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Social capital: Bonding or Bridging Europe?'

During the last decades, concepts like social capital, civic society, and collective action knew a huge popularity, especially due to the particular contribution that they may have as tools for or part of social development. An increasing number of academic articles and books flourish, doubled by a similar tendency in policy making circles, as well as in the media. The unprecedented popularity led to using those concepts in such a broad variety of contexts that they became almost meaningless. However, most of the papers devoted to social capital, using a careful selection of the indicators, provide important information and consistent models that allow better describing societies and explaining social processes and phenomena.

In this paper, I analyze the (bridging) social capital variations across European societies, aiming to see if Europe, as a mixture of countries, is or not homogenous from this perspective, how much Europe is different from other countries or (administrative/political) entities, and if the variability of social capital is one that might impede or facilitate European integration. I am avoiding defining social capital otherwise than through its main, operational elements. More, I am dealing only with those aspects of social capital which are useful for social development, according to the existing literature. I am interested in the frequency of (bridging) social connections, importance of friendship, membership in associations, interpersonal and institutional trust, as well as involvement in mass protest actions.

The quantitative country level analysis focuses on the variations across Europe, and tries to identify consistent patterns of social capital that allows clustering the European societies. I look for East-West differences, also sketching some cultural level explanations. In this context I address the question of how much the differences are important for European integration, and in which measure they contribute to the European diversity. However, my aim is not to build up an explanatory model, and I am not validating an explanatory one. I limit to describing the variability of social capital across Europe and to briefly discuss if the results have any importance for the European integration.

The findings are not necessary original: I identify several consistent patterns, derived from the cleavages between ex-totalitarian versus democratic recent history, and between the Nordic and Southern-Mediterranean heritage. I expect ex-communist countries to display lower levels of social capital, while Southern Europeans are more likely to often meet their friends. The Nordics, with a deep history of cooperation and collective action, developed higher levels of trust. Europe lacks homogeneity, but it belongs to a similar cultural pattern. However, other state entities are sharing similar patterns. The innovative part of my approach is to put together this information, and to build up coherent clusters inside Europe, showing how the levels of social capital indicators shape the continent.

¹ This paper was partially supported through the CNCSIS research grant no. 715/2003 „Social Capital and Community Development”. Due to their large size, I have preferred posting some of the maps which illustrate the distribution of social capital across Europe on the Sibiu conference web site, being included in the PowerPoint presentation posted there (<http://www.iccv.ro/romana/conf/conf.sibiu.2004/program.htm>).

The paper starts with a brief definition of social capital, and its elements. Then I briefly state the hypotheses. Few methodological considerations precede the data presentation. In the analysis section, I employ EVS/WVS 1999-2001 data set to describe first the variability of each of the social capital indicators across European societies. Cluster analysis allows to identify the common patterns, and to compare the European societies with other entities. In the end, I discuss some possible implications for the European integration.

Conceptualizing social capital

Each of the three “founding fathers” of the social capital as a social science concept added a specific part to the definition of the term. Bourdieu (1986, 1999) focused on social connections. Coleman (1988, 1990), emphasizing the functions of social capital, showed that it is embedded within the social structure and facilitate collective action. Putnam (1993) added trust and civic participation. Thousands of papers and books contributed in the 80s, 90s and today to increasing knowledge and understanding of social capital. They have debated upon its positive or negative functions, upon its specificity as capital, upon its structure and measurement. I have no intention here to review the huge literature. Many scholars did it (see by example Portes, 1998; Robinson et al, 1999; Dagsupta and Serageldin, 2000; Mihaylova, 2004, to mention only a few sources). I specify only my operational definition of social capital by noting that I am interested mainly in the so-called positive social capital. Considering that ‘*collective action* is the central reference point in any definition of social capital’ (Weltzel et al, 2004), I understand through social capital the elements mentioned in Table 1.

Table 1. The elements of (bridging) social capital: an operational synthesis

Bridging connections	Socializing	<i>Meeting friends</i>
		<i>Importance of friends in everyday life</i>
	<i>Membership in voluntary associations</i>	
Civic engagement	Participation in mass protest actions	<i>Latent support*</i>
		<i>Actual involvement</i>
Trust	Social trust (<i>Trusting people</i>)	
	<i>Trust in institutions</i>	

* In this paper I use no measure for the latent support for participation in mass protest actions. The six entries marked with italics define the measuring model that I employ.

Networks, trust, and civic engagement define the space where social capital lies. Frequently meeting friends, considering them as important, participating in formal associations, involvement in protest actions, crediting people and institutions with trust are the

operational expressions of social capital at societal level². In the following I briefly describe each of the components, also suggesting how they can contribute to individual/societal development.

First of all, a look to two taxonomies may be useful. The first one is between positive and negative social capital, used by many scholars, particularly when referring the ex-communist Europe (Rose, 1999; Paldam and Svendsen, 2002 etc.). The negative social capital is seen as that kind of social connections that may hinder general social development. They include clan and Mafia type relations, corruption etc. and are usually associated with generalized mistrust in institutions and people, as well as with lower levels of tolerance to differences. Positive social capital, described below, is the one who may support social development.

The second taxonomy in which I am interested, overlap in many aspects the first one. It separates the bridging and the bonding social capital (Woolcock 2000; Narayan 1999; Putnam, 2001 [2000]). Focusing mainly on social relations, the two categories describe qualities of social capital, related with the way in which individuals select their social network(s). If people use to interact mainly with similar individuals, belonging to their primary membership groups, they develop bonding social capital. Higher inter-group relations lead to increased bridging social capital. The later is useful in individual and social development, facilitating access to more various resources, societal negotiations, tolerance, trust, and collective action. Bonding social capital can lead, on opposite, to insular or conflictual societies. In many ways, bridging social capital is positive, when considering its consequences for development. Putnam (2001: 22-24) define the bridging social capital as being „inclusive”, while the bonding one is labeled as “exclusive”, since it may create, along with “strong in-group loyalties, [...] strong out-group antagonism”. As Putnam notes, in particular conditions, bonding social capital can be also positive, especially for “getting by”, while the bridging one facilitate individuals and communities to “get ahead” (p.23). The two forms are complementary, but the bridging one is more important for development. It represents the focus of this paper

Meeting friends acts as capital at individual level mainly through two basic ways: accessing resources controlled by the members of ones social network, including goods, but mainly information, knowledge; using informal safety nets as insurance for dealing with social risks. At societal level, the impact is less visible, but extremely important for development purposes: it allows people to share and discuss their ideas, acting as a trigger for developing participative culture.

Meeting colleagues plays a similar role. However, for both individual and societal level, meeting friends has a higher instrumental value than meeting colleagues: interaction

² Following Coleman assertion that social capital is embedded in networks, there is a tendency to locate social capital only at the level of groups, communities, or societies (see Portes, 2000 for a discussion of this point). The concept works at the individual level too, since the individuals may use the social capital for their own sake. Paxton (2002) argues that social capital can be measured at multiple levels (individual, group, society etc.) and produces effect on each plane. I embrace the same position. However, since in this paper I am interested in the differences between nations, I am interested more in the “stocks” of social capital (Putnam, 1993) that societies may have. Therefore I am dealing only with measuring (bridging) social capital at aggregate level.

with the latter ones is somehow mandatory for everyone who has a colleague. More, colleagues use to have profiles very similar from the informational point of view, as they have access to similar knowledge. Friends may bring a supplementary value, even if they are not necessary very different either. Neighbors, then family, in this order, are less important, at least for ex-communist societies like Romania (B.Voicu, 2004), since their proximity reduces the instrumentality of accessing different knowledge and resources³.

