

# TRUST: THE NOTION AND ITS TRANSFORMATION IN MATURE AND POST-COMMUNIST DEMOCRACIES

Teodora Gaidytė\*

## *Abstract*

This article aims at analysing and theoretically displaying the peculiarities and differences of the category of *trust* in mature and post-communist democracies<sup>1</sup>. First, referring to the seminal sociological studies by G. Simmel, N. Luhmann, R. Putnam, P. Sztompka, R. Hardin and others, the paper conceptualises the notion of trust as interpreted by the culturalist and the rationalist approaches, and systemises these approaches into a more coherent theoretical framework, underpinning three analytical perspectives: modernisation theories, social capital, and political psychology. Second, two forms of trust, viz., political and generalised trust, are discussed, and the relationship between these categories is analysed, considering the link of mutual causality. Third, in a wider theoretical perspective, the dialectics of political trust and liberalism is tackled with focus on the institutionalisation of distrust as the basis of the liberal system. Finally, the peculiarities of trust in the communist regime and aftermath are examined. The main argument is that, at the generalised level, trust in post-communist societies lacks good-natured origin and is more family-centred as compared to the wider *radius* of trust in mature, or so-called Old, democracies. Meanwhile political trust in post-communist societies, theoretically speaking, is less self-reflexive and is less rationally-based, since, unlike old democratic societies, it has evolved as the opposite to fear, rather than to risk. These different origins of trust should be taken into consideration when analysing the quality of democracy in post-communist societies, in particular, the scope and pace of political and socio-economic reforms, the emergence of populist and extremist parties and movements, political participation, and state-society relations in general.

## **Introduction**

As a concept of political sociology, trust is usually addressed when speaking of the so-called social capital theories and, undoubtedly, finds its primary

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\* **Teodora Gaidytė** is a PhD student at Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam. Email:t.gaidyte@vu.nl

<sup>1</sup> The paper focuses only on the European Union countries that are legally acknowledged as established democracies.

expression in the social capital narrative. On the other hand, contemporary political research more often refers to the category of trust in the wider context of democratic convergence at the European Union level, in particular, analysing transformation, consolidation, and the quality of democracy in post-communist societies. In fact, the focus on the notion of trust marks the turning point from institutional level explanations to individual-level analysis. This is very important and innovative, keeping in mind that, twenty years after the fall of communism, it is getting increasingly difficult to provoke value added theoretical debate about this region. In his resonant article “The End of the Transition Paradigm”, Thomas Carothers even argues that attempts to theorise the development of post-communist democracy have already run out of steam, and the “transitologist” model, constructed according to the examples of mature Western democracies, does not fit the real outcomes of democratisation in post-communist societies. The author points out that most post-communist research is elite- and institutions-based and lacks insight into socio-cultural dimensions that are the preconditions of the paths of democratisation in the region.<sup>2</sup> Taking this into consideration, the present article aims at analysing specifically the bottom-up dimension of democracy, viz., political and social (generalised) trust, applying the different perceptions of the category as well as the comparative approach of trust in mature (or old, established) and post-communist democracies. Special focus will be placed on trust transformation during the communist regime and the post-communist phase, theoretically asserting the shifts within social as well as political trust. For conceptual reasons, in analysing the transformational phase, I will cover early years of transformation until 1997-1999, when post-communist countries were invited to negotiate upon the European Union membership and when the institutionalisation of formal democracy was recognised. For this purpose, I admit that the early stage of the post-communist transformation witnessed the most chaotic, turbulent, institutionally instable, and therefore saliently affected trust both at the social and the political levels. This transformational phase and its impact to cultural shifts need to be highly emphasised. Moreover, I also acknowledge that this destructive influence on trust during the early transformation period is inert

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<sup>2</sup> The arguments are more clearly elaborated in: Thomas Carothers, “The End of the Transition Paradigm”. *Journal of Democracy*, Volume 13, Number 1, 2002, p. 5-21.

and long-lasting. It adheres to the contemporary phenomenon of the so-called political detachment and political alienation in post-communist societies.

