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# The Origins of Political Support for Democratic Governance in Post-communist Romania

## Testing the Social Capital Hypothesis

DRAGOȘ DRAGOMAN

The transition to democracy in Central and Eastern Europe was marked by incertitude. After 1989, when euphoria already disappeared and the economic and social constraints begun to channel the specific evolutions of the countries in the region, it was clear that only the starting point was guaranteed, not the path or the ending point<sup>1</sup>. The economic gap is easier to explain by the economic centralization and by the varying performances<sup>2</sup>, and also by the strategies of state capital conversion and the foreign capital flows<sup>3</sup>. The "new managerialism" and its economic interests shaped the openness of the economy and the transition to a capitalist economy<sup>4</sup>.

What makes the greatest difference is the openness of the political system toward a full competition, the proper functioning of state institutions and the respect of citizens' fundamental rights and liberties. The states in the region gained differentiated access to several international and regional organizations as the Council of Europe, NATO and the European Union, but they differ a lot also in what regards the democratization process, whatever would be the democratization measure we choose<sup>5</sup>. The gap between post-communist countries widened so much that it was common to differentiate between groups of countries and "waves" of accession to the European Union<sup>6</sup>. Since the economy is not sufficient to explain these gaps, a better explanation would be the cultural factors.

The cultural factor explanation generally focuses on values and habits of cooperation that bind people together. In the same time, cooperation under the large umbrella of voluntary associations is considered to be essential in providing participants with basic democracy tools. The small-scale cooperation would finally spill-over and forge large-scale cooperation, helping people combine political resources

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<sup>1</sup> D. STARK, L. BRUSZT, *Postsocialist Pathways. Transforming Politics and Property in East Central Europe*, Cambridge University Press, New York, 1998.

<sup>2</sup> D. STARK, "Path Dependence and Privatization Strategies in East Central Europe", *East European Politics and Societies*, vol. 6, no. 1, 1991, pp. 17-51.

<sup>3</sup> D. STARK, B. VEDRES, "Social Times of Network Spaces. Sequence Analysis of Network Formations and Foreign Investment in Hungary, 1987-2001", paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Sociological Association, San Francisco, 2004.

<sup>4</sup> G. EYAL, I. SZELÉNYI, E. TOWNSLEY, *Making Capitalism without Capitalists: The New Ruling Elites in Eastern Europe*, Verso, London, 2001.

<sup>5</sup> S. BERGLUND, K. DUVOLD, "The Difficult Art of Measuring Support for Regimes. An Inventory and Evaluation of Democracy Criteria", paper presented at the European Consortium for Political Research Joint Sessions of Workshops, Granada, 2005.

<sup>6</sup> R. ROSE, "A Diverging Europe", *Journal of Democracy*, vol. 12, no. 1, 2001, pp. 93-106.

in order to influence policy-making. The theory of voluntary associations as schools of democracy has been seriously challenged, by numerous measures and competing theories. We do this in transition settings, which are much different from those of consolidated democracies, and compare the importance of competing factors for the support for democracy. We first assess the importance of the support for democracy in transition settings and deal with the problem of accurately measure this support. We then take into account various factors and compare their influence on the support for democracy. We finally conclude by discussing the limited power for explanation that social capital holds in transition settings in Romania.

This article investigates what explains the support for democracy? and argues that what differentiates countries in the region could be institutions or democratic knowledge, beliefs, values and attitudes. In the process of transition, institutions are much easier to reshape than anything else. Dahrendorf considered that an institutional reform would be possible in one-year time, and under favorable conditions even in six months. Transforming economy would take longer, maybe six years<sup>1</sup>. The greatest effort to make and the longest process in time would be the change in political culture, from a dependent to a fully civic one. In fact, citizens' commitment towards democracy is essential, and it should overpass a limited and instrumental commitment. The beliefs of political activists in the authority, legitimacy, efficiency and the prestige of democracy, emphasizes Dahl, are important conditions<sup>2</sup>. From this point of view, citizens' characteristics are much more important than economic transformations and the institutional design. We therefore intend to measure the importance of several factors for democracy, and we emphasize cultural factors, grouped under the large label of social capital. Is social capital essential for the democratic foundations in Romania? Social capital is, certainly, credited with capacity of promoting a competent, participatory, civic citizen<sup>3</sup>. Should it be also responsible for the support for democracy? Does it explain more than other factors do, i.e. human capital, economic resources and civic attitudes, factors grouped by Rose and Weller<sup>4</sup> in the so called "classical paradigm"?

In order to measure the importance of different factors for democracy, we use the data of a survey conducted in Romania in November 2005 at the Open Society Foundation's request. We use these data in order to make Romania a fully comparable case, since this survey is part of World Values Survey (the wave 2005-2006), a larger inquiry conducted in no less than 50 countries. This way, we overcome serious concerns regarding the comparison between inquiries that use different questionnaires. At the same time, this survey is part of a larger project financed by the Open Society Foundation, namely the Public Opinion Barometer (POB), which makes comparison of data possible across time inside Romania. POB is a semesterly survey that covers a wide range of political and social issues in Romania. By using standard questionnaires,

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<sup>1</sup> R. DAHRENDORF, *Reflections on the Revolution in Europe*, Random House, New York, 1990.

<sup>2</sup> R.A. DAHL, *Poliarchy. Participation and Opposition*, Yale University Press, New Haven, 1971.

<sup>3</sup> R.D. PUTNAM, *Making Democracy Work. Civic Traditions in Modern Italy*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1993.

<sup>4</sup> R. ROSE, C. WELLER, "What Does Social Capital Add to Democratic Values?" , in G. BĂDESCU, E.M. USLANER (eds.), *Social Capital and the Transition to Democracy*, Routledge, New York, 2003, pp. 200-218.

POB is a very suitable way of making sound comparisons with other surveys inside and outside Romania. The sample used is made up of 1776 respondents aged 18 years or older, and it is representative for the Romanian adult population, with a calculated error (by the author) of  $\pm 2,3\%$ .

