DECLINING SYSTEMIC TRUST IN THE POLITICAL ELITE IN THE EU'S NEW MEMBER STATES: THE DIVERGENCE BETWEEN EAST-CENTRAL EUROPE AND THE BALTIC STATES

Attila Ágh

ABSTRACT

In the last decade there has been a process of rolling-back Europeanization efforts in the EU's new member states (NMS), a process intensified by the global crisis. This de-Europeanization and de-democratization process in the NMS has become a significant part of a more general polycrisis in the EU. The backslide of democracy in the NMS as a topical issue has usually been analysed in terms of macro-politics, formal-legal state institutions, party systems, and macroeconomics. The most significant decline of democratization, however, is evident in the public's decreasing participation in politics and in the eroding trust. This decline in systemic trust in political elites in the NMS has been largely neglected by analysts. Therefore, this paper concentrates on this relatively overlooked dimension of declining trust and social capital in the NMS. This analysis employs the concepts of governance, trust, and social capital to balance the usual formalistic top-down approach with a bottom-up approach that better illustrates the divergence between East-Central Europe and the Baltic states' sub-regional development.
Key words: *governance, social capital, systemic trust, low-trust societies*

INTRODUCTION: DISCOVERING SOCIAL CAPITAL ANALYSIS FOR THE NMS

In the first years of the EU membership of the NMS there was a prevalent and naïve belief that the evolutionary or linear development of Europeanization and democratization in the NMS would occur after a relatively rapid catching-up process. This fallacy of the NMS catching up with the West has been maintained due to politicians and experts in the West focusing merely on the democratic façade of the NMS, without grasping the true nature of these democracies. The failure of this fallacy has finally been documented by the databases of international institutions such as the Bertelsmann Foundation (BF), the Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU), Freedom House (FH), and the World Economic Forum (WEF). The rankings published by these institutions also focused, initially, on the formal-legal side of democratization, but they have slowly begun to offer wider and deeper overviews of the de-democratization and de-Europeanization processes occurring in the NMS. By widening the scope of their research to include informal political and cultural fields, and by synthetizing these comprehensive processes into a set of indexes, these institutions have provided detailed information regarding levels of democracy in the NMS.[1]

ATTILA ÁGH, Professor Emeritus at the Institute of Political Science, Corvinus University of Budapest, attila.agh@chello.hu.

In the last decades of the twentieth century, the umbrella terms of governance and social capital, and their accompanying key concepts, received considerable attention in political science as soft terms rather than as hard, legal-political, or institutional terms. These new comprehensive concepts allow for fresh in-depth analyses of political systems, but they also lead to unchartered waters given the ambiguities in their theoretical construct, with less consent and more varieties in the political science and sociology literature. Both concepts, of governance and of social capital, have diverse origins in the social sciences, but after decades of debate about these highly complex terms, some basic tenets persist in the "handbook of political science." I rely on scholarly agreement regarding the concept of governance to investigate the characteristics of poor governance in the NMS during the four stages of policymaking and point out the increasing systemic alienation of populations from their political elites. The concept of social capital or social trust, despite ongoing debates, and the contrast between high-trust societies and those with low levels of social trust, reveal and describe a decline in trust in the NMS.[2]

The concept of social capital has developed significantly over the last decades, however, due to its various roots in social sciences, the concept has remained rather debated and divergent. Unlike in the governance case, there is still "considerable disagreement about the conceptualization and measurement of social capital . . . Managing these different approaches under the umbrella of the social capital concept is a challenge" (Stolle, 2009, p. 655, p. 670). Ken Newton also notes the "explosion of the interest" in the concept of trust, given that "trust is a central core of social capital, and the best single empirical indicator of it." He also admits that "trust is a highly contested concept . . . the theories start from different assumptions and reach different conclusions . . . Some claim that there are so many problems with the concept that we should drop the term and replace it with a better one" (Newton, 2009, pp. 342-343).[3]

It is a challenge, indeed, for political scientists to manage so many different approaches to the concept of social capital. Nevertheless, converging summaries of these twin concepts—social capital and trust—demonstrate that despite the ambiguities and scholarly turmoil surrounding the varieties of these concepts, they have been very useful for analysing political systems, in the wide field of political culture, and in public opinion surveys. Therefore, in the recently launched new wave of research following the global crisis, the positive and negative effects of

---

[1]   The decline of democracy in the NMS in the last years has been widely discussed in the recent evaluations, for instance BF (2016), EIU (2017) and FH (2017a,b). I have discussed the Western fallacy in Ágh (2016a). This paper concentrates on the governance and social capital dimension of democracy decline. Although after the publication of Putnam's books in the mid-nineties there was an "explosion" of the literature on social capital and trust in the West (Aldridge and Halpern, 2002, p. 9), this approach has remained an undercurrent in the study of new democracies compared to the discussions on the formal-institutional macro-politics. At the end of this paper I give a general outline of the NMS democratization focusing on the ECE-BS contrast.

[2]   As to the standard knowledge of the "handbook political science" on governance and social capital see e.g. Bevir (2011), Dalton and Klingemann (2009), Levi-Faur (2012) and Sakwa and Stevens (2012) handbooks, and Fischer (2012), Kaase (2009), McLaverty (2011), Rucht (2012) and Stolle. See also the books of Maloney and Rossteutscher (2007) and Van Deth et al. (2006).

[3]   Moreover, "Institutional confidence comes close to the concept of legitimation, which has a more profound importance for the system of government than trust in political leaders … institutional confidence is a measure of support for the political regime" (Newton, 2009: 344). Otherwise, high trust is associated with good governance, big national wealth and low socio-economic inequality (Newton, 2009: 355).

social capital on social and political life can be captured. Hence, the concept of social capital has become vital to describing the very nature of political systems. In fact, this comprehensive concept of social capital is now an important analytical device for illustrating the systemic structures of countries and regions. A social-capital lens reveals the close correlation between trust and managing the impact of the global crisis. The so-called high-trust societies demonstrate resilience in managing the impact of the global crisis and the so-called low-trust societies demonstrate poor crisis management. These correlations are useful in examining divergences among the NMS, especially between East-Central European and Baltic states.[4]

Governance and social capital approaches have also proven fruitful in analyses of developed states. Both concepts are needed even more in analyses of the NMS; the two concepts reveal the special situation the NMS face more than the usual formal-legal macro-political reports do. The relationship between citizens and the political elite has to be addressed from two sides, a seemingly objective or institutional side and a seemingly subjective or cultural side—summarized under the umbrella of two comprehensive concepts: interactive governance and social capital. These comprehensive concepts are very general and sit under clouds of related terms, resulting in an internal tension of diverse approaches. Still, theorizing and conceptualizing governance and social capital has become a mainstream effort among international political scientists over the last decade and has been used in analyses of Western democracies. The decline of democracy in the NMS in "the East" as a result of their failure to follow the Western model requires analysts to apply the concepts of governance and social capital to the NMS as well.[5]

In a summary of changes to the analytical framework for examining the NMS, the first point to highlight should be that nowadays this framework includes a long list of indices ranging from the hard legal fields of state institutions to the soft fields of well-being and happiness. Altogether, it is still a somewhat heterogeneous concept, although its internal logics and synergy has improved. The systems of ranking institutes and individual research efforts differ considerably, like heavy artillery versus light cavalry. The institutes' large and comprehensive datasets are team products, with common decisions, internal debates, and corporate responsibility, while individual researchers' papers and books compete by striving to contribute novelties to their particular fields.

Second, though these large institutions' data sets have discovered (for some time) a gap between the formal and actual rights of citizens in the new democracies of the NMS, the ranking institutions still face tremendous problems when it comes to discerning the undemocratic reality behind the façades of these new democracies. A social science approach

---

[4]   This divergence can also be approached from the side of social and political participation that has been termed as "opportunities" (Tables V-VI). Altogether, the composite Liberal Democracy Index also suggests the advantage of BS versus ECE.