A further development of these hypotheses and past findings lead to the expectation that valuing friends at least in the same measure as family, is a good indicator for a latent orientation towards increasing the stock of social capital.

Some people might be skeptical on these matters: they claim that simply meeting friends for drinking, eating together, leisure activities, sports, etc. does not bring any value on increasing access or potential for access to knowledge, information etc.⁴ However, reducing everything to only one dimension, one may argue that people have to talk about something even when they are drunk. Since simple communication facilitate information sharing, the more different the drunk schmoozers are, the more diverse and potential valuable information they may get. Removing the exaggeration of over-drinking, one may easily identify diverse ways of potential cooperation and increasing social cohesion and potential for collective action that meeting friends offers.

Membership in associations can be seen as a particular case of meeting friends. The formal framework and the pronounced civic engagement make the difference. The latter one is the phenomenon that impressed Tocqueville during its American journey. Following Putnam's works (1993, 2001), membership in association became the main indicator used for measuring social capital and civic society in contemporary sociology, despite the fact that its relation with development is quite weak (Weltzer et al, 2004; Mihaylova, 2004; etc.). Let also note that not all types of association provide bridging social capital: xenophobic, ethnic, nationalist, militia etc. are rather hindering social development, destroying social trust and bridging connections, they exacerbate existing cleavage and may generate new ones, they reduce access to information, to new ideas etc. (Paxton, 2002).

Participation in mass protest actions is infrequently used as indicator for social capital. At individual level, it might be an indicator of social capital (people are part of the protest because they have the social connections which allow them to cooperate with others in developing the protest action), but it can also be determined by latent orientations towards non-conformism, self-expressing, terribleness, need for company, and other different things (some people may simply be on the street when somebody ask them to sign a petition, or a

³ See Peri 6, 1997: 10, for a similar argument. Peri 6 claims that government 'should stop reinforcing the wrong types of networks' (p.11), particularly referring family, neighbors and friends similar to the referential person. However, one can easily de-construct the argument since in many cases, at individual level, family relationships prove to be more important, with direct consequences on the community and society level (Coleman, 1990; Pahl, 2000; Douglas, 1997). One the other hand, using the bridging-bonding distinction, Putnam (2001: 23) reads Granovetter's classic assertion about the weak ties showing that the more distant (and weak) a connection is, the more bridging potential it has, since it offers a tie with a friend that is outside the usual circles in which one is involved. Therefore, one may conclude that friends should be more important than colleagues.

⁴ I have faced off this criticism in several meetings with colleagues from the Research Institute for Quality of Life, in Bucharest, when I have presenting findings related to social capital.

demonstration occur). At societal level, the aggregate index is an excellent indicator for the incidence of organizing such mass protest within the respective society (organizing need organizers, which implies membership in associations, volunteering, trust, ties etc.), i.e. for social capital and collective action. As Weltzer et al (2004) noticed, ‘both forms of community involvement [<membership in associations> and <participation in instantaneously action>] reflect the contextual opportunities of involvement more than anything else’, and they are better measures for societal level predictions⁵.

Following Putnam, trust became a standard component of the social capital mix (see Paxton, 1999; Sandu, 2003; Raiser et al, 2001; Anheier et al, 2004; etc.). Trusting people is a basis for any kind of cooperative action (Sztompka, 1999a; Misztal, 1996; Uslander, 2002). It implies an implicit insurance that the others will act according to ones expectation, decreasing the uncertainty of predicting their behavior.

Trust in institutions is also crucial for societal cooperation and cohesion. However, as Dumitru Sandu (1999: 75-78) noticed, trust in institutions is highly circumstantial, at least for societies like Romania. When including among the institutions the Government, the Parliament and other political bodies, several “trust cycles” may be noticed, depending mainly on the elections moment.

There are two other potential indicators of social capital at societal level, mentioned within existing literature.

Some scholars (Knack and Keefer, 1997; van Schaik, 2002; Raiser et al, 2001) argue that measuring social capital at societal level should also include what they call trustworthiness, civic mindedness, or attachments to the norms of order: rejecting cheating on taxes as legitimate action, as well as over speed driving, buying stolen goods, accepting bribes etc. However, this is more related with the support for the existing system of social order, than an intrinsic measure of social capital. It is a consequence of generalized trust in institutions, as one can argue using the data reported by the quoted authors. When considering the relation with social capital of the above mentioned indicators, one might argue that this is similar with the one of other attitudes towards the norms shaping the contemporary social systems of order: support for democracy, tolerance, ecological-friendly behavior etc.

Other authors (Sandu, 2003), discuss tolerance as a measure of social capital. As I have argued elsewhere (B.Voicu, 2004), tolerance is a consequence of the daily interactions with other groups, but it mainly stands as an indicator for post-modern social values, within a larger set including pluralism, open-mindedness etc.⁶

Main hypothesis

The bulk of the literature devoted to social capital is somehow embedded into the Western culture. Discussing levels of social capital indicators no matter where, scholars use

⁵ Paxton (2002: 257) argues that ‘meetings can be planned, events can be organized [...] when individuals meet in associations’. Therefore, the incidence of protest events within a society can be considered as an indicator for the presence of certain stocks of bridging social capital, at the level of the respective society.

⁶ Pluralism, open-mindedness, tolerance are discussed by Paxton (2002: 260) as effects of bridging social capital.

the occidental cultural pattern and compare the investigated societies with this model. My approach is similar. I describe the differences between European societies using Western Europe as reference category, and emphasizing the specificities of the other regions. Cultural factors induced by recent history, the level of social development, religious and ethnic structure may contribute to inducing these differences. In this section I sketch the main hypothesis inferred from a superficial look at this factors.

Friendship is the first element to be considered. It changed a lot its meaning over time (Pahl, 2000): in developed societies friends became more and more important extending their role beyond the limit of young adulthood, and competing family and kinship in providing the social support of safety net. Urbanization, dissolution of extended family, changes in sexual and marital behavior, more time and possibilities for leisure are among the factors that went together with this change. Late modernity is particularly marked by an increasing role of friends and social networks (Giddens, 1992). For ex-communist societies, friendship is still at the beginning of its career as determinant for everyday life during mature adulthood and at higher ages. Some of the Eastern societies (Romania, Poland, Albania, Ukraine etc.) include large segments dominated by the rural/agrarian life-style and culture. Others (Poland, Romania) also present traditional models of family, as well as high levels of religious belief. More, suspicions and fears developed during communism, when the social representation described political police as omnipresent, hindered the development of large, bridging social networks. Somehow this was also the case of other societies which experimented years of totalitarian rule during the second half of the late century (Spain, Portugal). On the other hand, there is Southern heritage of a more friends-oriented life-style, especially during the hot summers.

