxton (2002) argued that it offers a place for discourse. On the other hand, low levels of bridging social capital and high levels of bonding social capital may hinder development and democracy. Let suppose a system with two major parties/coalitions. When the two forces are sensible equals, lack or very low trust in the ‘other’ (opposed) party may lead to the impossibility of governing, or to a very minimal government, since always an important part of the population will mistrust the intentions of the group which is in power and will not comply very much with its decisions, even if converted in laws.

Analyzing the data for Romania depicted in **Error! Not a valid bookmark self-reference.**, one may note the mutual lack of trust manifested by the electors of any specific party towards the other parties. The respective attitude reflects on the level of politicians and led to fragmented political elite, with low cooperation between the main blocks. The Parliament resulting from the 2004 elections proved, at least in the first half of 2005, to have difficulties during debates, since the PSD and the PNL-PD coalition got a similar share of votes – around 40% – and were not able to cooperate and to negotiate as opposition and government⁹.

Table 6. How much trust the electors of the main Romanian parties have in the concurrent parties

<i>voters of ...</i>	<i>trusting "very much" or "much" in ...</i>			
	PSD	PRM	PNL	PD
PSD (the Social Democrat Party)	82%	8%	10%	15%
PRM (the "Great Romania" Party)	12%	87%	8%	14%
PNL (the Liberal Party)	9%	14%	84%	21%
PD (the Democrat Party)	23%	8%	33%	73%
The PNL-PD Alliance, as a whole	11%	7%	75%	72%

Notes: I have employed the November 2003 wave of the Public Opinion Barometer of the Open Society Foundation. PSD is social-democratic; PNL is liberal; PRM is nationalist; PD declared between 1994 and 2005 its social-democrat ideology, and had switch towards popular orientation in July 2005. PNL and PD formed a center-right coalition in 2003, and come to power after December 2004 elections. PSD governed between 2000 and 2004. *Reading tip:* 15% of the PSD voters have “much” or “very much” trust in PD (the possible choices for the respective trust questions were: “very much trust”, “much”, “a little”, “very little”, “not at all”, “I don’t know”, “I do not know the respective party”).

Lack of trust may be found even inside the PNL-PD coalition, between the voters of the two allied parties, which in December 2004 formed the Government with the support of two other smaller parties. In November 2003, only 20% out of the PNL voters were crediting with trust the partners from PD, while 33% from those declaring PD sympathy trusted "very much" or at least

⁹ According to Holmes (2004: 41), postcommunist societies generally lacked, at least in the first years of their transitions, a culture of compromise, allowing the supporters of opposite points of view to negotiate in order to reach a common solution. The above described mutual lack of trust is an example of this ‘radicalism’.

"much" their coalition partners. This highly affected the levels of trust displayed by the voters of the respective parties in the PNL-PD alliance: at the time only a half (57%) of the voters of PNL and PD trusted the alliance. After elections, in May 2005, another survey initiated by the OSF, offered similar results. The mutual mistrust was still there, being also present inside the Governing coalition. The only important change is the 10% higher trust of PNL in their coalition partners, but PD decreased trusting PNL with the same percentage.

Changing again the perspective, trust is part of a late modern (postmodern/postmaterial) culture, as Inglehart (1997), for instance, pointed out. It implies accepting that other people and groups can be different, both in thinking and in needs. It implies a more openness and less labeling different people as "strangers". This is not the case in contemporary Romania. Gypsies, new religious movements, homosexuals, any different life-style are less tolerated¹⁰. Several inter-ethnic mass conflicts ended with deaths, and severe material damages in the beginning of the 90s: gypsies versus Romanians (in the village of Mihail Kogălniceanu, in 1991, as well as in Bolintin, in 1991), or against Romanians and Hungarians (Hădăreni, 1993); Romanians against Hungarians (the huge conflict from Târgu Mureș, 1990) are just the most visible examples from a longer series.

Finally, one may look at the corruption as a sign of mistrust related to the system dysfunctions. Corruption, as well as blat (Ledeneva, 1998; Verdery, 2003; Paldam and Sevdson, 2002; etc.), is part of the bloc culture given by the former totalitarian rule. Evidences from Romania shows up that bribe tend to be considered part of everyday life. About half of the Romanians (50% in 2000 – Anderson et al, 2001; 52% in 2004 – Mărginean et al, 2004) think so. As a pervasive phenomenon, corruption is perceived to dominate society. 61% think that most of the clerk is corrupted, 80% know at least a person who offered bribes, and 33% admit that they gave bribes during the last two years, while 6% declare that someone offered them bribes¹¹ (Mărginean et al, 2004). Corruption is related with both lack of trust in institutions and in the others and with the prevalence of the kinship networks, more trustful than other connections. Low trust in institutions involves the need to have better ways to predict their behavior. Bribing is, in this perspective, the best way to control the environment, to reduce uncertainty.