[5]   With large overlaps the "governance cloud" contains participatory governance, government performance, political or civic engagement, citizen involvement, citizens' expression of their political preferences on one side. The "social capital cloud" embraces the institutional trust, satisfaction with democracy, trustworthiness, distrust-discontent, public attitudes, networks of civic engagements, norms of reciprocity, attitudes of trust, civil-civic behaviour on the other. Altogether, "Trust is so closely associated with its synonyms … mutuality, empathy, reciprocity, civility, respect, solidarity and fraternity" (Newton, 2009, p. 343). These terms demonstrate the comprehensive nature of governance and social capital concepts.

provides a better position for coping with this controversial situation due to disinformation and apologetic so-called fake news issued by governments of the NMS. The renewed analyses in social sciences can indicate easier the systemic de-Europeanization and de-democratization in the NMS without the overload of the systematization of all data. The ranking institutions offer a holistic picture, which they attempt to nuance year by year, given actual changes and new theoretical discoveries, but they are not very good at identifying a wealth of causal links and interdependencies. Meanwhile, the research summaries in the papers and books in the social sciences provide a much less detailed picture, but offer deeper reasoning and new insights than their institutional counterparts.

Third, and finally, although the ranking institutions have made significant efforts to follow and absorb the latest findings of social science research, these are still two big conceptual universes. The ranking institutions are better at systemizing and presenting data. They ensue their own "path dependency" year after year as it is extremely difficult to fully restructure their datasets. Social science research, on the other hand, is better suited to addressing uncertainty; it runs ahead of reconceptualization with its various roots in the social sciences and colourful debates about concepts and terms that speak to the very nature of scientific research. Therefore, this paper tries to present a synthesis between the latest datasets of the ranking institutes related to the NMS and the analyses offered by social scientists regarding the NMS.[6]

All in all, the fallacy of the NMS' rapid and easy modernization evaporated quickly and painfully during the global crisis. In the mid-2010s it is already clear that, due to a lack of resilience to crises, the catching-up process has failed in the NMS. Accordingly, due to the mismanagement of the global crisis, the credibility of political elites in the NMS suffered. Analysts have discussed the financial crisis and diminishing systemic trust in Europe's periphery by focusing on the general phenomenon of the loss of systemic trust in the EU. Analyses of trust point out not only special characteristics of particular NMS within this common conceptual frame, but also consider regional divergences between East-Central Europe and the Baltic states, divergences that have become more marked in the last decade. The Baltic states in general, despite their individual specificities, have exhibited much more resilience to the global crisis and the recent polycrisis than their East-Central European counterparts have. The loss of trust in political institutions and elites has also been remarkably lower in the Baltic states.[7]

---

[6]   Most importantly, the EIU has introduced the contrast between the formal and actual civil/political rights (Table I), in which the divergence between ECE and BS has been demonstrated by the declining rankings of ECE and increasing rankings of BS in democratization. The same can be noticed concerning the corruption (Table II). In addition, BF has offered a large scale of political and economic indicators, FH has made a distinction between national and local governance and between political rights and civil liberties, while WEF has elaborated altogether 12 pillars. This paper tries to compare the structure of the datasets of these leading ranking institutes in this "widening universe" year by year with increasing complexity and by incorporating the soft fields of human development and happiness (see Tables VII-VIII).

[7]   Indicating a clear turning point, the early 2010s CEPS investigated the impact of global crisis on the EU also in the dimension of trust (Roth et al., 2011). On 10 May 2011 there was a conference dedicated to the diminishing systemic trust in Europe's periphery in Brussels.

1. THE GOVERNANCE SIDE OF TRUST: MEASURING SUPPORT FOR INSTITUTIONS

1.1. The Western crisis: Interactive governance in the West with elite "competence"

In international political science, experts frequently employ David Easton's concept of systems theory to analyse relationships between *input* legitimacy and *output* legitimacy. Input legitimacy is judged in terms of the government's responsiveness to citizens' concerns that citizens express by participating in the political system or communicate directly to their representatives. Output legitimacy is judged in terms of the effectiveness of policy outcomes implemented for the people. Basically, in the academic literature pertaining to governance analysis, there are clouds of terms related to both input and output legitimacy. These somewhat overlapping, comprehensive terms—input legitimacy and output legitimacy—rely heavily on contrasting fairness and competence, responsiveness and performance, soft and hard, subjective and objective, process and institution, and so on. This conceptual framework offers a way to analyse both the support for governance and satisfaction with governance in Western democracies. Although this model presumes a functional rule of law, and therefore can only be directly applied to full democracies, it still serves as an analytical tool for evaluating NMS' policymaking processes, given proper regional distinctions. Altogether, the contribution of Easton's theoretical construct to the good governance debate offers an introduction to declining trust in the NMS, with some regional specifications.[8]

A central term used in measuring support for institutions is *interactive governance*. No wonder that in their summary of the first decade of the input-output debate on legitimacy and systemic support, Boedeltje and Cornips (2004, pp. 1-2) have focused on this very useful term. In this interaction between public institutions and citizens, according to the authors, input-oriented legitimacy is derived from the participative process, depending on how well it meets the criterion of *fairness*, whereas the *competence* of experts is needed to achieve legitimacy and social support on the output side. The question is: To what extent can these two criteria be realized simultaneously? Supposedly, they conflict; a high level of fairness can only be achieved at the expense of competence. Hence, the authors conclude that when the participative process cannot completely live up to fairness, new forms of legitimacy should focus more and more on competence. Although legitimacy requires linking political decisions to citizens' preferences, democracy would be an empty ritual if the procedure were not able to produce effective outcomes. Therefore, according to the authors, a trade-off must be made in which the principle of competence dominates over the criterion of fairness.[9]

Nevertheless, Boedeltje and Cornips moderate and nuance their competence-biased conclusion by pointing out that in the 1990s the cleavage between citizens and their governments

---

[8]   The best measure for the trust or confidence in the institutions and political elites can be found in the annual WEF Reports (Tables III-IV), which show a clear contrast between ECE and BS.

[9]   Two international organizations have been established to monitor the interactive governance, Group of States against Corruption (GRECO, 2016) and Open Government Partnership (OGP). OGP was organized in 2011, Hungary joined in 2012, but was under review since July 2015 because of the concerns about civil society organizations. As a result, Hungary was the first country to leave the organization on 7 December 2016 (OGP, 2016a; 2016b).

widened and citizen participation is also needed for effective policy implementation. Yet, all in all—and in the spirit of former decades—a technocratic and elitist view characterizes their paper. They claim that in modern democracies, outcome-oriented legitimacy is more relevant than input-oriented legitimacy, "The principles of fairness and competence pose different, rather conflictual, demands on the organization of the interactive process . . . As a consequence, not fairness, but competence should be the leading principle in managing interactive policy processes. This does not mean, however, that the principle of fairness should be completely ignored, as a certain degree of fairness is necessary to formulate effective policy in which the preferences of stakeholders are translated. In this respect input and output legitimacy complement rather than compete [with] each other." (Boedeltje and Cornips, 2004, p. 18).

In reaction to this widespread assumption about the dominion of competence, Vivien Schmidt has introduced *throughput legitimacy*, another term derived from systems theory. Schmidt uses throughput legitimacy to express judgements regarding accountability, transparency, the efficacy of decision-making processes, and openness to pluralist consultations with the people. Schmidt (2010, p. 5) concentrates on citizens' participation and conceptualizes input and output legitimacy as an interactive construction of responsiveness versus effectiveness, but she places these two dimensions on opposite poles of the governance process. In this way, Schmidt contrasts *participatory quality*—the field of communicative discourse that resonates with citizens' values—with *problem-solving quality*, the institutional means for indicating the performance of policy decisions. She locates throughput legitimacy, "interest consultation with the people", between input and output. Her expression of throughput legitimacy has not been widely accepted in scholarly literature as the usual construct of input legitimacy also includes organized forms of citizen participation, but her effort to balance the competence-based elitist approach has been useful (Schmidt, 2010, pp. 6-8).