Involvement in associations is also reported to be lower in those countries which experienced totalitarian rule relatively recently. Totalitarian ruler tried to fully control or forbid civil society (Ekiert, 1992; Rose, 1999). During communism, for instance, public space was a space of lying, where the official discourse was referring a different reality than the real world (Platonova, 2003). Even the private space was controlled in several ways, including diminishing the span of time in which one may speak with friends and even family (Verdery, 2003). In countries like Romania the communist regime imposed practicing so called "voluntary" or "patriotic" activities, on the behalf of the state, as representing the others, and undermined on longer run the meaning of and the propensity to volunteering (M.&B. Voicu, 2003).

Some deeper historical roots of different tendency for cooperation among the European societies can be found in the history of the structure of agricultural exploitation. In the Middle Age, Elba delimited two different patterns of land ownership and use (Rössener, 2003). The Western one involved peasant ownership over land or partial lease, with necessary individual decision and cooperation when discussing, for instance, the crop rotation. The Eastern pattern (spread from Bohemia to Ukraine and Romania), supposed the existence of

large plots owned by local boyards/nobles⁷, with the peasants depending on them and forced to work for the local aristocracy or gentry (the Western model involved different taxes paid by the peasants to the nobles). A mixture of the partial lease model and ownership over large plots characterized the Mediterranean countries. More, in the dawns of the industrial age, the Southern European aristocracy, particularly in Spain and Portugal, displayed a tendency to increase their relative power by ‘feudalising’ the agricultural relations, in the direction of to the above-described Eastern pattern.

The Western pattern involved more autonomy of the peasantry, and the need to cooperate for the common sake. The Norfolk type crop rotation⁸, present in countries like England and the Netherlands (Rössener, 2003), supposed some higher levels of cooperation amongst villagers. Common decisions and organized collective action, at least within neighborhoods, were more often present in the Western Europe than in the East, as well as in the North as compared with the Mediterranean societies. All these past realities may still reflect today in shaping a decreasing propensity towards cooperation from North to South and from West to East.

Trusting people is highly related with culture. Some scholars (Inglehart, 1997; Giddens, 1990) discuss it as part of the tendency towards the postmodern way of thinking. Higher levels are to be expected in the North and in the West. More frequent interaction with different people, and higher tolerance are present here. They are reinforced and reinforce social trust. The Netherlands, for instance, are expected to show higher trust in people. At the opposite, authoritarian regimes tend to destroy the social trust. When participating in public life is rather forced and ritualistic as in communism (Raiser et al., 2002), and every one can be an informer (B.Voicu, 2004: 202-203), trusting others is likely to be low, people preferring to be very careful, cautious when dealing with others. As Bădescu (2003) shows, inter-human trust is also related with the degree in which the economic system is closer to the free market model⁹.

Trust in institutions is shaped by the familiarity with the institutional system (see Sztompka, 1999), by their past and present performance, by the support for the respective social system, by socialization etc. (see Mishler & Rose, 2001, 1997). From this respect, I expect to find a lower trust in institutions in the ex-communist Europe, and an even lower one in the Balkans. Western countries with high growth rates during the last decades, such as Ireland, should display higher levels of institutional trust.

Involvement in mass protest action is part of a democratic culture of civic engagement, of collective action (Weltzel et al, 2004). This is specific rather to older than to newer democracies.

⁷ In the beginning of the second millennium, in some of the Eastern societies the agricultural/ownership pattern was functionally similar to the Western model. The ‘communal village’ implied common ownership and exploitation of the land by the villagers, while taxes were paid to the state and/or to the local nobles. By the 15th-16th century, this “communal-trade political economy” (Chirot, 2002) was replaced by the omnipresent boyard, owning large plots of land on which the peasants were forced to work.

⁸ The Norfolk system represented by the 16th-17th century the prototype of the modern agriculture, having as a crucial feature the crop rotation.

⁹ This relation partially proves the embedness of the social capital model within the Western pattern of democratic organization, briefly mentioned in the beginning of the current paper.

Summarizing, there are three influences that may change the Western pattern. The first one comes from the years of totalitarian rule experimented by some countries during their relatively recent past. The second comes from the Southern heritage, more opened to spending time with friends. The third is to be found in the Nordic societies, more post-material, in Inglehart's terms, and, therefore, displaying higher levels of trust (and collective action). Some atypical societies are to be found: Greece is Southern, and experienced de facto years of authoritarian rule (as Portugal and Spain also did). However, its belonging to the Western political bloc came with the influence of the Western cultural pattern, especially in developing the framework for an increased membership in associations. Albania's isolation during the second half of the 20th century was doubled by a severe totalitarian rule, which tempered the Southern influences. Ex-Yugoslavian more liberal communism, and Southern heritage were partially counter-balanced by the 90s war. Ireland with its high growth rates during the last decades should display higher levels of trust in institutions etc.

Measurement and data

Data. I am using the joint European Values Survey / World Value Survey 1999-2001 data base¹⁰. The surveys are very similar. EVS was carried out within most of the European countries in 1999-2000. WVS completed with data for several other world countries, as well as in some European countries which did not applied the EVS (Albania, Serbia, Montenegro, Moldova etc.). 81 societies were investigated, offering good indicators for the social capital. However, in some isolated cases, data collection seems to affect the quality of the information, limiting the analysis¹¹.

Meeting friends. The basic EVS/WVS item tapping for socializing is a four point scale, asking how often one Spend time with friends: 'every week', 'once or twice a month', 'a few times a year', 'not at all'. Several strategies may be employed for computing aggregate indexes at country level: counting the proportion of those answering 'every week', computing a dominant opinion index (a Hofstätter index), treating the variable as interval level measured and computing a mean (Anheier et al, 2004) etc. The resulting indexes present very strong correlations. I am using in the analysis the percent of people that declares that they spend time with friends weekly.

Importance of friends. Despite the fact that there is no direct measure of contrasting friends and family importance, EVS/WVS provides measures (four point scales) of how important are considered to be friends, respectively family. Since the interested is related with those individuals for which the friends are at least as important as family, the strategy for computing the aggregate index is to count the number of individuals who declare higher or equal importance for friends when compared with the similar answer for the family.

Membership in associations. EVS/WVS asked people if they belong to select the type

¹⁰ I have access to the data sets as a member of the EVS/WVS Romanian Team.

¹¹ This is the case of Albania (58% of the sample declared to be Catholic, in a country where the majority is Muslim), Georgia (a similar inconsistency), or Moldova (significantly more Romanians than expected and fewer Ukrainians – the weighting design did satisfactory solved the respective discrepancies).

of associations to which they belong from a list of 14 types: religious, political parties, labor unions, women, peace, environmental, third world-development/human rights, professional, charity, youth, sports, cultural. The EVS questionnaire included a category of voluntary association labeled “other”, but this is not asked in the WVS. One may compute either the average number of type of association in which one participate, or the percent of people belonging to at least one type of voluntary association (M.Voicu & B.Voicu, 2003; Weltzer et al, 2004; Schofer & Fourcade-Gourinchas, 2001; B.Voicu, 1999 etc.). The indexes are highly correlated, and practically they produce the same results. I preferred the average number of types of membership. A second option to be made is to include all types of associations or to distinguish among them. Some papers prefer distinguishing¹², some others – following Putnam – treat all types as being similar (Raiser et al, 2001; van Schaik, 2001). I stick to the same option that I have made in previous work (M. & B. Voicu, 2003, 2004; B. & M. Voicu, 2003), distinctly treating membership and voluntary work for political parties and labor unions, as well as for religious associations. At least in some countries, all of these types include some mandatory membership, which decrease their potential as indicators for social capital.