Support for democracy is measured by using a realistic definition of the regime, rather than an idealistic one. In the dispute between the two definitions of democracy, Mishler and Rose stress the superiority of the competitive definition<sup>1</sup>. It is worth to remember Dahl's remark about the attachment to political regimes that are imperfect, but perfectible and deeply tolerant and human. The liberties promoted by democratic regimes often lose the charm, they lose their revolutionary charm. These liberties are more often taken for granted. But people, who lost them or never had such liberties, are much more thankful for. Romanian people did not enjoy for a long period of time the benefits of these liberties. Thus they have the historical experience enabling them to make a realistic evaluation of political regimes. We will therefore use in our analysis a democratic indicator that measures how strongly people reject some plausible undemocratic alternatives, and which expresses the attachment for democracy as a competitive regime.

**Table 1**  
*Attitudes Regarding the Undemocratic Alternatives (%)*

How good would it be for Romania...	Very good	Good	Bad	Very bad	DK/ NA
To have a strong leader, who does not bother with Parliament and elections	28.9	36.8	12.9	5.4	16.0
That experts reach a decision, instead of government, as they consider to be the best decision for the country	22.6	37.6	14.9	3.8	21.1
To be ruled by a military regime	5.2	11.5	35.2	30.2	17.7

The democratic indicator we use is built up by adding the disagreement with the alternatives above. The three items make up a consistent scale, as measured by the reliability analysis (Crombach's Alpha = 0,8106). Looking to the share of citizens accepting a strong leader, we may easily believe in a tendency in favor of authoritarianism. Yet we have to look to the three items together. There are only 16,9% of the respondents who do not reject any undemocratic alternative, whereas 48,2% reject a single alternative, 25,4% reject two alternatives and 9,4% reject all of them.

The social capital is the second variable considered. In the last decade, cultural factors have been considered as important factors for democracy. In this respect, social trust, reciprocity and altruism are ingredients of cooperation. And cooperation facilitates the development and growth of the political resources of individuals and groups, enabling them to influence the political system<sup>2</sup>. They could have important direct effects, by influencing the members of the groups, but also indirect effects,

<sup>1</sup> W. MISHLER, R. ROSE, "Political Support for Incomplete Democracies: Realist vs. Idealist Theories and Measures", *International Political Science Review*, vol. 22, no. 4, 2001, pp. 303-320.

<sup>2</sup> G.A. ALMOND, S. VERBA, *The Civic Culture*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1963.

by influencing the political system. Through the process of cooperation, instead of isolated, distrustful and powerless individuals, one can find in society various organized civic groups that carry out specific actions of political communication (lobby, advocacy) and manage to control politicians in office. Such organized groups in civil society could force politicians to be more responsible, responsive and efficient by promising political support or by threatening with its withdrawal. Citizens' response to responsible and responsive behavior of politicians is an even growing demand for political solutions. In the same time, this new demand is accompanied by citizens' enforced satisfaction, trust and partisanship moderation. This favorable relationship between inputs and outputs within the political system, between critical citizens and effective policy-makers has been described as the virtuous circle of modern democracy. The opposite is easy to imagine, i.e. alienated citizens and irresponsible, corrupted and indolent political elites.

But which are those social institutions responsible for such favorable effects? The widespread answer is voluntary organizations. No matter their explicit or implicit political nature, they seem to yield desirable internal effects, i.e. participants get more oriented towards political system, more interested, competent and political efficacious<sup>1</sup>. The most important result is that citizens rely more on political cooperation under stressful circumstances. Cooperation is also favored by other effect that participation might have, as attitudes of trust and tolerance. The contact between individuals with different social background, people who differ in various ways (ethnicity, religion, language) fosters tolerance and lessens social conflicts. Some enthusiastic scholars even believe that such cooperation is in favor on many other phenomena, as education performance and even the reduction of antisocial actions and crimes<sup>2</sup>. Other scholars consider that self-rated health (or even health, for example) may be significantly related to social capital<sup>3</sup>.

Everybody did not accept the supposed relationship between participation in voluntary associations and democratic performance. For many scholars, this is not at all obvious, that participation produces the highly valued public and private goods. The relationship itself is contestable. According to Putnam<sup>4</sup>, voluntary associations do the job of "bonding" and "bridging" individuals and groups, and help them to overpass deep cleavages in society. The condition which Putnam considers essential is that these associations are completely apolitical. But this consideration raises a series of questions. If they are apolitical, how could these organizations favor political participation and civic engagement without engaging in specific political debates and without representing social interests? We must remember that civil society may be seen as a decisive counterweight to the state and a fearless opponent of the totalitarian state. If this is the case, than we have a paradox of the civil society, as emphasized by Edwards and Foley<sup>5</sup>. If civil society is strong enough to destroy authoritarian political order, which are the guarantees that democratic state will not be undermined? And

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<sup>1</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>2</sup> R.D. PUTNAM, "Social Capital: Measurement and Consequences", *Isuma. Canadian Journal of Policy Research*, vol. 2, no. 1, 2001, pp. 47-59.

<sup>3</sup> G. VEENSTRA, "Social Capital and Health", *Isuma. Canadian Journal of Policy Research*, vol. 2, no. 1, 2001, pp. 72-81.

<sup>4</sup> R.D. PUTNAM, "Social Capital...cit."

<sup>5</sup> B. EDWARDS, M.W. FOLEY, "The Paradox of Civil Society", *Journal of Democracy*, vol. 7, no. 3, 1996, pp. 38-52.

why civil society should only be composed by peaceful groups and not by violent ones, as Mafia or Ku-Kluk-Klan? Without legitimate state coercion and rule, wouldn't we experience an outburst of violent conflict between social groups? The same civil society that fights against a totalitarian state may be a threat for a democratic system, since it can push the government to adopt particular interests, standpoints and aspirations over the public goods. This kind of interests could obstruct society and government to respond to disadvantaged demands, making thus possible that these social blocks confront violently for the control of the state<sup>1</sup>. One should not disregard Olson's argument, that a dense network of associations could sometimes become a burden for the fair functioning of states and markets<sup>2</sup>.