In addition, for theoretical reasons, I treat the post-communist region as a complex political category, viewing post-communism as a certain stage of the transformation of democracy<sup>3</sup>. It can be treated as a methodologically synthesised category which deals with a set of problems common to new democracies: political apathy, corruption, distrust, sentiments for authoritarian rule, etc. On the other hand, I admit that post-communist countries are diverse in regard to the quality of democracy and institutional development. In their analyses of post-communist transformation, scholars argue that post-communist countries, such as Estonia, Slovenia, and Czech Republic show attributes of established democracies and are ahead of other countries in terms of institutional performance, efficiently functioning capitalism, and democratic culture<sup>4</sup>. However, the more problematic cultural peculiarities, including the sense of trust discussed below, are still apparent in all post-communist societies.

It should be admitted that *trust* is not a very new theoretical subject; research into trust began much earlier than the social capital theory<sup>5</sup>. However, earlier studies were rather fragmented and lacked systematic conceptualisation or clear theoretical frameworks. In addition, research endeavours of the time were mostly related to efforts to create democratic systems in Europe after World War II. In today's academic literature, the notion of trust attracts growing interest, especially bearing in mind the positive impulse trust gives to civic society, social capital, and the quality of democracy (with an emphasis on post-communist Europe). Scholars in political science and political sociology in particular have "revived" this category, which has never been a topic of mainstream sociology<sup>6</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup> Vaidotas Valantiejus, "Postkomunizmas kaip ideologinė konstrukcija" [Post-communism as an ideological construct]. *Politologija*, 2012/1 (65).

<sup>4</sup> Zenonas Norkus. *Kokia demokratija, koks kapitalizmas. Pokomunistinė transformacija Lietuvoje lyginamosios istorinės sociologijos požiūriu*. [Like democracy, like capitalism. Post-communism transformation in Lithuania from the perspective of comparative-historical sociology]. Vilnius: Vilniaus universiteto leidykla, 2008.

<sup>5</sup> Paul M. Heywood, Chris Wood, "Culture versus Institutions: Social Capital, Trust and Corruption". In: Erik Jones, et al. (eds.), *Developments in European Politics*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2011, p. 148.

<sup>6</sup> Niklas Luhmann, "Familiarity, Confidence, Trust: Problems and Alternatives". In: Diego Gambetta (ed.), *Trust: Making and Breaking Cooperative Relations*. Department of Sociology, University of Oxford, 2000, p. 94.

Following G. Simmel (1950), A. Giddens (1990), R. Putnam (1993), and P. Sztompka (1999), trust is perceived here as one of the endogenous cultural and psychological traits, which prevail in all aspects of personal, social, economic and political life. Trust also shapes the quantity and quality of civic engagement, since it enables any social relation and any collective action of political society. As a psychological dimension, trust may deeply affect the perceived political efficacy and empower citizens politically. This category is worth analysing in both “old” and post-communist democracies, seeking to capture the peculiarities of a slightly different trajectory of the development of post-communist societies.

Concerning the trust factor in post-communist societies, several theoretical and data-based studies have been released: 1) *Trust. A Sociological Theory* (Sztompka 1999), 2) *Creating Social Trust: Problems of Post-Socialist Transition* (Kornai et.al. (eds.) 2004), 3) *Trust and Democratic Transition in Post-Communist Europe* (Markova ed. 2004), 4) *Democracy and Political Culture in Eastern Europe* (Klingemann et.al. (eds.) 2006), 5) *Undiscovered Power: Map of the civil Society in Lithuania* (Žiliukaitė et al. 2006), 6) *The Political Anatomy of Post-soviet Lithuania* (Ramonaitė 2007). However, these studies lack a more coherent narrative and conceptual insights within the category of trust displaying what trust actually is and what elements it includes taking into account the post-communist specifics.