Trusting people. The EVS/WVS questionnaire includes a dichotomous item for trusting people: ‘most people can be trusted’ versus ‘you can't be too careful in dealing with people’. I use as aggregate index the percent of those who chose to trust most people.

Trust in institutions. EVS/WVS surveys include several items measuring trust in different institutions on a four points scale. Press, army, church, Parliament, labor unions, UN, civil services, and police are the institutions for which one can get measures for all the European countries included in the survey. As I previously mentioned, trust in Parliament is more exposed to trust cycles due to the distance to the elections. Trust in army and in church, as traditional institutions, may have different behavior than trust in other institutions. I have excluded these three institutions and I have run a factor analysis for the rest, computing the average for each country¹³. I have computed different other similar indicators, for the European countries, through including different other institutions in the analysis, or excluding some from the ones for which the dataset provided information for every European country. The correlations among those indexes were very high, proving the stability of the index for trust in institutions.

Involvement in mass protest actions. Involvement in five types of mass protest actions is measured through the EVS/WVS questionnaire: signing petitions, joining boycott, attending lawful demonstrations, joining unofficial strikes, occupying buildings or factories. Three answers were possible for each of them: ‘have done’, ‘might do’, and ‘would never do’.

¹² Schofer & Fourcade-Gourinchas (2001), using EVS-WVS 1990-1993 data, distinct two important groups: “old social movements” (trade unions, political parties, professional associations), and “new social movements” (women organizations, environmental associations, third world development associations, peace organizations etc.). Weltzel et al (2004), working on EVS-WVS 1999-2000 data, distinguish four categories: charity and environmental associations; educational and professional; labor unions and political parties; church and religious associations.

¹³ The factor was extracted through Principal Axis Factoring method and explains 31,8% of the total variance. The analysis is fairly adequate to the data (KMO = 0,772, the smaller communality is 0,199). I have run similar analyses for each country in the sample, and the results also confirmed the adequacy of using factor analysis.

Different aggregating strategies may be employed, conducting to different but highly inter-correlated measures: to count the percent of those who joined at least one type of mass protest actions; to count the percent of the ones who joined or might join these actions; to treat the five variables as continuous and to aggregate them through factor analysis in a latent orientation towards mass protest action, then computing the country average as expression of capacity to mobilize etc. On the other hand, among these five type of collective protest behaviours, unofficial strikes and occupying buildings are differ from the others, since they are more radical and attract much less people in all investigated societies (see Weltzel et al, 2004). Considering all these, my option is to use – as social capital indicator at aggregate level – the percent of people who participated in at least one protest action (from signing petitions, joining boycotts, or attending demonstrations).

Some limits of the analysis are related to treating the countries as homogeneous units. As several authors have shown (see Putnam, 1993; Beugelsdijk & van Schaik, 2003; Sandu, 2003; etc.), focusing either on a specific nation, or doing comparative analysis at NUTS2 level, European societies are not very compact units. Southern Italy differs from the North, London region from the rest of the UK, Transylvania from Moldavia (in Romania) etc. However, the countries are homogenous enough when comparing with other countries to be considered as the cases in the analysis that I run.

Basic findings

The table included in the appendix describes the scores of each European country for the selected social capital indicators. This section aims only to underline the main observations that can be drawn when firstly looking to this data.

Meeting friends. The percent of people declaring that they weekly meet their friends is varying across Europe from about a third (31% in Albania, 35% in Moldova, 36% in Romania) up to over 70% in Bosnia (71%), Ireland (72%), Great Britain (74%) and Greece (73%). Two patterns are to be noticed: ex-communist citizens spend less time with their friends, as compared with the rest of Europe. On the other hand, Northern countries (more secular), and Southern (Mediterranean) ones tend to have a higher propensity towards socializing with friends.

Importance of friends as compared with family. In 19 European societies family is more important than friends. This is the case of about two thirds of the Romanians, Polish, Maltese and Albanian. In other 26 societies, friends are at least as important as family is. Turkey and Sweden are the societies were friends are considered at least as important as family by three quarters of the population. There are no visible patterns: Europe seems to be a random mixture from this point of view. However, Catholic countries tend to put more importance on family than on friends. Western countries pay more importance on friends, as well as the Nordic people.

On average, 57% of Western Europeans consider family as important as the friends

are, but the score for Turkey (76%) significantly exceed all other regions¹⁴. The average for the ex-communist countries is 45%, with a significantly higher score for the Balkans and the ex-soviet space as compared with the societies which are included or currently candidate for EU accession. Religious denomination seems to play an important role here. Significantly more Muslims other religious or non-religious people put on friends at least as much as value as they put on family (71%). Protestants are somewhere in the middle (60%), but they put significantly more value than Catholics and Jews (50, respectively, 48%). Orthodox' score (47%) is even significantly lower than Catholics' one. Atheists and those that declare a free church (no denomination) are close to Protestants.

Membership in associations and volunteering provides the strongest East-West cleavage. Ex-totalitarian states (both ex-communists, but also Portugal and Spain) score lower than most of Western European countries. The average number of types of association, to which someone belongs mean of (0,78) is significantly higher in the Western societies than in any other region. The North-South tendency of decreasing membership in associations can also be noticed¹⁵.

At their turn, the new EU members formerly belonging to the communist block score significantly higher than the three candidate countries and Malta, as well as when compared with Turkey and the majority of the ex-soviet republics.

Volunteering follows similar patterns as membership in associations did (see Table 2). Netherlands and the Nordic countries display the highest levels of joining voluntary associations (more than 60% of the population), while Turkey (3%), Lithuania, Romania, Belarus and Russia (8% each) are placed at the bottom of such an hierarchy. Western Europeans are volunteering more than the ex-communist citizens, the new EU members higher than the Balkans and the EU candidates, which at their turn score higher on volunteering than the NIS.

¹⁴ All significant relations mentioned in the current section consider $p=0,05$ as threshold. The associations are studied either using contingency analysis or One-Way ANOVA, depending on the types of the involved variables.

¹⁵ Greece is an important outlier on this axe, since it displays relatively high scores of membership in associations. I do not have a very consistent explanation for Greece behavior. One can imagine that the higher volunteering and membership in associations in Greece are somehow related to the influence of belonging to the Western bloc during the cold war. Social defining the involvement in associations as "the correct way of doing" may fasten the process of converting the frequent meetings with friends in a rich associative life. However, Spain and Portugal act different. External validation of the measure seems to prove that the membership indicator is a valid one: Generally speaking, the Balkan countries display relatively high levels of volunteering and membership. Second, Greece is not an outlier when comparing membership in associations or volunteering (the measures highly correlate) with economic development or with value orientations such as postmodernism (see Inglehart, 2003; B. & M.Voicu, 2003). However, in Greece volunteers are less likely to display democratic values as compared with non-volunteers, while in the rest of the European societies (except for the neighboring Bulgaria) they seems to be significantly more democrat or at least the as democrat as the non-volunteers (Halman, 2003: 190). On the other hand, as Morales and Ulzurrun (2002) noticed, the measurement of membership in associations is subject to high errors, and depends a lot on the wording of the questions. For Greece, a brief inspection of Morales and Ulzurrun data shows that the EVS/WVS series and the Eurobarometers provide similar results. This is not the case of the 1999 wave of the European Community Household Panel which indicated the Greeks as the EU15 citizens with the lower propensity to membership in association (Christoforou, 2003). Lyberaki and Paraskevopoulos (2002), also note that Greece displays lower membership in associations than many Western European countries, but they also notice that Spain and Portugal have even lower associationism. They also suggest that one should carefully interpret the Greek data, because of the need to separate between traditional passive membership and the active one.