There are many other doubts about the importance of voluntary activity, namely about the effects on other significant variables for the democratic process. Participation in voluntary organizations is commonly seen as related to the interpersonal trust, while the latter is important for cooperation. Even if there are confirmations regarding the relationship between voluntary participation and trust<sup>3</sup>, many scholars continue to be skeptical. The correlation between the two variables one can find in various surveys may be the consequence of a selective recruitment of the participants in secondary organizations. Their members are exactly those who trust other people, whereas people who display less trust are not to be found between the members of such organizations<sup>4</sup>. Even when one can find a positive correlation between variables, the relationship is statistically weak. Newton discovered that it is rather inconsistent at aggregate level. Even in theory, emphasizes Newton, there are few arguments in favor of this relationship: the time one spends in the organization is incomparably shorter than that spent in other socializing environments, as family, school, workplace or neighborhood. Secondly, there are other factors that already proved important for trust and civic engagement, e.g. the education<sup>5</sup>. Therefore, the political support for democracy might not come from participation in voluntary organizations, and the political and economic performance of government might be more important than usually expected<sup>6</sup>.

It is already a known fact that the level of social capital in Central and Eastern Europe is lower than in Western societies<sup>7</sup>. But *different* scholars explain *differently* the gap between societies. There is no doubt that Central and Eastern European countries differ from the Western countries in respect to their recent past. Whether one does

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<sup>1</sup> R. SCIARRONE, "Réseaux mafieux et capital social", *Politix*, vol. 13, no. 49, 2000, pp. 35-56.

<sup>2</sup> M. OLSON, *The Rise and Decline of Nations. Economic Growth, Stagflation and Social Rigidities*, Yale University Press, New Haven, 1982.

<sup>3</sup> D. WOLLEBAEK, P. SELLE, "Does Participation in Voluntary Associations Contribute to Social Capital? The Impact of Intensity, Scope, and Type", *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, vol. 31, no. 1, 2002, pp. 32-61.

<sup>4</sup> K. NEWTON, "Social Capital and Democracy in Modern Europe", in J. van DETH (ed.), *Social Capital and European Democracy*, Routledge, London, 1999, pp. 3-24.

<sup>5</sup> G.A. ALMOND, S. VERBA, *The Civic Culture*, cit.

<sup>6</sup> K. NEWTON, "Political Support. Social Capital, Civil Society, and Political and Economic Performance", Center for the Study of Democracy, University of California, Irvine, paper 06'07, <http://repositories.cdlib.org/csd/06-07>, 2006.

<sup>7</sup> G. BĂDESCU, E. M. USLANER (eds.), *Social Capital and the Transition to Democracy*, Routledge, New York, 2003, pp. 120-139.

not consider trust as a psychological trait which may influence many aspects of late behavior<sup>1</sup>, than socializing conditions could be responsible for the cooperation and the commitment style of citizens. From this perspective, the actual social connections come from the general constraints of the communist system, based on tight ideological control and mobilization, deletion and repression. Distrust, social atomization, and loose cooperation could all originate in the kind of connections people had in communist times<sup>2</sup>.

Other factors explaining low levels of social capital in the region could be social and economic problems that citizens face. Struggling in transition, people hardly find time to spend in company of friends, and have no time at all to spend for non-profit activities. Low levels of participation in secondary organizations could thus be explained by the lack of resources, and also by the disappointing experiences people had with communist forced mobilization, the persistence of informal cooperation networks and, finally, by the frustration caused by the performance of the new democratic and economic systems<sup>3</sup>.

The consent and support of citizens are important conditions for the future consolidation of democracy. And this is not only about an idealistic attachment to democracy. We don't use an idealistic definition of democracy as the best form of government. It was already proved that the strongest attachment to democracy in idealistic terms can be found exactly where democracy performs badly, in countries one could hardly label as quasi-democracies<sup>4</sup>. The advice we take is to use a realistic definition of democracy, a competitive definition, which can compare democracy to plausible undemocratic alternatives<sup>5</sup>. This way, citizens could estimate the performance of a vivid regime, compared to past and well-known alternatives. As Sartori recalls, a terrible danger for democracy is the widespread correlation between unrealistic expectations of the citizens and the ideal traits of democracy<sup>6</sup>. The inevitable pessimism that arises from this occurrence is deeply undermining for democracy.

In the analysis, we use a definition of social capital that combines psychological traits, namely social trust, and structural features, as the density of networks of cooperation. The latter dimension is expressed by activism in different kind of voluntary associations and its indicator is built exactly by adding the participation in all sorts of associations (Cronbach's Alpha = 0,9554).

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<sup>1</sup> G.W. ALLPORT, *Pattern and Growth in Personality*, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, New York, 1961.

<sup>2</sup> B. VÖLKER, H. FLAP, "Weak Ties as a Liability. The Case of East Germany", *Rationality and Society*, vol. 13, no. 4, 2001, pp. 397-428.

<sup>3</sup> M.M. HOWARD, "Why Post-Communist Citizens Do Not Join Voluntary Organizations", in G. BĂDESCU, E.M. USLANER (eds.), *Social Capital and the Transition...cit.*, pp. 165-183.

<sup>4</sup> H.-D. KLINGEMANN, "Mapping Political Support in the 1990s: A Global Analysis", in P. NORRIS (ed.), *Critical Citizens: Global Support for Democratic Governance*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1999, pp. 78-99.

<sup>5</sup> R. ROSE, W. MISHLER, C. HAERPFER, *Democracy and Its Alternatives. Understanding Post-Communist Societies*, The Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, 1998.

<sup>6</sup> G. SARTORI, *The Theory of Democracy Revisited*, Chatham House, Chatham, 1987.