Ukraine

In the transforming society the role of the political elite increases, since the elite guides the reforms. But the elite can perform its function only when it has the trust of the people. The results of numerous sociological researches show that the Ukrainian elites have passed the stage of high trust in 1991, when transition to the democratic state was initiated. After that, throughout the first 13 years of the independence period, the trust in political institutions was very low. Thus we can speak of a crisis of legitimacy of Ukrainian ruling elite. For example, according to Panina (2004), in

¹⁰ Sandu (2003) treats tolerance as a distinct indicator of the social capital. However, as I have shown elsewhere (Voicu, 2005), I consider tolerance as a combined effect of cultural orientations, such as postmodernity (see Inglehart, 1997), and social capital, more specifically of trust.

¹¹ The figure is quite high considering the fact that not everyone holds a position that can put him in a situation to receive such 'gifts' (the quoted survey does not allow to control for this). More, I expect that very few people would declare receiving bribes even when if so, due to the legal implications.

2004 (before the elections), 15% of respondents trusted the President, 9.1% the Parliament, 11.2% the Government, confirming the lower levels of trust registered for the respective institutions during the last ten years (see Table 7).

Table 7. The dynamics of trust in the Ukrainian President and Government: 1994-2004

	Trust in the President		Trust in the government	
	trust	do not trust	trust	do not trust
1994	11%	51%	16%	53%
1998	8%	62%	10%	61%
1999	10%	62%	13%	58%
2002	10%	59%	13%	59%
2004	13%	58%	11%	58%

Notes: 5 points scales were used in all cases. Trust includes those giving positive answers (the first two points of the scale), while mistrust includes the last two points (4 and 5). Indecision (“not sure”, the midpoint of the scale) is not included in the table. Sources: Vorona & Shulga, 2004: 63-64.

The decline of the authority of the state and political structures, social institutions in general, mass dissatisfaction with the system of power distribution and other significant social resources lead to social tension increase. People were dissatisfied with the current economical situation and inability of the government to change it; they also believed that many government officials abused their status for the sake of personal enrichment at the expense of the society. At the same time, people did not see any acceptable alternative, mostly they did not engage in political opposition, but rather assumed the attitude of passive hostility to the political elite, relying only on themselves and family networks. Public social representations accuse the political and economic elite of frequently breaking the law, as opposed to ordinary citizens (Table 8). An acceptable alternative presented itself at the presidential elections of 2004. The distrust in the then-current political elite and its candidate, prime-minister V. Yanukovich, was one of the major factors contributing to the ultimate victory of the opposition candidate, V. Yushchenko. Currently the new government enjoys a high trust level (over 50%). Many believe that the new political force will be able to quickly improve the economic situation and eliminate corruption. Further evolution of the political trust in Ukraine will depend on how the new government will fulfill this promise.

Table 8. Public representations about the measure in which Ukrainian elites respect the law

<i>In your opinion in which measure, the following categories respect the law in today Ukraine?</i>	More often respect	Hard to tell	More often break	No answer
Representatives of legislature (members of Parliament)	4%	33%	63%	0,2%
High-ranking officials of ministries	3%	32%	65%	0,3%
High-ranking officials of the Presidential Administration	4%	40%	56%	0,6%
Ordinary officials	10%	41%	49%	0,2%
Entrepreneurs, business people	7%	41%	49%	0,2%
Citizens	45%	41%	14%	0,4%

Source: Vorona & Shulga, 2003: 600.

Involvement in mass protest actions

Romania

The communist heritage was one of non-involvement in any public protest. The former regime severely punished any attempt in this respect. The very few mass protest actions (such as the strikes of the miners from Jiu Valley in 1977, the street protest of the Iași students, in February 1987, the street protests of the workers from Brașov, in 1987) were rapidly repressed and no information was offered through the Romanian media. The mass manifestations from December 1989 were definitively inspired by the ones from the rest of the communist block. Notably, their initiation, at least in Bucharest, came from the regime itself¹².