Table 2. The incidence of performing voluntary work for different types of organizations in Europe

<i>Do you work unpaid for...</i>	Western Europe	ex-communist				Turkey & Malta
		now in EU	EU candidates	Balkan	NIS	
Volunteer in at least one type of organization	29%	23%	17%	20%	11%	16%
Volunteer in at least one type of organization except for political parties and trade unions	27%	20%	12%	17%	7%	13%
Volunteer in at least one type of organization except for political parties, trade unions and religious associations	24%	17%	10%	15%	5%	9%

Note: the figures are computed using the EVS/WVS 1999-2000 database, weighted according to the individual countries populations. EU candidates include Romania, Bulgaria, and Croatia. The figures for the Balkans (Serbia, Montenegro, Macedonia, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina) do not include Albania, due to the unexpected high volunteering incidence reported by the dataset for the respective country.

* The EVS questionnaire included a category of voluntary association labeled “other”. Since the WVS questionnaire (applied in countries like Moldova, Albania, Serbia, Macedonia etc.) did not included this category, we were forced to exclude it from the analysis.

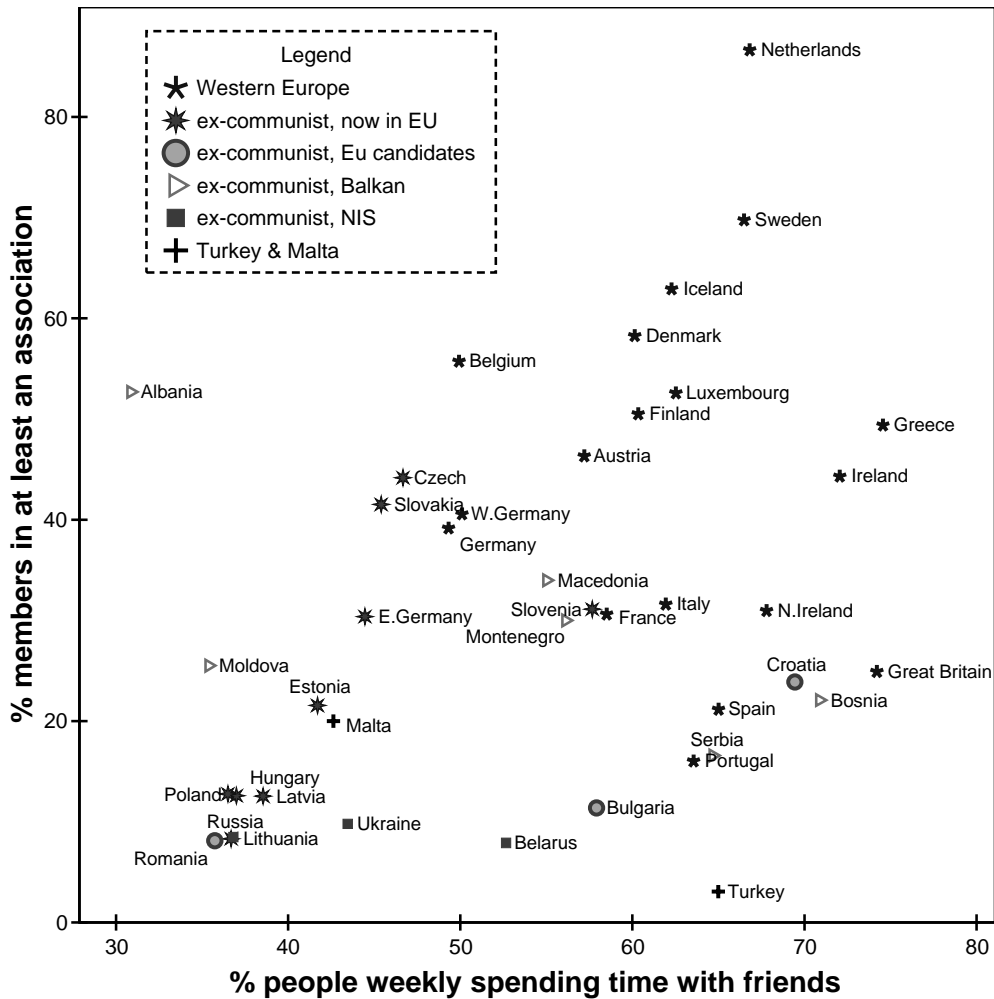
Paxton (2002) notes the circular dependency between social capital and democracy, also reflected in membership in associations: ‘more associations would be expected to exist when governments allow them to exist’ (p.259). Using comparative empirical evidences, Paxton proves in the quoted paper the validity of the respective relation. This may explain the West-East differences, but also those between the Balkans and the rest of the ex-communist countries. The geographically western part of the communist bloc (E.Germany, Czechoslovakia, Hungary etc.), and the societies which were included in the former Yugoslavia, have experienced a more ‘liberal’ communist regime. This is reflected in the today higher propensity to membership in associations and volunteering.

Membership in associations describes the formal side of the relational social capital. Spending time with friends taps for informal bridging relational capital. Albania is the unexpected outlier with much higher levels of membership in association than expected. On the other side, Turkey also has an atypical behavior, with much more propensity to meet friends than expected when considering its level of associationism. However, this is probably part of Turkey’s Southern cultural patter. Spain, Portugal, Greece, Italy, and even the rest of the Balkans also display quite high levels of informal relational capital. Great Britain, another atypical society, with – apparently – lower formal relational capital than expected, display the peculiarity that there are more people which volunteer within voluntary associations that people declaring that they do belong to such organizations¹⁶.

One can easily note the fact that most of the Western countries are clustered in the top-right side of the figure. Spain and Portugal, with their totalitarian period during the second half of the 20th century, score lower on participation in formal voluntary associations. The most western former-communist societies (Czech Republic, Slovakia, Slovenia, Croatia and Eastern Germany) are placed close to the imaginary border that might divide West and East.

¹⁶ Bartkowski and Jasińska-Kania (2004), using the same data set, also note this unique pattern in Europe.