**Table 2**  
*Participation in Voluntary Organizations (%)*

Type of organization	Member				(if the case) do voluntary (unpaid) activities		
	Active	Inactive	Don't belong to	NA	Yes	No	NA
Religious or church organization	5.3	4.4	90.1	0.2	42.2	42.2	15.6
Sports and recreation	1.0	1.0	97.9	0.2	14.3	45.7	40.0
Education, arts, music	1.1	0.7	98.0	0.2	21.9	46.9	31.3
Labor unions	3.8	2.8	93.2	0.2	18.5	81.5	----
Political parties	2.5	1.3	96.0	0.2	44.4	55.6	----
Ecological	0.2	0.5	99.2	0.2	25.0	25.0	50.0
Professional associations	1.2	0.5	98.1	0.2	26.7	23.3	50.0
Charitable organization	0.8	0.4	98.6	0.2	59.1	9.1	31.8
Consumer organizations	0.1	0.4	99.3	0.2	11.1	22.2	66.7
Other type	0.5	0.2	99.2	0.2	54.5	27.3	18.2

As we have stressed already, everybody does not agree with the definition of social capital. Following Coleman, the psychological traits are not part of it<sup>1</sup>. However, civic attitudes, as social trust, become more and more part of social capital's definition. In our survey, only 19,3% of the respondents believe that one can trust other people, whereas 75,6% believe that one can't be too careful in dealing with people. There are differences between Romania and other countries in the region, on one hand, and Western democracies, on the other hand. They could be real, yet they could come from the meaning of "people". Bădescu underlines that a better operationalization would be ethnic trust<sup>2</sup>. The difference is obvious when we ask about different kind of people, which may support Bădescu's findings.

**Table 3**  
*Trust in Different Kinds of People (%)*

How much do you trust the following kind of people	Very much	Much	Not too much	Not at all	NA	DK
Family	75.8	20.3	2.2	0.6	0.3	0.8
Relatives	26.4	52.0	17.5	3.3	0.3	0.6
Neighbors	8.3	40.6	38.9	10.8	0.8	0.7
People you know personally	5.7	48.5	34.1	7.7	2.7	1.2
People you meet for the first time	1.2	10.9	45.8	36.1	4.8	1.1
With other religion	2.1	25.0	40.7	20.8	9.9	1.6
With other nationality	2.2	23.2	40.8	20.7	11.4	1.8

<sup>1</sup> J.S. COLEMAN, "Social Capital in the Creation of Human Capital", *American Journal of Sociology*, vol. 94, 1988, pp. 95-119.

<sup>2</sup> G. BĂDESCU, "Social Trust and Democratization...cit".



In the measuring of social capital we also include the norms of reciprocity (trustworthiness), though measuring such norms could prove much more difficult. These norms are related to individual selfish or altruist behaviors. The latter takes into account the consequences one's actions could have on others, while the former does not. The items in table 4 express the agreement with the free-riding. The indicator built up by using these items is considered by van Schaik to be a *proxy* for the norms of reciprocity<sup>1</sup>. In fact, van Schaik closely follows Stolle and Rochon<sup>2</sup>, as well as Knack and Keefer<sup>3</sup> in the operationalization.

According to Stolle and Rochon<sup>4</sup>, social capital expresses the willingness to participate to common duties. In an environment dominated by high levels on social capital, people expect less that others to free-ride and, therefore, they are themselves less motivated to free-ride. The authors expect members of associations to develop an ethnic condemning the free-riding when dealing with public goods and governmental policies. According to social capital theory, voluntary associations help participants to enlarge their interests and the definition of the self, turning "I" into "us" even when associations follow specific and private oriented interests. As van Schaik stresses, the cooperation that arises is therefore a proof that people put common interest in place instead of their selfish interests<sup>5</sup>. Knack and Keefer also consider that norms of reciprocity are defined by attitudes of cooperation with strangers in prisoner dilemma settings<sup>6</sup>. Civic cooperation is generated by the people's willingness to cooperate when confronted to an issue related to collective action. That is why van Schaik<sup>7</sup> uses the rejection of free-riding as a *proxy* for reciprocity norms, which are measured by the agreement with a series of sentences regarding different kinds of behavior, ranging on a scale from 1 to 10, where 1 means that such a behavior could never be justified, and 10 means that it is always justified. The mean on the scale and the standard deviation are show below. Thus, we build an indicator of egoism by adding the following items (Crombach's Alpha = 0,8057).

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<sup>1</sup> T. van SCHAİK, "Social Capital in the European Values Study Surveys", paper presented at the OECD-ONS International Conference on Social Capital Measurement, London, UK, 2002.

<sup>2</sup> D. STOLLE, T.S. ROCHON, "Are All Associations Alike?: Member Diversity, Associational Type, and the Creation of Social Capital", *American Behavioral Scientist*, vol. 42, no. 1, 1998, pp. 47-65; D. STOLLE, T.S. ROCHON, "The Myth of American Exceptionalism: A Three-nation Comparison of Associational Membership and Social Capital", in J. van DETH, M. MARAFFI, K. NEWTON and P. WHITELY (eds.), *Social Capital and European Democracy*, Routledge, New York, 1999, pp. 192-209.

<sup>3</sup> S. KNACK, P. KEEFER "Does Social Capital Have an Economic Pay-off? A Cross-country Investigation", *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, vol. 112, no. 4, 1997, pp. 1251-1288.

<sup>4</sup> D. STOLLE, T.S. ROCHON, "Are All Associations Alike?...cit."

<sup>5</sup> T. van SCHAİK, "Social Capital in the European Values...cit."

<sup>6</sup> S. KNACK, P. KEEFER " Does Social Capital Have an Economic Pay-off?...cit", p. 1258.

<sup>7</sup> T. van SCHAİK, "Social Capital in the European Values...cit."