Altogether, similar balancing efforts have not been successful. In a recent contribution to the input-output debate, the same conflict arises between the relevance of these two dimensions of legitimacy and the dominance of competence returns (Bernauer et al., 2016, pp. 1-2). In the theoretical construct provided by Thomas Bernauer and his colleagues, input legitimacy pertains to how policies are established and implemented (process quality), whereas output legitimacy pertains to how effective and advantageous an output is (product quality). The input dimension relates to the governance process, how political decisions are made, and how policies are implemented. The output dimension relates to whether the system produces effective solutions for societal problems and to the costs and distributional implications of the solutions. The authors argue that both facets of legitimacy are relevant and impact public support for the political system, but one form of legitimacy cannot serve as a substitute for the other in interactive governance. In their presentation of the debate concerning the importance of input versus output legitimacy, the authors emphasize that citizens tend to care more about the results of politics than the quality of the political process and that citizens will support a system when they are content with its output. However, they also emphasize that high-quality processes increase citizens' support for a system. Therefore, enhancing the quality of political processes by improving transparency and civil society involvement has also to be emphasised.

So, after two decades of discussing good governance through the conceptual framework of the input-output legitimacy and the issuing support for the political system, the dominant view is still aligned with the elitist concept of competence.

Nevertheless, Buti and Pichelmann (2017) argue that in the West accepting the expertise of the technocratic elite has become taboo, causing a widespread distrust in official views and triggering a new wave of populism. Moreover, the ensuing loss of input-legitimacy at the national perspective can easily extend into allegations that the EU is eroding the sovereignty of its member states and neglecting the will of its citizens, resulting in the populist call to "take back control" by pursuing a "return to the people." The very nature of the highly technical issues that need to be resolved at the central level make it easy to depict EU policies as policies designed by soulless technocrats detached from the lives of ordinary people. Buti and Pichelmann also note that output-legitimacy in the EU has likewise suffered due to the decreasing credibility and efficiency of the technocratic elite.

In my view, the input-output legitimacy debate reflects a crisis in representative democracy in the West from the governance side. Acknowledging this crisis is key to understanding much deeper problems in the East. There are two conflicting perceptions of reality that clash in the input-output debate. According to Jürgen Habermas's widely accepted communicative action theory, in deliberative democracy, reality is socially constructed. Communicative rationality presupposes that all actors are equally and fully capable of making arguments—that, to be fair, requires equal opportunities be afforded to all citizens (or stakeholders), so a certain level of civil competence is also required to sustain mutual understanding. Actually, the input-output debate reflects the spirit of deliberative democracy with the criteria of both fairness and competence. But the widening gap between the political elite and citizens has produced two different and competing reality perceptions. On the participative input side, people feel a growing income gap and an ignorance among the elite about this worsening situation. On the output side, the elite have issued long official reports created by professional experts about the "best possible worlds," reports that only irritate impoverished citizens. This has even occurred in the West, as the new wave of populism demonstrates. Yet the crisis in the East is different and deeper than in the West. In order to discover the increasing "credibility gap" between the citizens and elites, a cursory view is needed about the stages of policy-making process focusing on the NMS case.[10]

1.2. The Eastern crisis: from governance to the almighty government

The West's developed democracies have been transitioning from government to governance with empowered horizontal socio-political institutions, and they have constantly introduced and further developed "new modes of governance." Their problems, discussed above, have originated from this transition to governance with participatory democracy—and nowadays, under the pressure of crisis management, most states in the West have been correcting their corroded representative democracies. The NMS, however, have gone in the opposite direction. After an initial democratization period and after taking the first steps towards introducing

---

[10]   I have analysed the new wave of populism, East and West in Ágh, 2016b.

governance measures, these states have turned back to hierarchical and vertical structures of government with centralized power and disempowered autonomous institutions. Actually, the political elite have pushed, step by step, ordinary people from politics and they have also, to a great extent, emptied the political arena of intermediary organizations.

This pattern of moving from emerging governance structures to over-centralized government structures illustrates a historical trajectory from agency and state capture to full democracy capture. Democracy capture produces a Potemkin or façade democracy, in which authoritarian regimes use formal-legal institutions as democratic facades that in fact have become empty shells. Socio-economic exclusion, followed by political exclusion and demobilization, emptied the political arena of the people's participation, rendering imported checks-and-balances institutions mere façades. Basically, considerable tension emerged between imported formal institutions and home-grown informal institutions, creating a ticking bomb that has exploded into the current populist eruption in the NMS. The imported institutions remained as fragile as sand castles given that socio-economic developments have not created a proper foundation for them in a strong civil society with an intensive social capital (Dimitrova, 2010).

This process of de-Europeanization and de-democratization has led to the peripherialization of the NMS. The U-turn from governance to government in the NMS can be clearly seen by summarizing the stages of their policymaking processes into four steps: 1) initiation, 2) decision-making, 3) implementation, and 4) evaluation. Summarizing their policymaking processes into these four steps offers a conceptual background for understanding the alienation of citizens from the political elite.

Initiation: the setting of the political agenda is the first test of a political system's openness to citizens' demands and preferences. How the political agenda is set demonstrates the political system's capacity to respond to popular initiatives and develop or maintain participatory democracy by inviting the people—represented not only by individuals, but also by groups and organizations—to join the political process. In this respect, transparency depends on whether government priorities are visibly confronted with citizens' priorities. The NMS' political systems, by silencing the voices of their populations and by excluding their people from the agenda setting process, have actually returned from governance to government. The exclusion of the people in general, and of groups of the organized society in particular, from the policy-making process at its very start produces a lack of input legitimacy as the government, in doing so, monopolizes the ownership of issues. Thus, people realize that the government lacks social sensitivity and is not ready to deal with their vital problems.[11]

Decision-making: by influencing the government's decisions—through popular action, social movements, political demonstrations and strikes, social debates among citizens, or through civic and other organizations representing their interests—citizens can improve the quality of political output. Hence, pressure exerted by citizens creates the output legitimacy of the political system. The transparency of a political system is manifest in a lack of favouritism and in holding politicians increasing accountable for their decisions. In the NMS' political systems,

---

[11]   Foa and Ekiert (2017) warn that the citizens' activity - that determines the level and composition of social capital – in the NMS is much wider than the formal membership in civil organizations.

people have been excluded from legitimately influencing legislation, therefore people sense a growing separation between themselves and the state. When a government does not tolerate horizontal, partnership contacts—only top-down, vertical contracts—it constrains even multilevel governance (MLG) structures from participating in decision-making processes. This leads to a sharp separation between the people and the state. This alienation of ordinary people from the political elite has been accompanied by the cloning of loyal and faceless politicians in the emerging authoritarian system.

Implementation: the meaningful participation of the population in general, and those directly concerned in particular, in the implementation process leads to effective social outcomes that correspond to public interests. Output legitimacy is achieved when the people feel that the results of implemented policies are their own, they have participated in policy implementation and are benefiting from the corresponding changes. In the NMS, however, the people and independent experts have largely been excluded from the implementation process. As a result, the NMS suffer not only from low output legitimacy, but are also witnessing the neglect of multidimensional governance (MDG), evident in the failure to properly coordinate several policy fields according to the specific nature of a given issue. The decline of output legitimacy and multidimensional governance can be conceived as a direct result of the de-professionalization of government experts, due to a tendency to prioritize loyalty over expertise in political selections. In the implementation process, the business interests of political circles—the hidden curriculum of systemic corruption in the first two stages above—are already surfacing as the naked business orientations of politicians. Exclusive policy control and the weakness of regular impact assessments (RIA) result in poorly implemented projects and policies and leave the people to face a series of policy failures.