The beginning of the 90s was marked by several street manifestations, culminating with the two months occupation of the University square, in the very center of Bucharest, by some ten of thousands people daily opposing to the new regime, considered as a communist. As a sign of irreconcilable perspectives, lack of dialog between the implied groups and violent counterdemonstrations occurred. The miners, for instance, used by leftist governments as armed justiciar troupes, occupied several times Bucharest (February and June 1990, September 1991, in January 1999, they stopped after winning the ‘battle’ with the Police forces in Costești – 200 km from Bucharest, and some negotiations with the center-right Government in the Cozia Monastery). In March 1990 the Hungarian ethnic pupils from Târgu Mureș manifested for having only Hungarian teaching in a local highschool while the Romanian ones protested, also through street manifestations. The conflict became violent, involving many Romanian and Hungarians from the villages surrounding Târgu Mureș. Many of the participants were wounded during the street fights. All this examples may be considered as indicators of lacking bridging social capital and abilities to negotiate. Mass protests did not served in these cases as means for negotiating, and did not actually proved the capacity of the society to organized and to mobilize forces in collective action, but the opposite. The conflicting groups may prove some roots for bonding social capital, but nothing more.

Two examples from 2004-2005, prove indices that some changes may occurred. The first one is the series of flash-mobs, used in December 2004 by the young supporters of the opposition parties as a way to protest against the Government, accused for non-democratic practices, and against the public television, accused for misinforming the public. Even if the actions had a political side, they were initiated outside the political parties, and formal organizations. Some chain e-mail messages announced the actions and informed the potential participants few days before the event (see Matei, 2004). Some tens of participants were part of each of the four protest actions, all planned to last maximum 10 minutes, at a precise hour, at a few days distance: the first implied consuming candies in front of the PSD campaign tent from the University Square and offering

¹² They have gathered a huge number of people to manifest their solidarity with the regime. However, the crowd roved to have other feelings and become uncontrollable.

candies to the young supporters of Adrian Năstase, the leader of the party and the prime minister at that time¹³; the second involved deflating blue¹⁴ balloons in the same place, then leaving; the third action, also held in the University Square, after the first official results from the ballot were published, consisted in sticking on the coat the adhesive stamp that proved voting¹⁵; the fourth flash-mob was to apply, as a protest towards lack of democracy, for immigration in the Congo Democratic Republic; finally, the last action in the series, implied covering the mouth and flexing the ankles¹⁶, in front of the public television building, as a symbolic protest against the obedience of the respective TV channel in front of the Government. Despite the low advertising of organizing the flash mobs (only electronic messages and SMS were used), and the anonymity of the organizers, there was some notable participation. More, no violent incident was to be noticed, despite the fact that in most cases the PSD supporters were there, gathered around the respective party's campaign tent from the University Square.

The second type of recent examples invokes the demonstrations of support for the Romanian journalists kidnapped by the Iraqi terrorists. Several tens or hundreds people were daily present, in the same University Square, in the spring of 2005, to manifest their solidarity with the three journalists and their guide. Bridging social capital, particularly for the younger generations, but not only, was manifest in this case.

One should note that all the above examples have many in common with the politics, even if they are not originated in the activity of political parties or lobby groups. We recorded no salient example of civic mobilization, no local protest against an entrepreneur or company, no petition signing for obtaining better access to something, no boycott against commercial practices. The case of manifesting solidarity with the kidnapped journalist is different, but it still implies some political decision, such as the involvement of the Romanian military forces in the Iraqi war. Several local and larger protests were organized by the labour unions, including strikes and street manifestations. The main topics were the salaries or privatizing some particular companies. The Government was the target for the most of the unions' protest action. The number of such actions, as well as the number of participants seems to decrease from 1990 to present.

Ukraine

In the first 13 years of Ukrainian independence (1991-2004) there were very few cases of mass protest actions. The relatively low support for such actions (see Table 9) explains somehow the causes. Behind these lies nevertheless a non-participatory culture, as well as the lack of organization of the civic society: as we previously showed, the number of voluntary associations is

¹³ Năstase was nicknamed "Bombonel" ("little candy gay"). The sense of the protest was that the people, including the electors of Năstase, should eat candies, not elect them. . .

¹⁴ The color used in campaign by the same Social-Democrat Party.

¹⁵ During the 2004 elections, the Government was accused for defrauding, by letting its supporters to vote several times: the sticker that proved voting was easy to unglue from the identity card; some organizations of the party in power were suspected to organize buses to transport sympathizers from a locality to another, in order to vote.