Below, I will first conceptualise trust as a sociological category in political science, distinguishing the main elements of and approaches to trust. Secondly, I will define the different forms of trust, in particular, social and political trust, its origin and relationship with democracy and causality. Thirdly, I will briefly discuss the dialectics of trust and liberal democracy, displaying the nature of trust in mature, or older, democracies. Finally, I will focus on trust in regard to the communist legacy and regime transformation in post-communist societies.

## **1. Conceptualisation of the category of trust**

### **1.1. The notion of trust**

Since trust is a very abstract and rather ambiguous notion, several theoretical frameworks and approaches to conceptualising trust have been developed. Among the many typologies used, we can identify a key distinction regarding

the notion of trust: trust as an inborn or inherited trait deriving from a very early socialisation phase *vs.* trust as a rational response that is determined by a certain social context and is learned with a set of normative rules.

According to the first approach, trust as a disposition would seem to hinge on emotions, self-perceptions, as well as ideals and values pursued in social relations; and it is as much an interpretation of oneself as of the other<sup>7</sup>. This approach sees trust as an inevitable and natural feature of every human, which derives from interactions with and interdependence among other humans in the society. We create ourselves as human beings through communication and interaction, and trust is a vital prerequisite of being *social*<sup>8</sup>. In accordance with this approach, we merely cannot exist and survive in a society without a minimum level of trust. As the famous German sociologist Georg Simmel states, trust is an essential feeling for society to function<sup>9</sup>. Luhmann claims that people generally tend to approach new social relationships with an attitude of trust, because it requires less mental effort to trust than to distrust each other<sup>10</sup>. It also facilitates behaviour and actions, as it organizes our choices according to certain habits and cultural norms we are used to and do not need to reflect upon all the time.

The first approach has been dominant in the so-called Weberian sociology, where trust is perceived as an inherent religion-based feature of culture. Indeed, G. Simmel, following a Weberian way of thinking, was the first scholar who integrated and analytically conceptualised trust as a sociological subject in his two main studies: *Philosophie des Geldes* (1900, [The Philosophy of Money]) and *Soziologie* (1908 [Sociology: Investigations on the Forms of Sociation]). G. Simmel describes trust as a type of social relationship and uses the term “confidence” as a synonym. According to him, trust is evidently one of the most important synthetic forces within society. In a formal sociological perspective, trust for Simmel is one of the social forms that lead the individual

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<sup>7</sup> Morten Frederiksen, “The Relational Structure of Trust”. *Paper presented at Denmark Sociology Congress*, 2011, January, 2011, p. 8.

<sup>8</sup> Ivana Markova, *Trust and Democratic Transition in Post-Communist Europe*. Oxford: Oxford University press, 2004, p. 3-4.

<sup>9</sup> The societal feature of trust is theorised in his seminal study: George Simmel, *The Sociology of Georg Simmel*, *Compiled and translated by Kurt Wolff*, Glencoe, IL: Free Press, 1950.

<sup>10</sup> Niklas Luhmann, “Trust: A Mechanism for the Reduction of Social Complexity”. In: Niklas Luhmann, *Trust and Power* (edited by T. Burns and G. Poggi). New York: Wiley, 1979.

to the so-called sociability (the form of sociation). Considering that the human is being exposed to social interactions, trust comes as an intermediate “between knowledge and ignorance about a man”<sup>11</sup>. Simmel notes that, in modern social environments, we do not need to have all the knowledge about a particular person we plan to take a common action with. We only need to know certain external facts (but no personal knowledge) in order to have some confidence required for the common action. It is trust that makes this common action possible, while the condition of trust helps us to leap from ignorance to certain knowledge, which is also a facet of the so-called objectivation of social life.