Evaluation: the last stage of policymaking also renews the policymaking process, it summarizes the lessons of the former processes and, through meta-level analysis and reflection, elevates good governance. Evaluation involves experts from all sides and institutionalized social actors; final evaluations are usually discussed in the media and by the public. In the NMS façade democracies, however, the government dominates or colonizes the media. The media, in turn, creates an artificial reality at the end of the policy-making process, a reality that often conflicts with the everyday experiences of the people. The real lessons of the policymaking process cannot be formulated by the population in a sophisticated way, this would presuppose the existence of competitive policy institutes and strong independent media. In the NMS, both are missing. In their absence, people retreat to apathy or react with anger. The evaluation process hosts the battle between (semi-)authoritarian systems and their populations. On this battlefield, the growing dominance of soft power on the government side—and the increasingly complicated means of utilizing information technology—is, to some extent, balanced by social media. Altogether, an overview of these four stages provides a more complete picture of poor governance in the NMS, declining trust in political elites, and waning popular support for the government; trends that are aptly documented by the Worldwide Governance Indicators of the World Bank.[12]

---

[12]   The Worldwide Governance Indicators have been composed of (1) Voice and Accountability, (2) Political Stability, (3) Government Effectiveness, (4) Regulatory Quality, (5) Rule of Law and (6) Control of Corruption. WGI

This cursory view of the four stages of the policymaking process reveals that the input-output approach is too narrow. In full democracies citizens participate in all four policymaking stages. The issue of transparency also appears in special ways in each of the four stages of policymaking. Transparency is a key issue as people and states decide: 1) which issues are to be dealt with; 2) how openly decisions are made in choosing policy issues to address; 3) how cooperatively policies are implemented, and; (4) whether or how policies are evaluated on a meta-level with regard to systemic legitimacy. Altogether, the dominance of "competence" in the political system's legitimacy by any kind of "expert elite" is even more damaging in the East than in the West. The presentation of good versus poor governance in the NMS has to be based on the contrast between *formal institutions* and *informal institutions*, regarded as comprehensive terms, with the large body of formal-legal institutions without their proper embedment in the socio-cultural environment on the "state" side and all forms of the softly organized informal-social or civic institutions in the weak meso-governance and civil society on the "social" side. In the West, formal and informal institutions are more or less harmonized, while in the East, from the very beginning, they were diverging and have now become deeply conflicted.

In the WEF data, the rankings of NMS' institutions in their largest meaning are significantly weaker than the rankings of their general competitiveness, hence the health of institutions in the NMS may be the weakest point of the NMS. Moreover, within these institutions, the formal mechanisms of electoral systems and the formal civil rights in the EIU data regularly earn much higher scores than the soft side of institutions in categories such as participation and political culture. This inherent asymmetry between the formal and informal institutions as a systemic deficit was not so visible at the beginning of systemic change in the region in 1989 because the first decade of these changes was marked by an enthusiasm to lessen tensions between formal and informal institutions. Later, systemic trust devolved into systemic distrust given the poor functioning of government and demonstrated low performance of the democratic polity. At the same time, data indicates a divergence between the East-Central European and Baltic states, with the Czech Republic and Slovenia being the most similar to the Baltic states.[13]

This systemic deficit produced chaotic democracy in the NMS and has led from state or agency capture to full democracy capture, in which the democratic scenery serves only as a façade for an emerging (semi-)authoritarian system. The informal institutions in this process have changed from positive to negative. For example, transparent public organizations have transformed into politico-business clientele networks, contributing to the essence of authoritarian political systems in the NMS: systemic corruption. This has usually been described

gives an opportunity for the detailed analysis of the poor governance in the NMS, but even in a cursory view indicates that there is a huge contrast between the average performance of developed democracies (90-100%) and the NMS (60-70%), but also between the ECE and BS, the BS average at least 5-10% higher (WGI, 2017). See also Lindberg et al. (2017).

[13]   In the early 2000s Mishler and Rose (2001) noted still their "cautious optimism" about the potential for nurturing popular trust in the new democratic institutions. However, the satisfaction with democracy in many NMS countries declined even before the global crisis in 2008, both in general and in the special aspects of accountability. Actually, the comprehensive analysis of Demos (Birdwell, et al., 2013) has pointed out the decline of democracy in the NMS countries on a large database.

as oligarchization, crony capitalism, and nativist corruption. The population's general exclusion from politics, as a radical political demobilization, explodes finally in populist remobilization. Earlier, this remobilization appeared as socio-economic populism from below and changed to political populism against the weak and hesitant democratic elite. But it transformed later, after the populist elite's accession to power, to an authoritarian system with a new and more sophisticated means of excluding from above. After the collapse of the first party system, macro-political transformations occurred in the emerging second party system after the "critical elections" of the 2010s. The first period of contradictory democratization eroded economic and social cohesion and increased socio-economic and political exclusion, hence it produced a sizeable democratic deficit as political demobilization led to apathy. This period began with chaotic voices and ended with bitter exits. The second period, due to the populist remobilization over the last decade, has been a lost decade for democratization. Nowadays, the NMS face what is actually a re-entry to the EU at a lower level of membership capacity than before, and the EU itself is already a Europe at two speeds.

2. SOCIAL CAPITAL OF TRUST: GENERAL AND SPECIFIC SUPPORT

2.1. The bonding and bridging social capital: strength in weak ties

Social capital, and its core concept of trust, has been one of the most relevant and revealing comprehensive theories of political science and sociology over the last few decades. Trust is a complicated and difficult concept, but it has a powerful explanatory power. Trust generates social capital and effective social outcomes (Newton, 2009, p. 356). Social networks produce trust and information, mutual solidarity, and cooperation. Therefore, social capital constructs evolved rapidly into a complex and comprehensive theorization of behaviour and citizen participation, and social capital is now regarded as a constructive element of socio-economic prosperity and democratic governance. Altogether, social capital refers to social networks as useful resources and information channels, which generate trust. Social capital reduces the costs involved in determining the trustworthiness of other citizens and fosters cooperation. Hence, investments in social relations or social interactions produce norms of generalized reciprocity in the form of trust in solid networks of horizontal civic engagements. However, though social capital is analytically useful, relative newcomers to the social sciences risk stumbling into conceptual confusions given the different approaches of various social science disciplines to social capital.

The resulting network of terms related to social capital creates a somewhat chaotic situation due to conceptual stretching, or a lack of conceptual clarity, but it also offers an opportunity to describe with greater precision the trust or credibility as it relates both to institutions and to the political elite. First, "Most studies find slight connection between social and political trust, and between social trust and forms of social participation, democratic behavior, and civic engagement. In this sense trust is a puzzling concept" (Newton, 2009, p. 357). Altogether, three other puzzles can be identified, which are also very relevant to an in-depth analysis of the NMS: 1) Some authors claim that social capital has been declining over the last few decades due to diminishing membership and activity in parties and associations, but these arguments have encountered fierce academic opposition from analysts who make a distinction

between decreasing conventional and increasing unconventional forms of social and political participation; 2) There has been a fierce debate over whether social capital is formed by long-term historical factors or by contemporary forces and factors and can be built by strategic actions in new and old democracies; 3) The most often discussed issue is whether social capital is deeply embedded in the realm of civil society and is basically active at this level—separated more or less from the political processes—or whether social capital is closely linked and intertwined with various forms of political participation in large formal institutions at the macro-political level. Without going into details, Robert Putnam represents a bottom-up view and focuses on collective civic resources, whereas Sidney Tarrow elaborates a top-down view and emphasizes the role of state in creating social capital.

In general, there is a variety of concepts of trust. Economists usually concentrate on the activities of individual actors, while political scientists examine the collective actions of larger groups and organizations. In sociology, both approaches are strongly represented. In some ways, each of these approaches are valid and relevant, even if the systemic integration of these approaches has been disturbed by the specific needs of disciplines on this terrain. Yet there is an important distinction separating trust into two distinct types: "between specific, thick, or particularized social trust, on the one hand, and generalized, thin, or abstract trust on the other. The first one is based on personal, first-hand knowledge of individuals (trust in a friend), the latter on more general information about social groups and situations" (Newton, 2009, p. 344). This leads to the recognition of two distinct types of social capital: *bonding social capital* created in small closed communities and *bridging social capital* generated among various groups across society. The famous phrase of "the strength of weak ties" refers to the increasing scale of these impersonal social connections. The World Value Survey standardly ask questions about generalized social trust.