**Table 4**  
*Agreement with Free-riding Behavior*

Please tell me for each of the following statements whether you think it can always be justified, never be justified, or something in between, using this 1 to 10 scale	Mean	Standard deviation
Claiming state benefits which you are not entitled to	2.04	2.05
Travel by bus/train without paying a ticket (free-riding)	2.01	1.94
Cheating on tax if you have the chance	2.34	2.48
Someone accepting a bribe in the course of their duties	1.45	1.33

Except these features of social capital, we will take into account a so called "diffused social capital", defined by relationships which help individuals to integrate into the community, such as church attendance and the rural residence, but also confidence in state institutions. We follow in the analysis the extended model of social capital used by Rose and Weller in their study of the social capital in Russia<sup>1</sup>. The authors include in the definition of social capital some dimensions that are closer to the definition of James Coleman<sup>2</sup>, namely instrumental social networks that vary in different contexts. Thus the authors measure social capital by the instrumental benefits of joining social networks, i.e. the support people benefit of in stress settings, when they need someone outside their family to help them when getting ill or when they need consistent financial aid<sup>3</sup>. In fact, Russia is much similar to other communist countries in this respect<sup>4</sup>. In the analysis, we use an indicator of helpful social networks in order to indicate whether people have social connections they can use in hospitals, in courts of justice, in public administration, when dealing with lawyers and policemen or when they look for a workplace or a bank loan.

As stated above, accepting reciprocity norms reveals a disposition to privilege common interest, and therefore it could be seen as an altruism indicator. Another element of "diffuse social capital" is trust in executive and authority institutions, e.g. the government, police, courts of justice and the army, and trust in representative institutions, e.g. the parliament, political parties, presidency and mayoralities. In fact, the connection between social and institutional trust is constantly debated. Whereas scholars like Norris<sup>5</sup> consider the influence running from interpersonal to institutional trust, Brehm and Rahn<sup>6</sup> depict the relationship as circular, while other scholars, like Newton<sup>7</sup>, question any relationship between the two types of trust.

<sup>1</sup> R. ROSE, C. WELLER, "What Does Social Capital Add to Democratic Values?", cit.

<sup>2</sup> J.S. COLEMAN, "Social Capital in the Creation of Human Capital...cit."

<sup>3</sup> W. MISHLER, R. ROSE, "What Are the Political Consequences of Trust? A Test of Cultural and Institutional Theories in Russia", *Comparative Political Studies*, vol. 38, no. 9, 2005, pp. 1050-1078.

<sup>4</sup> B. VÖLKER, H. FLAP, "Weak Ties as a Liability...cit."

<sup>5</sup> P. NORRIS, *Critical Citizens. Global Support for Democratic Governance*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1999.

<sup>6</sup> J. BREHM, W. RAHN, "Individual-Level Evidence for the Causes and Consequences of Social Capital", *American Journal of Political Science*, vol. 41, no. 3, 1997, pp. 999-1023.

<sup>7</sup> K. NEWTON, "Trust, Social Capital, Civil Society and Democracy", *International Political Science Review*, vol. 22, no. 2, 2001, pp. 201-214.

Finally, social integration can be influenced by living in rural areas, as well as by the churchgoing. Both variables could have a different effect compared with that of living in cities, which is a place where different social interactions occur. Mishler and Rose often use these variables as *proxies* for socialization<sup>1</sup>.

Protest, as a distinct form of political participation, represented in the '60s and '70s a huge social surprise and generated a great controversy about its causes. Scholars began first to study protest in the United States, probably the most tranquil Western society after World War II, as Barnes observes<sup>2</sup>. Their interest was to determine the causes of change in public's behavior, with the rise of different kind of social movements. Whereas the United States in the '50s only faced isolated violence related to specific work conflicts, they were later on confronted with new movements, such as peace meetings and rallies against the war in Vietnam, mass demonstrations in favor of black people, women and other social minorities.

There are two perspectives on protesters. Some scholars argue that are not basically different from other political participants, but rather similar to party members and civic volunteers. Thus protest is yet another form of participation. These scholars stress that protesters are also to be found in more conventional political actions<sup>3</sup>. Other scholars think that protesters are different. They do not participate to some more traditional political actions and do not vote as frequently. Moreover, in post-communist societies, protesters prove to be more dissatisfied with the ongoing transition and consider more often that political and economic systems fail to respond to citizen's demands<sup>4</sup>. In conclusion, they are different from their colleagues who protest in the streets of Brussels, Paris, Hamburg or London.

The rise in protest in Western countries was largely related to the general change in social conditions, to the growing emphasis on post-material values and then to an attitudinal change towards politics and political institutions<sup>5</sup>. Could this be the case in Romania? According to Uslaner<sup>6</sup>, protest in Romania and other similar societies in the region may rather express people's discontent with the general social conditions. Whereas conventional participation, as voting and party membership, represents the support for the political regime, protest represents discontent and frustration. Likewise in Western societies, protesters may prove more discontent with democracy<sup>7</sup>. We measure protest by citizens' past involvement in such activities as signing a petition,

<sup>1</sup> W. MISHLER, R. ROSE, "Political Support for Incomplete Democracies...cit."

<sup>2</sup> S.H. BARNES, "Perspectives on Political Action: A Review Twenty-five Years Later", paper presented at the ECPR Joint Sessions of Workshops, Uppsala, Sweden, 2004.

<sup>3</sup> P. NORRIS, S. WALGRAVE, P. VAN AELST, "Who Demonstrates: Anti-State Rebels, or Conventional Participants? or Everyone?", *Comparative Politics*, vol. 37, no. 2, 2005, pp. 251-275.

<sup>4</sup> E.M. USLANER, "Bowling Almost Alone: Political Participation in a New Democracy", paper presented at the ECPR Joint Sessions of Workshops, Uppsala, Sweden, 2004.

<sup>5</sup> R. INGLEHART, *The Silent Revolution: Changing Values and Political Styles Among Western Publics*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1977.

<sup>6</sup> E.M. USLANER, "Bowling Almost Alone...cit."

<sup>7</sup> P. NORRIS, "Young People and Political Activism: From the Politics of Loyalties to the Politics of Choice? Report for the Council of Europe Symposium Young People and Democratic Institutions: From Disillusionment to Participation", Strasbourg, France, 2003; T. O'TOOLE, "Engaging with Young People's Conceptions of the Political", *Children's Geographies*, vol. 1, no. 1, 2003, pp. 71-90.

joining in boycotts and attending lawful demonstrations. We build a protest indicator by adding the three items (Crombach's Alpha = 0,9370).