Figure 1. Formal and informal stocks of relational social capital in Europe



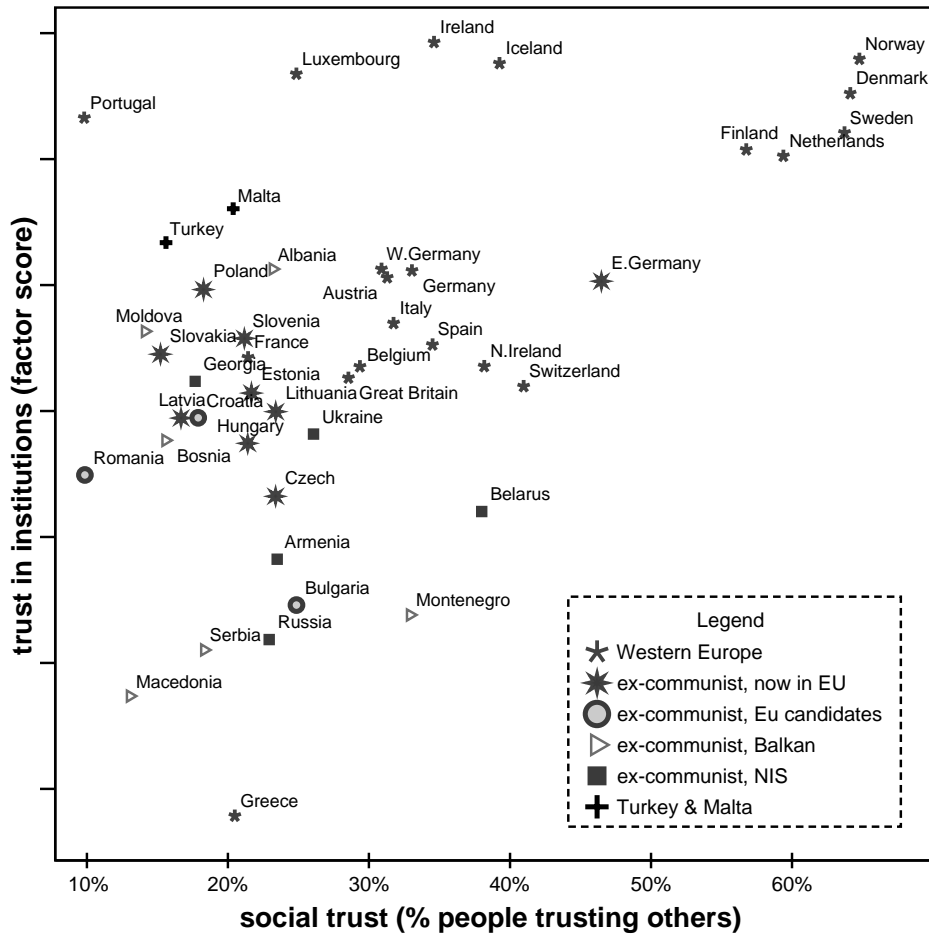
Source: own computations based on EVS/WVS 1999-2000 data set.

Trusting people records the lowest scores in Portugal, Romania and Macedonia, where less than 15% generally trust the others. At the opposite, in the Nordic countries and the Netherlands, the majority of the people trust the others. Generally, mistrust is significantly higher in the former communist block, and lower in the new EU countries as compared with the candidates, but otherwise there is no clear rule to divide the continent.

Trust in institutions follows a similar pattern. Nordic countries and the Netherlands display higher levels of trust. Portugal and Ireland, with growing life standards during the last decades, score high too. At the opposite corner are the former communist societies, with the note that those accepted within EU have higher levels of trust in institutions than the others. Greece also shows a very low level of trust in institutions.

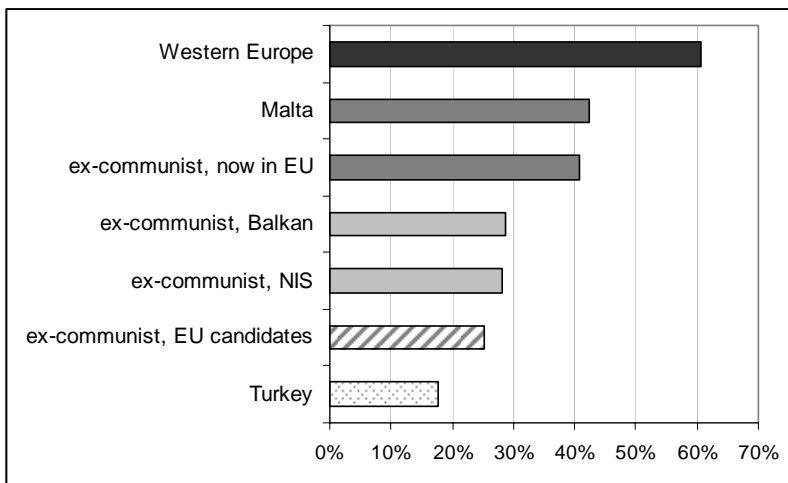
Considering both indicators of trust (social trust and trust in institutions), as in Figure 2, one may note that Western democracies tend to cluster together in the upper-right part of the graph. Portugal, place in the upper-left corner (lower social trust), is the one who is different. The ex-communist countries recently integrated in the EU, are close to the imaginary border that separate the West and the East. However, some other countries tend to interfere (Croatia and Georgia, for instance), making the group less compact. Greece is a complete outlier.

Figure 2. Patterns of trust across Europe



Participation in mass protest actions is also lower in the East and higher in the Nordic countries. Most Western societies, except for Spain and Portugal, with their past totalitarian experience, have a greater capacity to mobilize in mass protest actions than any ex-communist society excluding Eastern Germany, Slovakia and Czech Republic.