The second approach would suggest that trust is a *rational choice*. Placing trust is making a *bet* about the future, uncertain actions of others that are always associated with *risk*<sup>12</sup>. If we define trust as a bet, we believe that placing trust in someone means expecting particular results from him/her though we cannot really control or predict his/her actions<sup>13</sup>. In this sense, the risk would be realised if the persons we trust would behave contrary to our expectations. The logic of rational trust is based on the following view of a relationship: I put trust in person X, and I am certain that it would be too risky for him/her to terminate our relationship; therefore, my interests partly become his/her interests. In contrast, trust as an inborn trait of personality refers to the inclination towards general trust in people, despite the risk it may bring.<sup>14</sup>

According to the second approach, risk derives from taking some actions or making some deals in *advance*. This imperative of *advance* is obviously risky, since the person can never be absolutely sure about the trustworthiness of other individuals. On the other hand, a minimum level of trust is necessary in order to invoke any social cooperation, any relation *per se*, because in the sphere of social relations, most actions are committed “in advance”, i.e., based on expectations of particular responses.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Simmel, p. 318.

<sup>12</sup> Peter Kollock, “The emergence of exchange structures: an experimental study of uncertainty, commitment, and trust”. *The American Journal of Sociology*. Vol. 100, No. 2., 1994, p. 317.

<sup>13</sup> Piotr Sztompka, *Trust. A Sociological Theory*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999, p. 31.

<sup>14</sup> Russell Hardin, *Trust*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2006, p. 17.

<sup>15</sup> Luhmann, 1979, p. 25.

Following the rational choice approach, trust means suspending the risk and acting as if the risk did not exist<sup>16</sup>. We are inclined to take risks and place trust only if the person we are dealing with is perceived as *trustworthy*. Kollock maintains that to be trustworthy means to become committed to particular exchange partners, and this commitment can be treated as a response to the possible risk of trust, or information asymmetries<sup>17</sup>. Thus placing trust as making a bet is grounded in the anticipation of mutual utility. It implies a certain level of predictability of social actions: when we trust someone, we organize our actions according to the most probable utility-based behaviour of other actors. R. Putnam says that trust encompasses the expectations from the person or institution we trust, since when trusting, we predict his/her/its most probable choices<sup>18</sup>. This idea is reminiscent of the Pareto-optimum situation of the Prisoners' dilemma in game theory: the actor is led to trust the other actor presuming that in future, the latter would be interested in further cooperation (reciprocity). Therefore the mechanism of trust enables confidence in mutual utility in situations where mutual utility cannot be immediately or simultaneously realised. Trust shortens the time for our calculations whether it is expedient to make a decision. One may argue that in this sense, trust itself is not something very rational, even if we can define it in rational terms, but it is essential for rational decision-making to function.

Therefore, despite the different approaches towards trust, it is impossible to clearly distinguish the nature of trust, defining trust as a rational or an inborn trait, when we take into account any social interaction. These dimensions are usually underpinned within trust. On the one hand, trust may include rational basis and moral basis at the same time, while the "weight" of these dimensions may vary depending on different situations: in some situations, it is rationality that becomes a determinant of trust, and in some situations it is morality. On the other hand, different people may emphasise different nature of trust as well.

In order to systematise the notion of trust in a more coherent narrative, it may be useful to apply the conceptualisation of confidence and trust as

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<sup>16</sup> Sztompka, 1999, p. 31.

<sup>17</sup> Kollock, p. 318-19.

<sup>18</sup> Robert Putnam, *Democracies in Flux: The Evolution of Social Capital in Contemporary Society*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004, p. 225.

proposed by Adam B. Seligman. He argues that trust is a modern concept which did not exist in pre-modern or pre-industrial societies. Instead, there was a sense of confidence in well-regulated social systems with defined norms, identities and roles<sup>19</sup>. To make it clearer, confidence is reliance on social norms and traditional structures, whereas trust means voluntary selection, a personal choice to rely on someone/something. Trust comes with the modern age as it does not imply following traditional rules anymore. Trust is self-reflective. It also encompasses risk since the individual, when placing trust, is able (or forced, due to modernisation) to assess the consequences of trust.