In political science, support for or satisfaction with a political system is usually cast in Easton's terms of diffuse and specific support. In Easton's thesis, diffuse support refers to public opinion about the political system, such as contentment with the form of government and attachment to the norms and structure of the regime. In contrast to this broad attitude, the public also has opinions of incumbent political leaders and governmental outputs, such as public policies, in the form of specific support. This dual approach between diffuse and specific, general and particular support has gone through the entire research on social capital and trust, since citizens have been socialized in a value system that serves as an anchor in their long-term attachment to a political system despite all the vacillations of short- or medium-term political changes.[14]

Thus, generalized trust, or social capital, is remarkably stable over time, while particular trust, corresponding to real political events within political institutions such as governments and parliaments, varies with particular circumstances. The most important point of tension is between the social-horizontal and the political-vertical trust, formulated often as trust in people and confidence in institutions, since social and political trust do not overlap much, and political trust is better explained by political rather than social variables. There is still a strong

---

[14]   Clawson and Oxley (2017, Chapter 11: Trust in Government, Support for Institutions, and Social Capital) have recently summarized the Easton thesis in great detail.

correlation between social and political trust. Generalized trust in society may have a spillover in politics, but there is not a direct casual connection between them. Altogether, trust increases with transparent governance in a responsive government. When the population's involvement in policymaking processes is low, trust decreases. In the specific support case, the alternative is approval or disapproval, but beyond specific policy cases there is a higher level of generalized trust in the system or generalized distrust depending on the population's alienation from the system. This leads us to relate high-trust and low-trust countries to old and new democracies.

2.2. West and East: The high-trust and low-trust societies

Originally, the concept of social capital concept emerged in research conducted in southern Italy, where Robert Putnam noted that "civicness" is much weaker than in northern Italy, therefore the political developments of these sub-regions diverged historically, into a longue durée, facilitating democracy in the north and impeding it in the south (Putnam, 1993). Many analysts later extended this assumption to the larger region of southern Europe as a whole, which allegedly has lower levels of social capital and trust than northern Europe does. The contrast between the high- and low-trust societies was first introduced by Francis Fukuyama who raised this issue in the second part of his book titled *Low trust societies and the paradox of family values* (Fukuyama, 1995). He focused on France and China but extended his research to new democracies as well. Fukuyama insisted that economic life cannot be divorced from cultural life in an era when social capital may be as important as physical capital. Hence, only countries that create a high level of social trust can achieve economic growth and prosperity.

The main message of social capital research is that fair and impartial state practices facilitate trust, whereas corrupt practices erode trust, this is proven by the strong correlations in indices between high levels of corruption and low levels of social capital. Many studies have dealt with the so-called repression level of high politics, such as the strong negative influence of a state's domination on social capital disrupting civic development and discouraging trust. Thus, trust-centric comparative research on social capital concludes "authoritarian and totalitarian political systems seem to undermine generalized trust and oblige citizens to rely in daily life on particularized trust" (Newton, 2009, p. 348). This has been the case even more so in old and new authoritarian systems, where the negative effect of state dominance has influenced social capital, but the most intriguing case is that of the NMS with their ups and downs from the early 2000s (see Sztompka, 2000 and Mishler and Rose, 2001). Nevertheless, the social capital approach has not become dominant in the conceptualization of the NMS' historical trajectories; instead, legal-political analyses of governments and parties has been in the forefront. The social capital approach has survived as an undercurrent in some analyses emphasizing the importance of political culture in Europeanization and democratization, usually based on public opinion data. Yet, participation and trust-based research has always been present in democracy studies, especially in studies of the NMS, where sociological research has been stronger than political science analysis, which has mostly been concerned with domestic power and party relationships.

Social prehistory provides a key to understanding the present regimes in the NMS. Namely, the weakness of civil society as a long-term historical heritage in central Europe was already a

topical issue during the very beginning of the region's systemic changes. Furthermore, the NMS' ups and downs of social capital and trust over the last twenty-five years have shown that social capital and trust levels have been coursing in short cycles as they are rather intensively influenced by political events. Therefore, both logics are at work, "history matters" is the long tendency, but history has not entirely fated the new trajectories of the NMS. To the contrary, initial developments in the NMS demonstrated that under favourable conditions, historical heritage can be overcome. The biggest issue is that the socio-economic and political developments in the last quarter-century have not facilitated, but have impeded an increase in social capital in the NMS, and this decline in social capital can be documented. Socio-economic exclusion has, to a great extent, destroyed bridging social capital. So, in lieu of generalized trust, systemic distrust, a lack of solidarity, and general apathy in a fragmented society have emerged; people have been pushed back to strong bonding social capital. This process culminates in the complete alienation of young people—the political orphans of systemic change. Ignored by politicians, many young adults are taking the option to exit to the West.

This social history has radically changed power relations in the twenty-first century. In the NMS, compared to the former authoritarian systems, a very strong negative social capital of politico-business networks mixes the features of bonding and bridging social capital in mafia-type organizations headed by leading politicians, business moguls, or oligarchs. Currently, analysts are intrigued to see how nationalist-populist elites will maintain their rule despite being unpopular. In the present authoritarian systems, state pressure produces social fragmentation and even more alienation, disillusion, a declining political culture, and a value war (*Kulturkampf*) that is disrupting interactive governance processes. With neo-traditional narratives, these authoritarian systems are splitting their societies and ruling from a basis of mutual distrust and reciprocal suspicion.

The lack of conceptual clarity about neo-traditional nineteenth-century terms has returned as a weapon wielded in the media. The media, colonized by the government, contributes to conceptual confusion and is replete with empty slogans about protecting national interests in the twenty-first century, like vowing to protect the nation from "Brussels." Moreover, in the mid-2010s, due to the refugee crisis and Russian expansionism, there has been a further decline in public trust and a sense of panic related to seemingly chaotic international developments. The new identity politics—or politics of historical memory—has produced a new meta-level identity, rooted in perceptions of external and internal enemies, it has strengthened the soft power of the populist elite. Thus, despite strong social discontent and a lack of general trust in the political elite, they can stabilize their rule through the direct support of "the majority of a minority"—and thanks to the "indirect support" of depoliticization, disorientation, and enduring apathy, anger is turned against perceived enemies, not against the ruling elite (see Ágh, 2016c, Ágh, 2016d).

2.3. A comparative adventure: the divergence between East-Central Europe and the Baltic states

Analysing declining trust in the NMS offers a test case summarizing governance and social capital concepts in this region and characterizing an overall picture of a sub-regional divergence between the East-Central European and Baltic states. This divergence has been reinforced in the last decade, first by the global crisis (given the Baltic states stronger resilience to the crisis) and later by geopolitical changes that threatened the two sub-regions in very different ways. The "return of geopolitics" threatened East-Central European states from the South and the Baltic states from the East. East-Central European states, in various V4+ constructions (Visegrad Group states with their southern NMS neighbours), have dealt with the refugee crisis whereas the post-Soviet Baltic states have grown increasingly wary of Russian expansion. On the economic side, the catching-up process—with all of its individual idiosyncrasies—has been far more successful in the Baltic states than in East-Central Europe. All three of the big ranking institutions have pointed to a divergence between the two sub-regions and the eminence of the Baltic states.

In the Economist Intelligence Unit's 2016 Democracy Index of 167 states, the highest-ranking country among the NMS is Estonia (29th), closely followed by the Czech Republic (30th). The Czech Republic, however had scored much lower on functioning of government (7.14) than Estonia (7.86). The two other Baltic countries Lithuania (38th) and Latvia (41st) also performed well, only two East-Central European states, Slovenia (37th) and Slovakia (47th), came close to them. The other East-Central European countries ranked much lower (EIU, 2017, pp. 7-8). Based on the 2016 Democracy Index, the Czech Republic and Slovenia are the two East-Central European countries with trajectories closest to those of the Baltic states. The relatively high rankings of the Baltic states in the Democracy Index can be attributed to their interactive governments.