Figure 3. Participation in mass protest actions in different European regions

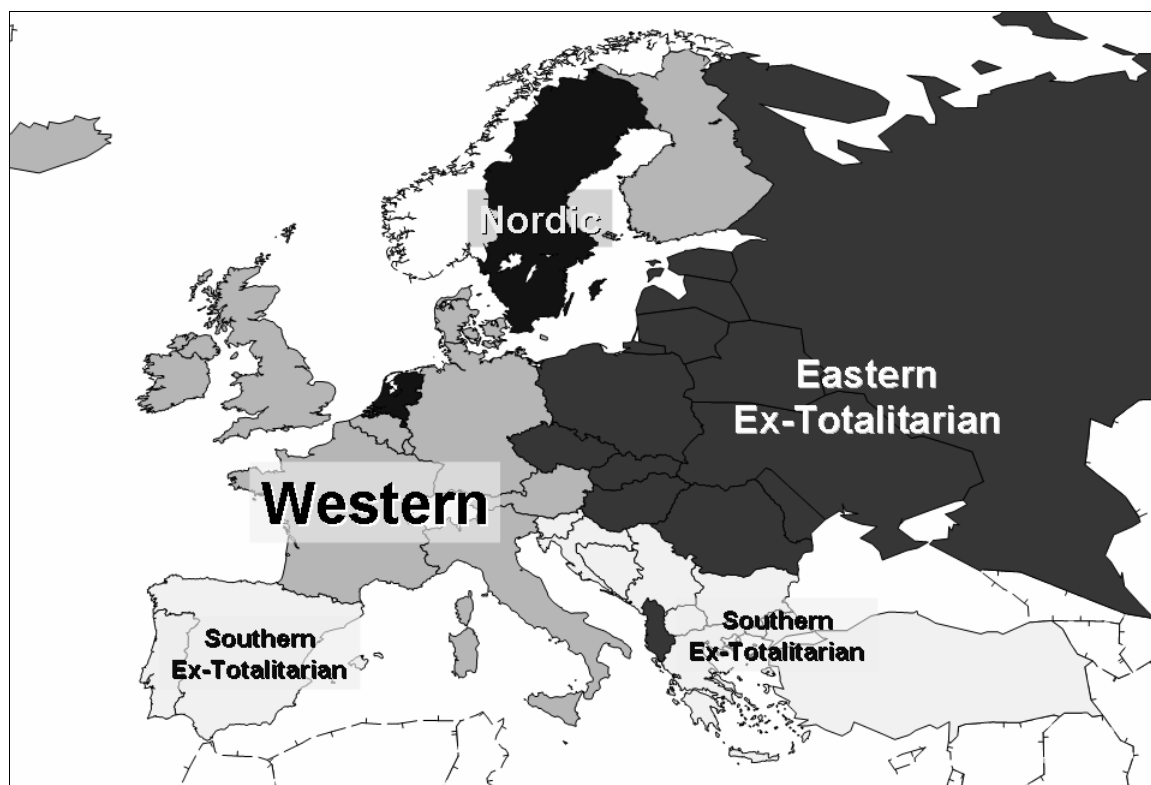


Note: the figures stand for the percent of people declaring that they have attended at least once one of the following protest actions: petition signing, boycott, lawful demonstrations. All differences are significant at $p < 0,05$, except for those regions marked with the same color. Data source: EVS/WVS 1999-2002 data set.

Clusters within Europe

In order to check for the existing patterns of social capital across European societies, I have employed cluster analysis. The first conclusion was that a solution with four clusters is the most appropriate to the data¹⁷, as I have expected. The main influences that add to the Western pattern are visible when plotting the results: the Nordic influence, the authoritarian experience in some southern societies, the communist regime (see Figure 4).

Figure 4. Patterns of social capital across Europe: the four cluster solution



Note. The white spots indicate the lack of data for the respective country. Data source: EVS/WVS 1999-2001 data set.

The main cluster includes all the western countries but Sweden and the Netherlands, which forms a separate group, labeled as 'Nordic'. Finland, Denmark and Iceland are close to the Nordic pattern¹⁸, but no so different from the Western one (see the Appendix). The countries that experienced in the recent past some authoritarian regimes form two different groups. They share similar positions, with lower scores than the Western and Nordic societies with regard to membership in associations, trusting people, trust in institutions and involvement in mass protest actions. The Southern group of countries which experienced some authoritarian rule (Greece, Spain, Portugal, ex-Yugoslavia) differentiate through their

¹⁷ I have used graphical recognition of the number of clusters (through plotting the agglomeration schedule coefficients), as well as the analysis of the adjusted Rand index. The last one takes the higher value (0,59) for the four cluster solution. The total variation explained through categorizing the countries into the four groups is $ETA_{2K} = 60\%$. In all cluster analyses reported in this paper, I use Standard Euclidian Distance for measuring the distance between cases, and the Ward method for measuring the distances between clusters. When computing the Rand Indexes, I employ BAVERAGE as alternate method for measuring the distances between clusters.

¹⁸ For Norway I have lacked full data, but the existing indicators suggest that the country is close to the Nordic pattern.

higher propensity to meet friends¹⁹.

Table 3 indicates the averages for the four groups of countries for the six dimensions of social capital considered.

Table 3. The four patterns of bridging social capital across Europe

	Eastern Ex-Totalitarian	Southern Ex-Totalitarian	Western	Nordic
<i>% spending time with friends weekly</i>	40%	64%	60%	67%
<i>friends - at least as important as family</i>	40%	55%	58%	71%
<i># memberships in assn.</i>	0,3	0,4	0,7	1,8
<i>social trust</i>	21%	20%	37%	62%
<i>trust in institutions</i>	-0,10	-0,21	0,24	0,37
<i>involvement in protest actions</i>	31%	32%	62%	77%

Note: Bold figures indicate the higher scores for the respective dimension (row). Grey background reflects the minimums.

Apparently, using only the statistical indicators, a better solution would be selecting 8 clusters²⁰. The groups are similar, but Finland, Denmark, Iceland and Ireland separate from the Western group, forming a new cluster between the rest of the Western societies and the Sweden-Netherlands cluster. In the South, Greece on one hand, and the orthodox ex-communist southern societies (Bulgaria, Serbia, Macedonia, Montenegro) on the other, form separate clusters. In the East, the Czechs and the Slovaks join in a group which stays in between the western and the Eastern model. All these changes make logical sense and base on the particularities discussed when separately analyzing each dimension. However, there are several reasons that make me considering the four clusters solution as being more appropriate for the analysis. First, the eight cluster solution may be the outcome of certain ‘mechanical clustering’: there are few cases – only 40 societies with full data, and this may impede on the reliability of separating them into very small groups²¹. At theoretical level, the four cluster solution gets almost the same support as the eight-cluster one. Finally, the four-cluster categorization is more parsimonious, offering a clearer tool for analyzing the European space from the point of view of social capital distribution.

Considering the above results, Europe is not very homogenous when considering all the six dimensions of bridging social capital. The four basic patterns are highly consistent and simplify the interpretation of the data. They also suggest that, from the point of view of social capital distributions, four different types of societies should be considered as existing in Europe. They reflect historical evolutions and social development levels, and suggest that the European puzzle may have some four different cores.

¹⁹ Bulgaria also belongs to this group: it shares a common past history within the Otoman Empire with most of the societies in the respective cluster, is Southern, communism was leader-centered, as in Yugoslavia, but softer than it was for instance in Romania, the Northern neighbor, etc.

²⁰ $ETA_{2K} = 76\%$ explained variation. Adjusted Rand Index = 0,80. See the map which plots the 8-cluster solution on the Sibiu conference website.

²¹ The eight-cluster solution also gets less support when analyzing the agglomeration schedule.

How different is Europe?

A further question is if using the same data, one can discuss not only the differences across the European area, but also, its relative individualization as compared with the rest of the world. I have used cluster analysis for the respective purpose, too. The EVS/WVS 1999-2002 covered 81 societies from all over the world. About half of them belong to the European space, but all the continents are represented in the survey. Most of the questions were the same, with few exceptions, notably the membership in associations for which the data is missing in several of the Asian and African societies included in the sample.

A first analysis considered all six dimensions and led to an 8-cluster solution²². The results show that Europe is not very different, especially when compared with its former colonies, but on average, it imposes its four patterns to the rest of the world. The Western European pattern is quite unique, only Japan clustering in the respective group. The Nordic one includes now, along Sweden and the Netherlands, the Northern America (USA and Canada) and its center tend to be closer to the Western model (Finland becomes this time part of the Nordic group). Some countries in Latin America share one of the Ex-Totalitarian patterns, either the Eastern, either the Southern one. Generally, the countries in Asia and Africa follow different models than European societies.

In order to consider more cases, I have run the same procedure, but excluding the membership in association as dimension of social capital. Despite the higher diversity given by the increasing number of cases (75 societies, as compared with 61 in the previous analyses), the results are not very different. The optimal solution includes this time 10 clusters²³. Only six of them contain European countries. They are originated in the 4-cluster solution for the European space, with some differences that can also be found in the 8-cluster solution for Europe. Notably, the Western cluster includes ONLY European societies, while the Nordic one includes all Nordic countries but Iceland (which keep belonging to the Western European pattern). UK and Ireland form their own cluster, with US and Canada. The Southern and the eastern clusters include the same European countries, and some Latin American societies, Morocco and Algeria. Only Turkey and Bosnia tend to place outside Europe and cluster with some African societies.