At the conceptual level, as a sociological category, trust is basically grounded within three broad thematic concepts: modernisation (Luhmann 1979, Seligman 2000, Beck 1992, Giddens 1997, Uslaner 2002); social capital (Putnam 1993; 2001, Coleman 1988, Fukuyama 1999, Newton 1997), and political/social psychology (Macovici 1993, Kuklinski 2002).

These thematic concepts reveal the possibility of a three-level analysis of trust. Modernisation theories interpret the systematic and structural changes within society and institutions in regard to confidence/trust. Social capital theories address networks within a community and perceive trust as a sort of “public good”, which derives from common actions of citizens. This includes both rational and culturally learned perceptions of trust: in the social capital theoretical framework, the mutual utility of trust, on the one hand, is a rational strategy of social being; on the other hand, the inter-change of trust among society members is not simultaneous, so this makes trust an ethical imperative and not merely a rational choice. And finally, the political/social psychology approach is based on the individual level, focusing on one’s self-interpretation and self-relationship to the society. As a study of mental processes that underlie political judgments and decision making of the individual, political psychology emphasises trust within the narrative of political empowerment and perceived political efficacy referring to the confidence of people that they can make a difference in a political society (Cambell, Gurin and Miller 1954, Paige 1971, Berger and Neuhaus 1977, Kuklinski 2002). Social psychology addresses trust in a wider context of the individual’s sense of belonging to a community. It perceives trust as mental processes that inspire decisions towards the other

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<sup>19</sup> Adam B. Seligman, *The Problem of Trust*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000, p. 36-37.



members of the society or of a more closed community; however, they are not necessarily related to political decisions, opinions, or actions.

Conditionally, we can also distinguish an additional – fourth – theme, which actually derives from the former three types, viz., trust in post-communist societies. This subject is analysed from different perspectives, but the scope and depth of cultural changes in post-communist societies inevitably embrace all three levels of analysis: the systemic (institutional-structural level), the societal (community-level), and the individual.

### **1.2. Forms of trust: social (generalised) trust and political/institutional trust**

Theoretically, trust can be separated into several forms referring to different foundations and functions of trust. Conceptually, we can talk about *social/generalised trust* as trust in people or inter-personal relations, and *institutional trust* as trust in state mechanisms (institutions and rules as well as politicians, political regimes, and political and economic systems). In academic writing, social trust and institutional trust are sometimes conflated within a more abstract notion of *political trust*<sup>20</sup>.

In this paper, by institutional trust I mean trust in the more concrete level of particular institutional arrangements and particular politicians that represent those institutions. I refer to this institutional trust as ‘political trust’. Meanwhile ‘social trust’ is trust in other citizens as fellows of the community I belong to.

When talking about social trust, most scholars emphasise the specific dimension of generalised trust. Usually generalised trust is measured by the question that first appeared in a study in post-war Germany in 1948: “Generally speaking, would you say that most people can be trusted or that you can’t be too careful in dealing with people”. Indeed, the aim of this question is to measure the trust level between strangers and not particularly inside specific groups.<sup>21</sup>

Sztompka argues that social trust could be based on the perception that pluralities of persons of the community I belong to share common traits<sup>22</sup>.

<sup>20</sup> Heywood, Wood, p.148.

<sup>21</sup> Jan Delhey, Kenneth Newton, “Predicting Cross-National Levels of Social Trust. Global Pattern of Nordic Exceptionalism?”. *European Sociological Review*, 21, 2005, p.311.

<sup>22</sup> Sztompka, 1999, p.42.