When we measure the importance of social capital for democracy, it may prove that other factors to be much more important. We take here into account three series of factors, which are civic attitudes, economic resources and human capital. The first of these factors are civic attitudes, namely the way people refer to the democratic political system. The two items we take into account are the importance of living in a democratic society and how important are the liberties guaranteed by the new regime through the system of protection of human rights. Whether people estimate that living in a democratic regime does not make the difference and that democracy does not offer enough guarantees for individual liberty, then we expect people to support undemocratic alternatives.

The second factor we take into account are economic resources. The importance of economic performance was already stressed out following the collapse of communism in Central and Eastern Europe.<sup>1</sup> We expect that "winners", in terms of resources and opportunities, support democracy much more than "losers" in transition. Revenue, household financial satisfaction and hope in a future improvement of everyday life represent the economic resources. Democracy should demonstrate its economic effectiveness, it is often stressed, and a current lack of effectiveness must be balanced by the hope of future improvement. Communist regimes lost any popular support when they proved incapable to fulfill their economic responsibilities. Workers' strikes in 1956, 1968, 1970 and 1980 dissipate any remaining illusion. Communists' capacity of guaranteeing human rights vanished even earlier<sup>2</sup>. Though nobody knew the precise moment of the collapse, everybody expected the fall of those regimes, since they have lost their popular legitimacy. The third factor is human capital. Support for democracy may be related to individuals' characteristics, as age, sex and education, social status and the control one believes to have over its own life.

We now turn to the impact of factors described above on the support for democracy, with surprising findings regarding the significant factors for the support for democracy in Romania. Using an almost similar survey in Russia<sup>3</sup>, Rose and Weller have not found any proof that social capital was important for democracy<sup>4</sup>. We do not want to replicate their analysis, but we follow their model in grouping the variables in the analysis. We first measure the importance of civic attitudes, economic resources and human capital, grouped in a paradigm Rose and Weller define as "classical".

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<sup>1</sup> A. PRZEWORSKI, *Democracy and the Market. Political and Economic Reforms in Eastern Europe and Latin America*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1991.

<sup>2</sup> J. KORNAL, *The Economics of Shortage*, North Holland Publishing Company, Amsterdam, 1980.

<sup>3</sup> New Russia Barometer, conducted in 1998.

<sup>4</sup> R. ROSE, C. WELLER, "What Does Social Capital Add to Democratic Values?...cit.".

**Table 5**  
*Civic Attitudes, Economic Resources, Human Capital and the Support for Democracy*

	B	S.E.	Beta
Constant	0.800	0.235	
Democratic governance is important	0.02	0.014	0.054
Human rights are observed in Romania	-0.04	0.034	-0.045
Personal income	0.00008	0	0.089**
Satisfied with household income	0.01	0.015	0.045
Optimism with everyday life in one year	0.02	0.034	0.031
Gender (male)	-0.009	0.053	-0.005
Age	-0.0001	0.002	-0.004
Education	0.01	0.010	0.071*
Status	-0.01	0.019	-0.032
Control over one's life	0.006	0.013	0.018
<b>adj. R square</b>	<b>0.029</b>		

Regression analysis (OLS). \*  $p < 0,1$ ; \*\*  $p < 0,05$ .

The total variance explained by the regression model that we have used is only 2,9%. The only variables with a significant impact are the income and education, but their impact is rather modest. We therefore need to look for another explanation of the support for democracy, and this is social capital. As stated above, we include in the model a broader definition of the social capital, by adding the dimensions of "diffuse social capital" and measures of social integration. Accepting the free-riding, claiming state benefits which one is not entitled to, cheating on taxes or accepting bribe in the course of one's duties means accepting a selfish behavior. Another element is the density of profitable relationships, which enable people to handle everyday problems, like seeing a doctor, a lawyer, a public notary. The last element is the confidence people have in executive (authority) institutions (government, police, courts of justice, army) and in representative institutions (parliament, political parties, presidency and mayoralities). We differentiate social integration by using two variables, the church attendance and living in rural areas. Both variables are supposed to have different effects than living in cities, a space defined by different social interactions.

**Table 6**  
*Social Capital and the Support for Democracy*

	B	S.E.	Beta
(Constant)	1.222	0.134	
Membership in voluntary associations	0.008	0.062	0.004
Social trust	0.03	0.068	0.018
Egoism	0.004	0.004	0.036
Density of profitable relationships	0.0004	0.015	0.001
Trust in authority institutions	-0.01	0.015	-0.034
Trust in authority institutions	0.02	0.014	0.064
Church attendance	-0.00004	0.017	0
Rural residence	-0.147	0.017	-0.083**
<b>adj. R square</b>	<b>0.003</b>		

Regression analysis (OLS). \*\* $p < 0,01$ .

The regression model presented above has an unexpectedly low explanatory power for the support for democracy. The single significant effect is that of rural residence, but its impact is also modest. Living in rural areas could thus represent a different socializing context, less friendly for democracy. Considering the small fraction of variance explained by this model, it is easy to anticipate a small increase in explanatory power for the integrated regression model which takes into account all relevant variables, civic attitudes, economic resources, human capital, protest and social capital alike. The tables that follow present the integrative model of regression for the support for democracy.

**Table 7**  
*The Integrative Model Explaining the Support for Democracy*

	B	S.E.	Beta
(Constant)	0.807	0.303	
Democratic governance is important	0.03	0.016	0.072**
Human rights are observed in Romania	-0.07	0.038	-0.070*
Personal income	0.0001	0	0.104***
Satisfied with household income	0.007	0.016	0.022
Optimism with everyday life in one year	0.02	0.037	0.026
Gender (male)	-0.01	0.058	-0.006
Age	-0.0004	0.002	-0.008
Education	0.02	0.011	0.083*
Status	-0.007	0.021	-0.018
Control over one's life	0.009	0.014	0.024
Membership in voluntary associations	-0.01	0.031	-0.013
Social trust	-0.01	0.077	-0.007
Egoism	0.005	0.005	0.042
Density of profitable relationships	-0.03	0.019	-0.062*
Trust in authority institutions	-0.009	0.017	-0.024
Trust in authority institutions	0.008	0.016	0.023
Church attendance	0.001	0.019	0.002
Rural residence	0.001	0.066	-0.011
<b>adj. R square</b>	<b>0.029</b>		

Regression analysis (OLS). \* p < 0,1; \*\* p < 0,05; \*\*\* p < 0,01.