In the Bertelsmann Transformation Index (BTI) the Baltic countries rank high among the 128 countries examined with Estonia ranking fourth, Lithuania ranking sixth, and Latvia coming in at seventh place. The East-Central European countries scored lower rankings, with the exception of Poland, which ranked fifth, reflecting its long-term GDP growth and relative consolidation until 2015, followed by Slovakia (8th), the Czech Republic (12th), and Slovenia (18th), with the rest of the region ranking significantly lower (BF, 2016, p. 41). These data sets demonstrate anew and again the importance not only of output legitimacy in interactive governance in the Baltic states, but also the value of input legitimacy and high-levels of participation in transformation management. The Baltic countries also performed better in managing their political and economic transformations according to the BTI 2016 Report due to their relatively high crisis resilience and crisis management capacities.[15]

The Democracy Scores in the Nations in Transit Reports of Freedom House (FH) demonstrate this participative approach in the Baltic states in a detailed way. The report includes data on: the electoral process (EP), civil society (CS), independent media (IM), national democratic

---

[15]   The latest Polish data in the various Bertelsmann datasets do not yet reflect the turning point to the velvet dictatorship after the October 2015 elections. However, the latest special FH Report on "modern authoritarians" is already very critical about the Polish situation after the October 2015 elections (FH, 2017b: 37-39).

governance (NDG), local democratic governance (LDG), judicial framework and independence (JFI) and corruption (CO). Freedom House's 2016 report reveals that democracy scores have declined in the NMS in general, but this decline has been less marked in the Baltic states than in East-Central European countries. Most of the East-Central European countries (except for Romania) including Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Croatia, Hungary, Poland, and Slovenia received worse scores in 2016 than previously. Slovakia maintained its previous score. In the Baltic countries, Estonia and Lithuania's scores stayed the same and Latvia slightly improved its democratic score. Beyond the above-mentioned indicators, the three Baltic countries received the best scores both in political rights and in civil liberties, only Latvia received the second-best score in civil liberties. East-Central European countries, in general, rated worse on both political rights and civil liberties (FH, 2017, p. 19). The fact that Hungary and Poland's scores have declined in five of the seven fields mentioned above makes them their region's primary underperformers and positions them as East-Central Europe's counterpoints to the Baltic states among the NMS. All in all, the Baltic states are leading among the NMS in Europeanization and democratization. The Baltics are, to some degree, followed by the Czech Republic, Slovenia and Slovakia, while the other East-Central European states, especially Poland and Hungary, appear to be in worsening situation.

Altogether, these short general outlines of the divergences between the East-Central European and Baltic sub-regions should be investigated in greater detail. The main factors contributing to the Baltic states' developments, particularly in contrast to developments achieved by East-Central European states are: 1) path-dependence, national independence, mobilization, and participation as key factors in identity politics; 2) a Scando-Baltic macro-region and a Danube macro-region and respective relevant special integration partners; 3) varying geopolitical threats coming from either Russian expansionism in the form of hybrid war versus mass migration and so-called alien cultures; (4) strong European identity and support for Eurozone membership in the Baltic states versus the illusion of defending the state from threats to national sovereignty posed by the EU in East-Central Europe. Each of these factors is worthy of further discussion and research. The NMS have yet to reveal the causes of their relative failures to "catch up," but the partial success of the Baltic states could hold lessons for East-Central European countries.

CONCLUSION: THE TRUST GAP BETWEEN THE EU AND NATIONAL LEVEL IN THE NMS

The historical trajectory of the NMS can be summarized by returning to Easton's thesis on diffuse and specific support. As discussed, diffuse support is an enduring support for the political regime in general, originating from the public's socialization in and connectedness to the general political attitudes and values. Specific support depends on the performance of given governments and other organizations in particular policy fields. In the Europeanization and democratization of the NMS over the last quarter-century, we have witnessed a gap between diffuse and specific support, both between the EU and the member states on one side and within the member states themselves on the other. There has also been a widening gap between the support for Europeanization in general and dissatisfaction with specific EU policies. Another gap appears

between those who support democratization in general and growing distrust in the workings of democratic institutions in particular. Namely the enduring general, symbolic support for the EU has been accompanied in the NMS by strong criticisms of specific EU policies and their particular ups and downs. Similarly, support for democracy in general and dissatisfaction with the democratic performance of the NMS governments illustrates the same dualism.[16]

Thus, the diffuse-specific support construct can be applied to the NMS as well, however, the twin processes of Europeanization and democratization in the NMS still have rather different historical trajectories. "Europe" is still the true anchor for the NMS' populations, whereas the image of "democracy" has been eroded, to a great extent, by the practice of façade democracies in these countries. According to the latest report, in the NMS, dusk is settling over democracy (V-Dem Institute, 2017). Some young people say, "if this is democracy, then we do not like it," hence, support for democracy is often lower than support for EU membership. Due to the inherent systemic deficit of the tension between formal and informal institutions, the original systemic trust in the NMS has turned into systemic distrust. It is true that diffuse support endures while specific support often changes, but even diffuse support for a democratic system can be weakened in the NMS due to the cumulative effects of poor democratic performance. That is, in the long term "regime legitimacy should be seen as affected by the regime's effectiveness" (Magalhaes, 2014, p. 78). Therefore, diffuse support has been weakened for "democracy", but not for "Europe", the EU, or EU membership. Europe is the sacrosanct value, hence young people at public demonstrations against the authoritarian regimes are shouting, "Europa! Europa!" It is no wonder that Orbán and Kaczynski have fiercely attacked the image of Europe and the EU with a narrative centred on a declining Europe and declining Western culture. Thus, the main front in the recent value war in the NMS is the very image of Europe in identity politics. In the remote Eastern rimland, the only hope is trust in the EU.

---

[16]   See the large public opinion surveys, Chatham House (2017) and EP (2017).

TABLE 1. EIU, Democracy Index 2016. Rankings in 167 countries and scores (1-10)

Country	(1) rank	(2) score	(3) elec.	(4) gov.	(5) part.	(6) cult.	(7) civil
BG	49-47	7.01	9.17	6.07	7.22	4.38	8.24
CZ	18-31	7.82	9.58	7.14	6.67	6.88	8.82
HR	51-54	6.75	9.17	6.07	5.56	5.00	7.94
HU	38-56	6.72	9.17	6.07	4.44	6.88	7.06
PL	46-52	6.83	9.17	5.71	6.67	4.38	8.24
RO	50-61	6.62	9.17	5.71	5.00	5.00	8.24
SI	27-37	7.51	9.58	7.14	6.67	5.63	8.53
SK	41-42	7.29	9.58	7.14	5.56	5.63	8.53
EE	33-29	7.85	9.58	7.86	6.11	6.88	8.82
LV	43-41	7.31	9.58	5.71	5.56	6.88	8.82
LT	39-38	7.47	9.58	5.71	6.11	6.25	9.71

1) general rank in 2006 and 2016, and scores in 2016: (2) overall score, and special scores for (3) electoral process and pluralism, (4) functioning of government, (5) political participation, (6) political culture and (7) civil liberties

SOURCE: EIU, Economist Intelligence Unit (2017) Democracy Index 2016, http://www.eiu.com/public/topical_report.aspx?campaignid=DemocracyIndex2016

TABLE 2. Transparency International. Corruption Perception Index between 2012-2016. Ranking in 2016 in 166 countries, with scores between 2012 and 2016