Going deeper into this insight, in our imagination, these common traits are shaped by modern institutions, by a sense of nationalism which, according to Benedict Anderson, is based on imagined communities sharing the same language, history, culture, and belonging to the same institutional arrangement<sup>23</sup>. Therefore in this sense, social trust is closely related to political trust, as this sort of trust is capable of maintaining our imagination about the similarities we share with other members of the society. Generalised trust is a very relevant category in the modern, individualised community as well as in democratic political systems, because it allows seeing other members of the pluralist community as fellow citizens rather than enemies. In democracy, generalised trust encourages tolerance for pluralism and a variety of lifestyles, which is inevitable for the implementation of fundamental human rights and freedoms in democratic regimes. Moreover, generalised trust allows for peaceful conflict resolution, compromise and consensus, because when people trust each other, they are committed to the same democratic values and principles.<sup>24</sup> With persistence of general trust it becomes more likely that citizens obey laws and rules and do not abuse the rights of other people. Finally, it is also more likely that a society with higher levels of trust will reject any undemocratic alternatives<sup>25</sup>. In fact, this insight is very important when talking about the consolidation of democracy. Mishler and Rose suggest that from a cultural perspective, distrust in society and democratic institutions not only undermines their legitimacy, but “also threatens to increase support for undemocratic regimes”<sup>26</sup>.

It is widely argued that generalised trust is a fundamental prerequisite of civic engagement and collective action. We live in a differentiated society, but despite our differences, we are obliged to share the same democratic values that inspire us to keep a watch on political institutions. To ensure civic engagement and a common purpose of maintaining democracy, we need at

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<sup>23</sup> See more: Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London: Verso 1983.

<sup>24</sup> Rūta Žiliukaitė, “Anatomy of Generalized Trust: Case of Lithuania”. In S.Juknevičius (ed.) *Post-Communist Lithuania*. Vilnius: Gervelė, 2005, p. 87.

<sup>25</sup> Richard Rose, William Mishler, Christian Haerpfer, *Democracy and Its Alternatives: Understanding Post-Communist Societies*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998.

<sup>26</sup> William Mishler, Richard Rose, “What are the Consequences of Political Trust: A Test of Cultural and Institutional Theories in Russia”. *Comparative Political Studies* (November), 2005, p. 1053.

least a minimum level of trust in each other. Comparing various societies, Fukuyama suggests that societies differ in regard to general trust. He explains this by using the metaphor of a trust “radius”. According to Fukuyama, generalised trust means trust spill-over from a concentrated trust radius within family circles to the more abstract level of society and people we are not familiar with. He acknowledges that in some cultures, the radius of trust is much wider than in others.<sup>27</sup>

There are a few main approaches towards studying relationships of social trust and political trust in democracy. Institutional theories state that interpersonal trust is not very relevant for the support of democratic regimes as this support flows not so much from social trust, but rather from citizens’ evaluation of the political and economic performance of the regime<sup>28</sup>. By comparison, cultural theories (including social capital theories) propose that interpersonal or generalised trust is one of the key prerequisites for political trust and democracy support<sup>29</sup>.

Following the latter approach, some relevant academic literature observes a reciprocal relationship between social trust and political trust. Three relations of trust circulation can be recognised in this respect. *First*, trust in a certain system as a set of values empowers us to trust in citizens of this system as we all belong to the same setting of normative rules and general morality. Newton assumes that trust in political institutions, as the background for good governance, may create a capacity for trust (with some institutional precautions included) and positively contributes to generalised (social) trust<sup>30</sup>. Citizens are more willing to trust institutions which produce better policy outcomes. Transparent governments that are responsive to citizens’ needs are a key factor

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<sup>27</sup> The concept of trust “radius” Francis Fukuyama describes in *The Social Virtues and the Creation of Prosperity*. London: Penguin, 1995.

<sup>28</sup> The idea is more concisely elaborated in: William Mishler, Richard Rose, “What are the Consequences of Political Trust: A Test of Cultural and Institutional Theories in Russia”. *Comparative Political Studies* (November), 2005.

<sup>29</sup> See, for example, Robert Putnam, *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy*. Princeton: Princeton University, 1993; Robert Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*. Touchstone Books by Simon & Schuster, 2000.

<sup>30</sup> Kenneth Newton, “Social and Political Trust in Established Democracies”. In: Norris, P. (ed.) *Critical Citizens: Global Support for Democratic Governance*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999, p. 169-170.

in establishing formal community rules and institutions. As Levi argues, “governments provide more than the backdrop for facilitating trust among citizens; governments also influence civic behaviour to the extent they elicit trust or distrust towards themselves”<sup>31</sup>.

