Minutes of the Academic Workshop CONNEX RG5 WP-2
16-18 June, Bled, Slovenia

1. Programme of the Academic Workshop:

Friday, 16 June
Arrival of participants
18:00 Opening of the Academic Workshop and informal meeting of participants
19:00 Dinner

Saturday, 17 June
10.00 – 13.00
Round table on the contents of the edited volume Social Capital and Governance: Dr. Jan Fidrmuc (Senior Lecturer at Brunel University, London, UK), Dr. Frane Adam (Professor from the University of Ljubljana, Slovenia), Dr. Thomas Luckmann (Professor Emeritus from the University of Konstanz, Germany), Dr. Olga Mashkina (Research Fellow at the Helsinki School of Economics, Finland)

13.30 Lunch
16.00 - 19.00
Dr. Thomas Luckmann: Moral Communication in Contemporary Society: Intermediary Institutions and Social Capital
Dr. Frane Adam: Social Capital in Europe: Findings and Methodological Shortcomings of Cross-national Studies.
Dr. Olga Mashkina: Business Norms and Networks in Finnish-Russian Business Operations
19.30 Dinner

Sunday, 18 June
10.00 – 12.00
Presentations of PhD theses:
Blaž Lenarčič (University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Social Sciences, Slovenia): The Meaning of Social Capital in the Information Society
Mateja Rek (University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Social Sciences, Slovenia): The Role of Social Capital in the Formation of European Civil Society.

Presentation of research:
Tatiana Basina (Kharkiv National University, Sociology Faculty, Ukraine): Social Capital and Civic Participation in Ukraine and Romania.

Discussion: How to improve the quality of the planned volume on Social Capital and Governance.

Closing words and information about future activities.
12.00 Lunch
2. List of participants:

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3. Aim of the workshop

Organised by Prof. Dr. Frane Adam, the purpose of this academic workshop was:

- to prepare papers for the publication *Social Capital and Governance: Old and New Members in Comparison* which will be published by the international publisher LIT-Verlag
- to discuss the open questions and dilemmas related to these papers (peer-reviewing) by Dr. Thomas Luckmann and newly invited colleagues/economists (Dr. Fidrmuc, Dr. Maskina)
- to concentrate on methodological issues connected with the quality of data from cross-national surveys
- to discuss the work in progress on PhD theses presented by two students included in the RG-5 (WP-2) activities.
4. Minutes of the round table on the contents of the edited volume

- Igor Bahovec, Vinko Potočnik and Siniša Zrinščak: Religion and social capital: diversity of European regions.
In the paper the authors argue that religious beliefs and religious participation may encourage the creation of social capital and reinforce bonds within society. To measure religious diversity in Europe and its impact on civic participation they used an empirical analysis (EVS and ESS). The discussion focused on the appropriate data employed in examinations of this research topic (the discrepancy among different levels – local, regional, national - of study).

- Peggy Schyns and Margreet Nuus: Political cynicism and social cohesion in Europe and the United States.
The topic of the paper is the relationship between political cynicism and social cohesion at the individual level in five European countries and the United States. Because three different surveys (DPES, NES national surveys and the ESS international survey) are used in the paper, the focus in the discussion concerned their comparability.

- Gojko Bežovan: Path dependency of civil society and social capital – the case of Croatia
The role of NGOs in Croatian history described in the paper is interesting according to the peer reviewers. The paper stresses that in Croatia trust decreased after democratisation (EVS), therefore the central topic of the discussion was the question: why did the level of trust in Eastern European countries fall after the collapse of communism? The main conclusion of the discussion was that the process of Europeanisation is likely to help to close the gap seen in social capital between Eastern and Western European countries because of its effects on economic and institutional convergence.

- Anna Gąsior-Niemiec and Piotr Gliński: Polish traditions of self-organisation, social capital and the challenge of Europeanisation
Similarly to the previous presenter, the author of this paper stressed that after democratisation in Poland the level of social capital declined. However, the author argued that social capital in Poland is not necessarily lower but is taking on different forms. In that respect, the discussion evolved around a series of methodological issues related to measuring social capital. It was argued that the authors should not only use indicators such as civic engagement, political participation and the number or density of NGOs but also focus on other aspects of informal participation that contribute to the creation of social capital. In this sense, it would be advisable to look for additional indicators of social capital and to use other methods of data collection.

- Mateja Rek: Organised civil society in the multilevel system of European governance
The paper explores specific features of organised civil society on the EU level that seem to determine its possibilities (or impossibilities) to function as a bridge between different levels of EU governance. It was pointed out that a number of conceptual and empirical difficulties arise when trying to describe this multi-faced and multi-layered phenomenon, which becomes even more difficult in the absence of data about these transnational networks (the problem of methodological nationalism and the question of how to measure transnational networks/flows). The discussion dealt with the question of whether the EU can effectively deal with only transnational and national interest groups since it is probably too detached to deal with local concerns.
- Petros Gougoulakis and Nevenka Bogataj: *Understanding study circles in Sweden and Slovenia as the basis of examining their roles regarding social capital*

According to the peer reviewers, the paper provides a good comparison of study circle activities in Slovenia and Sweden from a socio-cultural perspective with regard to their significance for the creation and maintenance of social capital in the respective countries. In this context, the discussion that followed focused on the motives that lead individuals to join the study circles as well on the distinction between individually-based learning and socially-embedded learning.