Country	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2016R
BG	41	41	43	41	41	75
CZ	49	48	51	56	55	47
HR	46	48	48	51	49	55
HU	55	54	54	51	48	57
PL	58	60	61	62	62	29
RO	44	43	43	46	48	57
SI	61	57	58	60	61	31
SK	46	47	50	51	51	54
EE	64	68	69	70	70	22
LV	49	53	55	55	57	44
LT	54	57	58	61	59	38

2012-2016 scores (1-100) and 2016R rankings in 2016

SOURCE: Transparency International (2017) Corruption Perception Index 2016, https://www.transparency.org/news/feature/corruption_perceptions_index_2016

TABLE 3. World Economic Forum (WEF). Institutional trust in East-Central Europe and the Baltic States. Rankings in 2008 and 2016 in 133-137 countries

Country	competit.	institutions	publicfunds	policaltrust	favouritism	Transparency
BG	76-49	116-98	113-97	112-88	110-90	118-107
CZ	31-31	62-52	91-99	115-89	104-95	103-73
HR	72-74	85-102	80-105	91-116	92-122	88-128
HU	58-60	76-101	94-108	111-105	114-131	113-125
PL	46-39	66-72	50-57	99-101	64-85	127-116
RO	64-68	84-86	75-91	106-113	117-116	128-113
SI	37-48	46-56	41-69	45-92	56-88	29-67
SK	47-59	78-93	95-117	121-109	127-130	54-87
EE	35-29	31-24	39-33	51-38	39-28	17-27
LV	68-54	65-82	69-98	102-95	97-99	78-71
LT	53-41	59-53	67-82	95-66	70-67	61-59

Rankings in 2008 and 2016: (1) competitiveness, (2) institutions in general as the 1st pillar followed by the 1.03, 1.04, 1.06 and 1.11 special indicators as (3) diversion of public funds, (4) public trust of politicians, (5) favouritism in decisions of government officials, (6) transparency of government policymaking.

SOURCE: WEF, World Economic Forum (2017) The Global Competitiveness Report 2017-2018, https://www.weforum.org/reports/the-global-competitiveness-report-2017-2018

TABLE 4. World Economic Forum (WEF). Public trust in politicians. Rankings between 2008 and 2016 in 133-137 countries

Country	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
BG	112	104	95	85	97	130	110	94	88
CZ	115	121	134	139	146	138	107	92	89
HR	91	96	104	115	114	124	122	113	116
HU	111	128	130	128	129	113	120	97	105
PL	99	82	76	90	100	101	100	104	101
RO	106	116	119	133	141	109	112	120	113
SI	45	70	96	116	133	133	105	90	92
SK	121	132	132	136	139	121	113	110	109
EE	51	53	32	30	42	38	34	37	38
LV	102	119	92	84	89	84	87	95	98
LT	95	108	110	113	95	83	67	66	82

SOURCE: WEF, World Economic Forum (2017) The Global Competitiveness Report 2017-2018, https://www.weforum.org/reports/the-global-competitiveness-report-2017-2018

TABLE 5. V-Dem Liberal Democracy Index (LDI). Rankings 2016 - 174 countries

Country	LDI	EDI	LCI	ECI	PCI	DCI
BG	35	39	25	39	53	39
CZ	21	15	24	11	28	63
HR	53	54	54	54	54	95
HU	59	63	52	31	84	132
PL	55	56	53	27	65	106
RO	40	38	43	52	69	17
SI	16	16	17	21	29	14
SK	32	34	35	43	41	105
EE	4	3	8	18	4	8
LV	28	22	36	32	49	33
LT	18	19	13	13	39	28

LDI (Liberal Democracy Index), EDI (Electoral Democracy Index), LCI (Liberal Component Index, ECI (Egalitarian Component Index), PCI (Participatory Component Index) and DCI (Deliberative Component Index)

SOURCE: V-Dem Institute, Varieties of Democracy (2017) Democracy at Dusk? V-Dem Annual Report 2017, https://www.v-dem.net/media/filer_public/91/14/9114ff4a-357e-4296-911a-6bb57bcc6827/v-dem_annualreport2017.pdf

TABLE 6. Social Progress Index 2016

Country	rank	SPI	BHN	FWB	OPP	PER	PFC	TAI	AAE
BG	43	72.14	87.18	74.81	54.42	62.02	54.62	47.51	53.54
CZ	22	82.80	96.17	82.57	69.66	75.70	77.48	57.42	68.03
HR	33	77.68	91.54	79.51	62.00	75.20	65.20	48.53	59.09
HU	35	76.88	90.84	77.29	62.52	65.43	66.38	53.47	64.78
PL	30	79.76	90.97	80.15	68.16	82.02	71.49	52.20	66.95
RO	42	72.23	84.26	74.91	57.52	63.16	68.03	43.33	55.58
SI	20	84.27	93.75	83.13	75.92	90.90	80.26	67.83	64.68
SK	31	78.96	93.40	80.85	62.61	78.61	64.13	50.22	57.50
EE	23	82.62	92.03	82.63	73.19	97.73	77.75	48.33	68.96
LV	36	76.19	89.37	80.61	58.58	66.57	68.75	41.64	57.38
LT	34	76.94	88.09	77.07	65.65	73.43	69.36	54.05	65.76

SPI – Social Progress Index, BHN – Basic Human Needs, FWB – Foundations of Wellbeing, OPP – Opportunity (in general), PER – Personal Rights (OPP-1), PFC – Personal Freedom and Choice (OPP-2), TAI – Tolerance and Inclusion (OPP-3) and AAE – Access to Advanced Education (OPP-4)

SOURCE: Social Progress Index (2016) Social Progress Imperative, 28 June 2016, http://www.socialprogressimperative.org/

TABLE 7. UNDP Human Development Index 2015

Country	rank	LE	SC	GNI	R. 2010
BG	56	74.3	10.8	13	3
CZ	28	78.8	12.3	11	0
HR	45	77.6	11.2	14	1
HU	43	75.3	12.0	6	-4
PL	36	77.6	11.9	11	-3
RO	50	74.8	10.8	11	-2
SI	25	80.6	12.1	13	0
SK	40	76.4	12.2	1	-7
EE	30	77.0	12.5	12	2
LV	44	74.3	11.7	7	1
LT	37	73.5	12.7	7	-1

LE – life expectancy in years, SC – mean years of schooling, GNI per capita rank minus HDI rank and R. 2010 – change in HDI rank between 2010 and 2015

SOURCE: UNDP (2017) Human Development Report, 27 March 2017, http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/librarypage/hdr/2016-human-development-report.html

TABLE 8. World Happiness Report Rankings 2017

Country	rank	Score
BG	105	4.714
CZ	23	6.609
HR	77	5.293
HU	75	5.324
PL	46	5.973
RO	57	5.825
SI	62	5.758
SK	40	6.098
EE	66	5.611
LV	54	5.850
LT	52	5.902

SOURCE: World Happiness Report 2017 (2017) https://s3.amazonaws.com/sdsn-whr2017/HR17_3-20-17.pdf

REFERENCES

Aldridge, S., Halpern, D., 2002. *Social Capital: A Discussion Paper*. [pdf] Cabinet Office. Available at: <http://www.thinklocalactpersonal.org.uk/_assets/BCC/Social_Capital_PIU_Discussion_Paper.pdf> [Accessed 10 August 2017].

Ágh, A., 2016a. The increasing core-periphery divide and the new member states: Diverging from the European Union's mainstream developments. In: J. Magone, B. Laffan and Ch. Schweiger, eds. 2016. *Core-Periphery Relations in European Union*. London: Routledge, pp. 117-129.

Ágh, A., 2016b. Increasing Eupopulism as the megatrend in East-Central Europe: From façade democracies to velvet dictatorships. *Baltic Journal of Political Science*, No. 5, pp. 21-39.

Ágh, A., 2016c. Rocky Road of Europeanization in the New Member States: From democracy capture to the second try of democratization. *Polish Sociological Review*, No. 1, pp. 71-86.

Ágh, A., 2016d. Deconsolidation of Democracy in East-Central Europe: The New World Order and the geopolitical crisis in the EU. *Politics in Central Europe*, Vol. 12. No. 3, pp. 7-36.