Apparently, the findings support the heterogeneity assumption. However, I would say that Europe is heterogeneous, but somehow homogenous: *the diversity is there, but some large compact groups of countries are homogenous enough to ensure some general homogeneity*. The four parts core of the Europe mentioned in the end of the previous sections, looks more like a unique core – the (basic) Western European one – where three types of influences meet: the ex-authoritarian, the Nordic, and the Mediterranean ones.

One may argue that the measuring model employed in this paper is not valid and reliable for assessing other societies than the Western ones. For the CEE space, the validity of the model is externally proved through the consistency of the patterns depicted in the previous sections. The analysis refers other (i.e. non-European) societies only for contrasting them to

²² Adjusted Rand Index = 0,62; Explained variation: $ETA_{2k}=70\%$.

²³ Adjusted Rand Index = 0,87; Explained variation: $ETA_{2k}=76\%$.

the European models, to show that Europe tend to structure its own patterns. If the measurement is inadequate for these societies this would simply mean that those societies are indeed different, which confirms anyway my point of Europe as a different entity.

Conclusion. Implications for the European integration

Europe means obviously diversity. From the relatively “civic engaged” North, to the rather parochial, traditionalist East, one can identify a variety of situations. However the 42 European societies considered in this paper can be clustered in four consistent, reliable groups. More important, among the ‘original’ EU15 members, some Southern countries (Spain, Portugal, Greece) cluster together with two new EU members (Slovenia, Malta), some candidate countries (Croatia, Bulgaria, Turkey), and the rest of the ex-Yugoslavian space. This creates a premise for considering the current EU integration not very much different than the previous enlargements.

On the other hand, the rest of the former communist nations cluster together. Former USSR, most of the new EU25 members, Romania and Albania share a common pattern, which is opposed – especially in which regards civic engagement – to the Nordic and the Western models. The two different cultural backgrounds²⁴, reflected in the mixes of bridging social capital, may raise the question of the feasibility of integrating and making work a union of such diverse societies. A first answer may come from the tautology that Europe constitute a diversity per se, and it is not the same under almost any aspects, from the legislation to levels of social development or social values. Second, from the point of view of social capital patterns, I have shown that, when considering the whole World, European societies tend to cluster together. More specifically, neither China, India, most of the African or Arabic societies look different than Europe and its former American colonies. This largely confirms the differences between the Old Continent and other cultures, and suggests that, when comparing with the world heterogeneity, Europe is not that un-homogeneous.

Through this rather speculative argumentation I am trying to point out that:

- (1) Even if from the point of view of the bridging social capital patterns, EU integration and EU construction are not very facile processes,
- (2) The current evolutions do not differ very much from the previous enlargements,
- (3) And, as a general conclusion, *bridging social capital is simultaneously bridging and bonding European societies.*

²⁴ Sztompka (1999b) discusses about a certain ‘bloc culture’, common to the citizens of the former communist bloc. The syntagm refers not the identification with communism, or with the respective military and political alliance, but to the sharing of common cultural patterns, in terms of social values and norms, that may differentiate the Eastern citizens from the Western ones, and that were developed during the communist experience.

APPENDIX: Levels of the social capital indicators in Europe (EVS/WVS 1999-2002)

	Bridging connections		Participation			Trust	
	friendship	importance of friends	voluntary associations		mass protest actions	trusting people	trust in institutions
			At least one membership	# of memberships			
Albania	31%	34%	53%	1,11	27%	23%	0,03
Armenia	.	51%	.	.	36%	24%	-0,44
Austria	57%	49%	46%	0,79	58%	31%	0,01
Belarus	53%	40%	8%	0,09	22%	38%	-0,36
Belgium	50%	55%	56%	1,13	71%	29%	-0,13
Bosnia-Herzegovina	71%	71%	22%	0,29	24%	16%	-0,25
Bulgaria	58%	48%	11%	0,18	17%	25%	-0,51
Croatia	69%	54%	24%	0,34	35%	18%	-0,21
Czech Republic	47%	36%	44%	0,69	61%	23%	-0,34
Denmark	60%	63%	58%	0,98	65%	64%	0,30
Estonia	42%	44%	22%	0,30	25%	22%	-0,17
Finland	60%	63%	51%	0,86	50%	57%	0,21
France	59%	56%	31%	0,42	72%	21%	-0,12
Georgia	.	76%	.	.	25%	18%	-0,15
Germany	49%	61%	39%	0,56	53%	33%	0,02
W.Germany	50%	61%	41%	0,58	51%	31%	0,03
E.Germany	44%	57%	30%	0,39	67%	46%	0,01
Great Britain	74%	65%	25%	0,36	79%	29%	-0,15
Greece	75%	51%	49%	0,91	65%	20%	-0,84
Hungary	37%	40%	13%	0,18	15%	21%	-0,25
Iceland	62%	51%	63%	1,15	58%	39%	0,35
Ireland	72%	67%	44%	0,73	61%	35%	0,39
Italy	62%	41%	32%	0,52	61%	32%	-0,06
Latvia	39%	39%	13%	0,16	34%	17%	-0,21
Lithuania	37%	42%	8%	0,11	27%	23%	-0,20
Luxembourg	63%	54%	53%	1,08	56%	25%	0,34
Macedonia	55%	51%	34%	0,71	32%	13%	-0,65
Malta	43%	35%	20%	0,27	42%	20%	0,12
Moldova	35%	44%	26%	0,49	24%	14%	-0,07
Montenegro	56%	49%	30%	0,45	29%	33%	-0,52
Netherlands	67%	68%	87%	2,24	65%	59%	0,20
Northern Ireland	68%	71%	31%	0,50	60%	38%	-0,13
Norway*	.	66%	65%	1,21	69%	65%	0,36
Poland	36%	33%	13%	0,19	26%	18%	-0,01
Portugal	64%	42%	16%	0,20	27%	10%	0,27
Romania	36%	34%	8%	0,12	18%	10%	-0,30
Russia	37%	42%	8%	0,10	28%	23%	-0,56
Serbia	65%	62%	17%	0,21	35%	18%	-0,58
Slovakia	45%	42%	42%	0,57	59%	15%	-0,11
Slovenia	58%	54%	31%	0,52	34%	21%	-0,08
Spain	65%	52%	21%	0,32	35%	35%	-0,09
Sweden	66%	75%	70%	1,43	89%	64%	0,24
Switzerland	.	68%	.	.	64%	41%	-0,16
Turkey	65%	76%	3%	0,05	16%	16%	0,07
Ukraine	43%	49%	10%	0,14	24%	26%	-0,24

Notes: friendship = % of people spending time with their friends weekly or more often; importance of friends = % of people that give to the friends at least the same importance as to the family; at least one membership in associations = % of people involved in at least one voluntary associations; # of memberships = average number of types of voluntary associations in which one is member (see text for details); mass protest action = % of people declaring that they have participated in at least one petition signing, lawful demonstration or boycott action; trusting people = % of people declaring that 'most people can be trusted'; trust in institutions = factor score (see text) – higher values denote higher levels of trust. Empty cells indicate lack of data for the respective dimension in the corresponding country. For Norway, the WVS 1990 data was employed.

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