**Table 8**  
*The Models Explaining the Support for Democracy*

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
(Constant)				
Democratic governance is important	0.054			0.072**
Human rights are observed in Romania	-0.045			-0.070*
Personal income	0.089**			0.104***
Satisfied with household income	0.045			0.022
Optimism with everyday life in one year	0.031			0.026

Gender (male)	-0.005			-0.006
Age	-0.004			-0.008
Education	0.071*			0.083*
Status	-0.032			-0.018
Control over one's life	0.018			0.024
Protest		0.008		0.008
Membership in voluntary associations			0.004	-0.013
Social trust			0.018	-0.007
Egoism			0.036	0.042
Density of profitable relationships			0.001	-0.062*
Trust in authority institutions			-0.034	-0.024
Trust in authority institutions			0.064	0.023
Church attendance			0	0.002
Rural residence			-0.083**	-0.011
<b>adj. R square</b>	<b>0.029</b>	<b>-0.001</b>	<b>0.003</b>	<b>0.029</b>

Regression analysis (OLS). \*  $p < 0,1$ ; \*\*  $p < 0,05$ ; \*\*\*  $p < 0,01$ .

## Conclusions

The testing of the social capital hypothesis as an important asset for democracy leads to several conclusions. Despite the large emphasis on cultural factors made by the school of social capital, the first conclusion after analyzing the Romanian data is that social capital has virtually no importance for the support for democracy. We have already expected it when we measured solely the impact of the social capital. It therefore seems that social capital does not add anything to the "classical paradigm" explaining the support for democracy by civic attitudes, economic resources and human capital taken together. The second observation resides in the difference between our survey results and those obtained in Russia by Rose and Weller<sup>1</sup>. The "classical paradigm" accounts for 22% of the variance of the support for democracy in Russia, but less than 3% in Romania. Whereas social capital model accounts for 5,5% of the variance in Russia, it does not account for anything in our case. The only similarity resides in the rise in explanatory power of the overall model, which is only 1.2% in the Russian case. Yet the comparison of the two surveys is used only to show the importance of social capital in the two contexts. We did not intend to replicate the Russian analysis, but only to compare the effects of social capital. In both contexts, there is no proof that "hard" elements of social capital, as membership in voluntary associations and even social trust, have to seriously do with the support for democracy. Whereas "diffuse social capital" has almost no importance in the Romanian case, the elements of the diffuse social capital in the Russian survey that proved to be significant are the density of useful relationships, the church attendance and, finally, the trust in authority institutions.

Comparing the results of the two surveys helps us question the allegedly high importance of social capital factors for democracy. When compared to other factors

<sup>1</sup> *Ibidem.*

it seems that social capital does not prove at all important for the citizens' support for democratic governance in Romania. In fact, there is good news. The support for democracy is larger than previously expected and democracy does not depend on the fragile civil society in Romania. This was also the case in Spain after the breakdown of the Franco regime, where the persistently low participation in voluntary associations accompanied the consolidation of democracy<sup>1</sup>. In our case, the support depends more on civic attitudes and on the economic performance of the new regime. In this respect, because large shares of Eastern Europeans expect future economic conditions to actually improve, the support for the new regime is expected to remain stable or even to increase with time. Thinking that fears of communism will fade and economic hopes will be frustrated as times goes by, the support for democracy should remain positive for the foreseeable future<sup>2</sup>. In the light shed by these new findings, we do share authors' optimism. Romania may not have yet a strong civil society, characterized by a dense network of voluntary organizations; still it does not mean that the new democratic regime is in great peril. New threats can be found in the undemocratic behavior of power elites, who are today challenged by growing social criticism<sup>3</sup>. It is now up to them to encourage democratic consolidation by assuming fair, responsible and responsive political and electoral attitudes.

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<sup>1</sup> P. MCDONOUGH, S.H. BARNES, A. LOPEZ PINA, *The Cultural Dynamics of Democratization in Spain*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, 1998.

<sup>2</sup> W. MISHLER, R. ROSE, "Trajectories of Fear and Hope. Support for Democracy in Post-Communist Europe", *Comparative Political Studies*, vol. 28, no. 4, 1996, pp. 553-581.

<sup>3</sup> Ronald F. KING, Paul E. SUM (eds.), *Romania under Băseșcu. Aspirations, Achievements, and Frustrations during His First Presidential Term*, Lexington Books, Lanham, 2011; S. GHERGHINA, S. MIȘCOIU (eds.), *Partide și personalități populiste în România postcomunistă*, Editura Institutul European, Iași, 2010.



## TECHNICAL APPENDIX

### *Variables encoding*

#### Social capital:

V23. Generally speaking, would you say that...

1. most people can be trusted	2. you can't be too careful in dealing with people	98. DK	99. NA
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recode v23: (1=1) (2=0) (98,99 = sysmiss)

I'm now going to read out a list of voluntary organizations. For each of them, please tell me which do you belong to as an active member, an inactive member or not a member of that type of organization.

		Member			
		Active	Inactive	Not a member	NA
V24.	Religious or church organization	2	1	0	99
V25.	Sports or recreation	2	1	0	99
V26.	Education, arts, or cultural activities	2	1	0	99
V27.	Labor unions	2	1	0	99
V28.	Political parties	2	1	0	99
V29.	Environmental organization	2	1	0	99
V30.	Professional association	2	1	0	99
V31.	Charitable organization	2	1	0	99
V32.	Consumers organization	2	1	0	99
V33.	Other groups	2	1	0	99

Count (v24, v25, v26, v27, v28, v29, v30, v31, v32, v33) (values to count 1, 2)

#### Diffuse social capital:

Please rate each of the following statements on a scale from 1 to 10; 1 means that you think it can never be justified and 10 means you think it can always be justified.