Bernauer, T., Mohrenberg, S., Koubi, V., 2016. How relevant are input and output legitimacy in international environmental governance? [pdf.] National Centre of Competence in Research, Working Paper, No. 94. Available at: <http://www.nccr-democracy.uzh.ch/publications/workingpaper/pdf/wp_94.pdf> [Accessed 10 August 2017].

Bevir, M., 2011. *The Sage Handbook of Governance*. London: Sage, p. 576.

BF, Bertelsmann Foundation, 2016. *BTI Transformation Index 2016*. Gütersloh: Verlag Bertelsmann Stiftung, p. 130.

Birdwell, J., Feve, S., Tryhorn, C., Vibla, N., 2013. *Democracy in Europe can no longer be taken for granted*. [pdf.] Demos. Available at: <https://www.demos.co.uk/files/DEMOS_Backsliders_report_web_version.pdf> [Accessed 10 August 2017].

Boedeltje, M., Cornips, J., 2004. Input and output legitimacy in interactive governance [pdf.] Erasmus University. Available at: <https://repub.eur.nl/pub/1750/NIG2-01.pdf> [Accessed 10 August 2017].

Buti, M., Pichelmann, K., 2017. European integration and populism, 22 February 2017. Available at: <http://voxeu.org/article/european-integration-and-populism-addressing-dahrendorfs-quandary> [Accessed 10 August 2017].

Clawson, R., Oxley, Z., 2017. *Public Opinion: Democratic Ideals, Democratic Practice*. Sage, CQ Press, p. 480.

Dalton, R., Klingemann, H.-D, eds., 2009. *The Oxford Handbook of Political Behavior*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, p. 992.

Dimitrova, A., 2010. The new member states of the EU in the aftermath of enlargement: do new European rules remain empty shells? *Journal of European Public Policy*, Vol. 17, No. 1, pp. 137-148.

EC, European Commission, 2017. *Reflection paper on the social dimension of the future of Europe*, April 2017. [pdf]. Available at: <https://ec.europa.eu/commission/sites/beta-political/files/reflection-paper-social-dimension-europe_en.pdf> [Accessed 10 August 2017].

Eder, C., Mochmann, I. Quandt, M. eds., 2014. *Political Trust and Disenchantment with Politics*, Brill, p. 240.

EP, European Parliament, 2017. *Two years until the 2019 European elections*. [pdf]. Available at: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2017/599336/EPRS_STU(2017)599336_EN.pdf> [Accessed 10 August 2017].

Chatham House, 2017. *The Future of Europe: Comparing Public and Elite Attitudes*. [pdf]. <https://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/files/chathamhouse/publications/research/2017-06-20-future-europe-attitudes-raines-goodwin-cutts-final.pdf> [Accessed 10 August 2017].

FH, Freedom House, 2017a. *Nations in Transit 2017*. [pdf.]. Available at: <https://freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/NIT2017_booklet_FINAL_0.pdf> [Accessed 10 August 2017].

FH, Freedom House, 2017b. *Breaking Down Democracy: Goals, Strategies, and Methods of Modern Authoritarians*,   <https://freedomhouse.org/report/special-reports/breaking-down-democracy-goals-strategies-and-methods-modern-authoritarians> [Accessed 10 August 2017].

Fischer, F., 2012. Participatory governance: from theory to practice. In: Levi-Faur D., ed. *The Oxford Handbook of Governance*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 457-471.

Foa, R.S., Ekiert, G., 2017. The weakness of postcommunist civil society reassessed. *European Journal of Political Research*, Vol. 56, No. 2, pp. 419-439

Fukuyama, F., 1995. *Trust: The social virtue and the creation of prosperity*. New York: Free Press, p. 445.

GRECO, Group of States Against Corruption, 2016. *16th General Activity Report*. Council of Europe. Available at: <https://rm.coe.int/16806cbf46> [Accessed 10 August 2017].

Kaase, M., 2009. Perspectives on political participation. In: Dalton, R., Klingemann H.-D., eds. *The Oxford Handbook of Political Behavior*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 783-796.

Levi-Faur, D., 2012. *Oxford Handbook of Governance*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, p. 803.

Lindberg, S., Lührmann, A., Mechkova, V., 2017. *Mapping dimensions and sequences of accountability*. World Development Report, World Bank Group, http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/324501487592445304/ Mapping-dimensions-and-sequences-of-accountability. [Accessed 10 August 2017].

Magalhaes, P., 2014. Government effectiveness and support for democracy. *European Journal of Political Research*, Vol. 53, No. 1, pp. 77-97.

Maloney, W., Rossteutscher, S., eds. 2007. *Social Capital and Associations in European Democracies*, Routledge, p. 308.

McLaverty, P., 2011. Participation. In M. Bevir, ed. 2011. *The Sage Handbook of Governance*. London: Sage, pp. 402-418.

Mishler W., Rose R., 2001. What are the origins of political trust? Testing institutional and cultural theories in post-communist societies. *Comparative Political Studies*, Vol. 34, No. 1, pp. 30-62

Newton, K., 2009. Social and political trust. In: R. Dalton, H.-D. Klingemann, eds. 2009. *The Oxford Handbook of Political Behavior*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 342-360.

OGP, Open Government Partnership, 2016a. Open Letter to the OGP Steering Committee, 26 April 2016, (66 civil organizations, Léderer, Sándor et al.) https://www.access-info.org/wp-content/uploads/OGP_SC_ OpenLetter_29April2016.pdf

OGP, Open Government Partnership (2016b) Support Unit, Statement by OGP's Criteria with a joint Proposal for Dialogue with Government of Hungary, 22 June 2016, http://www.opengovpartnership.org/blog/ ogp-webmaster/2016/06/22/statement-ogps-criteria-and-standards-subcommittee-regarding.

Putnam, R., 1993. *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, p. 247.

Roth, F., Nowak-Lehmann, F., Otter, T., 2011. *Has the financial crisis shattered citizens' trust in national and European governmental institutions?* Center for European Policy Studies (CEPS), p. 27.

Rucht D., 2012. Political Participation in Europe. In: R. Sakwa, A. Stevens, eds. 2012. *Contemporary Europe*. New York: Palgrave-Macmillan, pp. 128-148.

Sakwa, R., Stevens A., eds. 2012. *Contemporary Europe*. New York: Palgrave-Macmillan, p. 286.

Scharpf, F., 2015. After the Crash: A perspective on Multilevel European Democracy. *European Law Journal*, Vol. 21, No. 3, pp. 384-403.

Schmidt, V., 2010. Democracy and Legitimacy in the European Union Revisited: Input, Output and Throughput [pdf]. Freie Universität Berlin, Working paper No. 21. Available at: <http://userpage.fu-berlin.de/ kfgeu/kfgwp/wpseries/WorkingPaperKFG_21.pdf> [Accessed 10 August 2017].

Stiglitz, J., 2017. Lessons from the anti-globalists. *International Politics and Society*. Available at: http:// www.ips-journal.eu/topics/international-relations/article/show/lessons-from-the-anti-globalists-2016/ [Accessed 10 August 2017].

Stolle, D., 2009. Social capital. In: R. Dalton, H.-D. Klingemann, eds. 2009. *The Oxford Handbook of Political Behavior*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 655-674.

Van Deth J., Ramón Montero J., Westholm A., eds. 2006. *Citizenship and Involvement in European Democracies*. Routledge, p. 500.

WGI, Worldwide Governance Indicators (2017) World Bank Governance Reports, http://info.worldbank. org/governance/wgi/index.aspx#reports

Závecz, G., 2017. Post-communist societies of Central and Eastern Europe. In: S. Zmerli, T. van der Meer, eds. 2017. *Handbook on Political Trust*. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, pp. 440-459.

Zmerli, S., van der Meer T., eds. 2017. *Handbook on Political Trust*. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, p. 560.