The authors deal with the problem of the quality of governance in the European Union and its relationship with the state of social capital as well as general socio-economic performance. According to the peer reviewers, the paper has a clear structure and good background due to the indicators used to measure the level of social capital (generalised trust, civic involvement and the global civil society index – measuring the inclusion of a particular ‘national’ civic sphere within global civil society).

- Matej Makarovič, Angelca Ivančič and Darka Podmenik: *Social and political participation: is there European convergence?*

The paper addresses the question of the convergence between European democracies, particularly between the old and new ones concerning the patterns of social and political participation in the context of social capital. According to the peer reviewers, the empirical part is well done, the cluster analysis of the data employed gives in some regards an unexpected perspective on the distribution of social and political participation in European countries.

5. Presentations and discussions

Some key aspects of the presentations:

'Moral communication in contemporary society: intermediary institutions and social capital’ (*Prof. Dr. Thomas Luckmann*)

Prof. Luckmann presented his empirical research in which moral communication was observed. The main findings of the research were the following: (1) moral communication remains an important factor in modern society; (2) moral communication is present in different intermediary institutions (besides the family also in local branches of larger civil society groups, for example Greenpeace). The link between moral communication and social capital was found in moral obligations.

'Social capital in Europe: findings and methodological shortcomings of cross-national studies.’ (*Prof. Dr. Frane Adam*)

On the basis of a (not always reliable) comparison of longitudinal data from EVS (1999)/ESS (2002) and WVS (1981, 19990) measuring generalised trust, membership in voluntary organisations and unpaid work in voluntary organisations, it can be argued that the whole picture is not clear – some oscillations and findings are difficult to explain. Therefore, we must be cautious when making strong theoretical claims. However, in the sense of a cross-national comparison four groups of countries can be theoretically distinguished: (1) high social capital: Nordic countries plus the Netherlands; (2) medium (high) social capital: Anglo-Saxon countries, Continental (Western) countries; (3) medium (low): some new members of the EU from ECE, big Mediterranean countries (including France); and (4) low (underdeveloped) social capital: some new members
from ECE, Eastern and South-Eastern Europe plus two members of the EU, Portugal and Greece.

Considering the methodological deficits and future research the following reflections and strategies were presented: (1) using more (available) data sets (not only operating with the WVS/EVS data set) as a control group; (2) the inclusion of qualitative as well as other “insiders” (from national or local levels) findings and views; (3) taking into account the meaning and significance of the wording of questions and selected indicators in particular national and cultural contexts.

‘Business norms and networks in Finnish-Russian business operations’ (Dr. Olga Mashkina)

The Russian market is very specific (risk, deficient infrastructure etc.), yet also very attractive (size). To reduce risks, many Western firms have entered Russian markets through strategic alliances with local partners. These are seen to be better able to operate in the business environment that is unfamiliar to the Western companies. Problems with such alliances are largely due to differences in business norms, institutional and cultural differences, partner expectations and consequent economic behaviour.

Results of the 2001-2004 study on Finnish-Russian partnerships showed that the Russian public sector is very unsettled (the legislation is hard to cope with, personal relations are critical, corruption is high etc.). According to fact that Finland had a long history of bilateral trade with the Soviet Union, (using the Q methodology) three typologies of Russian and Finnish partners were defined: (1) the Western thinker who is Western-oriented, reflects the opinions of businessmen, where corruption is not a problem and decisions are taken based on market indicators; (2) traditional Russian, which reflects the Russian company reality in which corruption and ‘blat’ are present and personal relations are relied on a lot, and where Russian business is seen as something very unique and not easy to understand for foreigners; and (3) partnership mix, which is the mix of Russian and Finnish respondents whose views are shared.

The main conclusion of the presented survey is that both Finnish and Russian managers agree that Russian business practices are rapidly ‘Westernizing’ in all respects.

6. Presentations of PhD theses:

‘The meaning of social capital in the information society’ (Blaž Lenarčič)

The following research questions were presented: (1) everyday social life is strongly affected by the use of new information-communication technologies (ICT). In what way does ICT influence social capital; (2) if among virtual community members elements of social capital (trust, reciprocity and values) exist, can we therefore talk about social capital in cyber space; and (3) is the social capital produced in the virtual community (given the specific characteristics of cyber space) different to the social capital produced in the community in physical space?

The discussion that followed mainly focused on the research methodology. It was suggested that a combination of qualitative (observation without participation) and quantitative approaches (data from different empirical surveys) should be used.
‘The role of social capital in the formation of European civil society’ (Mateja Rek)

In the presented PhD thesis answers to two research questions are sought: (1) does the amount and quality of social capital influence the possibility of engagement in the transnational networks of civil society organised at the EU level; and (2) can civil society actors from new member states, under certain conditions, equally participate in the framework of civil society organised at the level of the EU? The main focus of the discussion was the relevance of the empirical data and on the research methodology (focus group).

7. Presentation of research:

‘Social capital and civic participation in Ukraine and Romania’ (Tetiana Basina)

The presentation’s aim was to substantially describe social capital levels and civic participation in Ukraine and Romania. The research was based on empirical data from EVS and national researches (Kharkiv State Economic University). The methodology used consists of a qualitative description of social capital elements, based on the existing literature and personal observations/research of the author.

8. Discussion on how to improve the quality of the planned volume on Social Capital and Governance

All authors considered the comments that they received from the peer reviewing exercise and the round table as very useful. It was also said that this was a very good idea. All authors will receive the comments presented via e-mail and should use them according to their own judgement. All papers should be supplemented and sent to Igor Bahovec within two weeks and will then be submitted to Lit Verlag.

Prepared by: Blaž Lenarčič
Ljubljana, 20 June 2006