¹⁶ „Keep your mouth and flex the ankles” is a Romanian saying for keeping low profile, obey and do not protest against the orders.

quite reduced.

Table 9. The level of social acceptance of different protest activities in Ukraine, 1994 & 2004

<i>Which of the following protest activities appears to you as an effective and admissible measure for me to adopt when considering the need to protest about something?</i>	1994	2001	2004
Collecting signatures for a petition	17%	20%	22%
Lawful meetings and demonstrations	17%	27%	19%
Participation in election campaigns	16%	20%	-
Threatening a strike	8%	9%	4%
Boycott (refusal to comply with the decisions of the administrations and other bodies of power)	7%	9%	3%
Picketing of government offices	4%	8%	5%
Unauthorized meetings and demonstrations	2%	4%	1%
Hunger strikes	2%	4%	2%
Establishment of armed forces independent of Presidential and governmental control	2%	3%	-
Unlawful strikes	2%	2%	1%
Seizure of buildings	1%	2%	2%
None of these methods appear as an effective and admissible measure for me to adopt	32%	30%	37%
Difficult to answer	30%	27%	19%

Source: Panina, 2004: 18.

For 2004, the levels of support for specific protest forms seemed to record a slight increase: in Panina (2004) study, the respondents were asked what form of legal protest they would chose if their rights or interests were violated by the government. The most frequent answer (36,6%) remained “no form seems effective to me”. However, 21,8% would participate in signing petitions and 19,2% in public meetings. Thus we can say that Ukrainians did not participate in mass protests, despite being dissatisfied with the government, primarily because they thought that such protest would not result in any change. On the hand, in late 2004 we saw a massive outburst of protest during the events of “Orange revolution” in Ukraine. This apparently signifies a new tendency for more active social position and civic participation of Ukrainians.

Why such as radical change happened is one of the hottest and most highly debated topics in Ukraine. Currently no-one can claim to have an exhaustive explanation. One can only suggest hypotheses. We think that massive participation in the protest actions was influenced by a combination of causes. First, Ukrainians really were dissatisfied with the current regime, which is confirmed by the low level of trust in the past. The opposition candidate, Victor Yushchenko, managed to persuade the electorate that he is different from the old elite and that he has real chances to win – thus, for the first time in the modern history of Ukraine, an acceptable alternative to the current power presented itself. Second, after the election results allegedly were rigged, the opposition called the nation to fight for their choice. In other words, they convinced the people to stand up not only for the specific candidate, but rather for themselves. This gave the protesters a feeling that they are defining the fate of their country, which was attractive to many. Finally, comparison of the “Orange revolution” to similar events in Yugoslavia and Georgia shows so many

similarities that we can suspect that consultants experienced in this style of political struggle had their role in the Ukrainian events.

Such a massive involvement in a mass protest action is however exceptional, as it proved to be in the cases of the similar manifestations which accompanied the communist breakthrough in Central and Eastern European non-soviet countries in the late 80s. DDR, Czech Republic, Romania, Bulgaria, Hungary experienced the same high rate of popular participation in street protest meetings in 1989, which had a very low level of formal organization. The situation remained the same during the first years after the regime changes, but participation in such actions dramatically decreased when the regime changing goal (an issue which attracted the majority consensus) was reached.

Conclusions

The quantitative data invoked in the beginning of the article find some substantial correspondence in the selected examples from Romania and Ukraine. Both countries share a non-participatory culture, probably having its roots in the communist past, underdevelopment, rural structure, lower economic development. For illustrating the levels of social capital in the two societies, we have used a multitude of indicators. Some are stronger manifestations of existing levels of social capital, while others are only proxies when assessing the studied phenomena, and get their explanations merely in other factors than social capital. Each of them offers only isolated, incomplete information, but their assembly may be used, if consistent in describing what lies under the “cold” figures offered by the comparative surveys.

We have showed out how people prefer private settings instead of public one, how they lack a culture of meeting friends, as well as, more generally, a participative culture. Developing relations inside the kinship, and giving low credits of trust to the institutions and other people were found common to both Romania and Ukraine. Substantial examples were used to show out how bonding social capital overcome the bridging one.

However, trends towards rebuilding civic society, collective action, civic and political participation, bridging social capital were mentioned for both countries. An increasing number of restaurants, associations, flash-mobs etc. stands as proof. Pervasive corruption still undermines the development of a participatory culture and of the bridging social capital, but, on long run, Romania and Ukraine seems to follow the path towards development.

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