		Never										Always		DK	NA
v198.	Claiming state benefits which you are not entitled to	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	98	99		
v199.	Travel by bus/train without paying a ticket (free-riding)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	98	99		
v200.	Cheating on tax if you have the chance	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	98	99		
v201.	Someone accepting a bribe in the course of their duties	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	98	99		

Recode v198 into same variable (98,99 = sysmiss)  
 Recode v199 into same variable (98,99 = sysmiss)  
 Recode v200 into same variable (98,99 = sysmiss)  
 Recode v201 into same variable (98,99 = sysmiss)  
 Compute v198+v199+v200+v201

Do you have connections / people you know and you can rely on...		Yes	No	NA
b51	...in case of illness, for medical consultation, treatment, surgery operation	1	2	9
b52	...to the law court, notary public, lawyer	1	2	9
b53	...to the mayor	1	2	9
b54	...to the police	1	2	9
b55	...for getting a loan	1	2	9
b56	...for getting a workplace	1	2	9
b57	...in business	1	2	9
b58	...outside the country	1	2	9
b59	...to the local institutions (prefecture, county council)	1	2	9

Count (b51, b52, b53, b54, b55, b56, b57, b58, b59) (value to count 1) (Crombach's Alpha = 0,8967)

How much confidence do you have in		A great deal	Quite a lot	Not very much	Not at all	DK	NA
v132.	The armed forces	4	3	2	1	98	99
v136.	The police	4	3	2	1	98	99
v137.	The law courts	4	3	2	1	98	99
v138.	Government	4	3	2	1	98	99

Recode v132 into same variable (98,99 = sysmiss)  
 Recode v136 into same variable (98,99 = sysmiss)  
 Recode v137 into same variable (98,99 = sysmiss)  
 Recode v138 into same variable (98,99 = sysmiss)  
 Compute v132+v136+v137+v138

How much confidence do you have in		A great deal	Quite a lot	Not very much	Not at all	DK	NA
v139.	The political parties	4	3	2	1	98	99
v140.	Parliament	4	3	2	1	98	99
b13.	Presidency	4	3	2	1	98	99
b14.	The local mayoralty	4	3	2	1	98	99

Recode v139 into same variable (98,99 = sysmiss)  
 Recode v140 into same variable (98,99 = sysmiss)  
 Recode b13 into same variable (98,99 = sysmiss)  
 Recode b14 into same variable (98,99 = sysmiss)  
 Compute v139+v140+b13+b14

**Protest:**

I'm now going to read out some different forma of protest action that people can take, and I'd like you to tell me, for each one, whether you have actually done any of these things, whether you might do it or would never, under any circumstances, do it.

		Have done	Might do	Would never do	DK	NA
V96	Signing a petition	1	2	3	98	99
V97	Joining in boycotts	1	2	3	98	99
V98	Attending lawful demonstrations	1	2	3	98	99

Recode v96: (1=1) (2,3=0) (98,99=sysmiss)

Recode v97: (1=1) (2,3=0) (98,99=sysmiss)

Recode v98: (1=1) (2,3=0) (98,99=sysmiss)

Compute v96+v97+v98

**Civic attitudes:**

V162. Please rate from 1 to 10 on a scale how important is for you to live in a country which is democratically ruled

1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.	10.
Not at all important								Very important	

DK = 98      NA = 99

recode v162 into same variable (98,99 = sysmiss)

v164. How strongly do you think human right are observed in Romania?

1. very strongly    2. strongly    3. not too strongly    4. Not at all  
98.DK                      99.NA

recode v164: (1=4) (2=3) (3=2) (4=1) (98,99 = sysmiss), reverse codes

**Economic resources:**

V253. We would like to know which is your household income, counting the incomes of all members? \_\_\_\_\_ lei

v68. Generally speaking, how satisfied you are with the financial situation of your household?

1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.	10.
Fully unsatisfied								Fully satisfied	

DK = 98

NA = 99

recode v68 into same variable (98,99 = sysmiss)

b10. How do you estimate your living conditions will be in one year?

1. much better    2. better    3. the same    4. worse    5. much worse    8. DK    9. NA

recode b10: (1=5) (2=4) (3=3) (4=2) (5=1) (8,9 = sysmiss), reverse codes

### Human capital:

V235. Sex:            1. Male            2. Female

recode v235: (1=1) (2=0)

V237. Age: \_\_\_\_\_ years            99.NA

recode v237 into same variable (99 = sysmiss)

V238. What is the highest educational level that you have attained?

1. No former education	8. Incomplete lycée
2. Incomplete primary school	9. Complete lycée
3. Complete primary school	10. Higher secondary technical school
4. Incomplete gymnasium	11. Some university level education, without degree
5. Complete gymnasium	12. University level education – technical, engineer education
6. Secondary apprentice school	13. University level education, with degree
7. Secondary technical school	14. M.A., Ph.D.
	99. NR

recode v238 into same variable (99 = sysmiss)

b30. People sometimes describe themselves as being rich or poor. How would you describe yourself on the following scale?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	98. DK	99. NA
poor									rich		

recode b30 into same variable (98,99 = sysmiss)

V46. Please use this scale where 1 means "none at all" and 10 means "a great deal" to indicate how much freedom of choice and control you feel you have over the way your life turns out.

1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.	10.
Not at all									A great deal
								DK=98	NR=99

**Social integration:**

V186. Apart from weddings, funerals and christenings, about how often do you attend religious services these days?

1. More than once a week	4. Only on special holy days	7. Never
2. Once a week	5. Once a year	98. DK
3. Once a month	6. Less often	99. NA

recode v186: (1=7) (2=6) (3=5) (4=4) (5=3) (6=2) (7=1) (98,99 = sysmiss)

**Locality type:**

1. Great city, over 200.000 inhabitants	4. Small town, under 30.000 inhabitants
2. Great city, 100.000-200.000 inhabitants	5. Commune
3. Town, 30.000-100.000 inhabitants	6. Village

recode "locality type" into "rural": (1,2,3,4=0) (5,6=1)