*Second*, trust in citizens encourages trust in institutions, as fellow citizens not only shape and represent these institutions, but also elect and control the governing bodies through their common political action. According to Tabellini, based on general trust, the citizens expect and demand higher standards of behaviour from political representatives and are more inclined to vote based on considerations of general social welfare rather than personal criteria<sup>32</sup>. In his studies, Putnam claims that if people are willing to trust strangers, they will also trust politicians and political institutions. He explains this phenomenon using the example of voting: by the act of voting, he says, a citizen expresses his/her belonging to a certain community<sup>33</sup>. To elaborate this idea, the stronger attachment I feel to the community, in social terms, the stronger a need I recognize to involve myself in the political process (to increase civic engagement) and in this way to help building trust in political structures.

*Third*, trust in institutions supports trust in the political system, since institutions operate as the transmission belts of the system: they aggregate our needs and demands to the political level and produce the outcomes, the policies, we live in accordance to. As Tabellini observes, aggregate data across different countries reveal that societies where generalised morality is more widespread have better governance indicators and specialise in sectors that rely on the good functioning of legal systems<sup>34</sup>.

In this way, taking these three relations of trust circulation into account, we can metaphorically compare trust to oil that lubricates the work of the whole political mechanism from the minutest details that empower the system to work properly.

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<sup>31</sup> Margaret Levi, “Social and unsocial capital: A review essay of Robert Putnam’s *Making Democracy Work*”. *Politics and Society*, 24, 1996, p. 51.

<sup>32</sup> Guido Tabellini, “Institutions and Culture”. *Journal of the European Economic Association*, April–May 6(2–3), 2008, p. 261.

<sup>33</sup> See, for instance, Robert Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*. Touchstone Books by Simon & Schuster, 2000.

<sup>34</sup> Tabellini, p. 289.

Social and political trust is closely related to the process of the so-called trust institutionalisation within the political system. In old and in post-communist democracies, the efforts to instil trust have taken very different directions. Below I will briefly focus on the dialectics of trust and liberal democracy and will elaborate on the peculiarities of trust in the period until the post-communist transformation.

## **2. The dialectics of trust and liberal democracy**

In liberal political thinking, trust is a fairly controversial notion<sup>35</sup>. Although sociological theories approach trust and democracy as mutually supportive, according to liberal philosophy, the roots of institutionalisation of the rules of the liberal system lie, in fact, in *distrust*. French philosopher Pierre Rosanvallon maintains that distrust is a natural and legitimate component of democracy, and it functions as a protective mechanism, obliging society to control the democratic processes alongside the formal rules. Rosanvallon refers to this kind of interaction, when members of society maintain the control levers of democracy that have been created for their own common good, as “*counter democracy*”<sup>36</sup>. The philosopher suggests that thinking about democracy solely as an institutionalised system of formal rules and electoral procedures is superficial and erroneous. Democracy encompasses a wide range of resistance forms taken by society against the government, and these forms surpass the limits of formal rules<sup>37</sup>. Democracy refers not only to formal rules, but also to the citizens’ actions related to precaution, monitoring, protest, and evaluation of institutional policy.

Following the thought of liberal philosophy, distrust is the necessary condition for institutions not to override their authority or abuse the rights and freedoms of ordinary citizens. This is presupposed by the key concept of representative democracy: citizens elect representatives to government as they

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<sup>35</sup> For more information on trust controversies, see: Hardin 2006, Rosanvallon 2008.

<sup>36</sup> Pierre Rosanvallon, *Counter-Democracy: Politics in an Age of Distrust*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008, p. 8.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*

are not competitive to wield authority (Montesquieu). Historically, the institutionalisation of distrust in the political system is tightly related to economic liberalism and, of course, the ideas of A. Smith. The Constitution of the United States, which was passed in 1787, has institutionalised distrust primarily in the realm of economics: it inscribes protective mechanisms on behalf of economic liberties against the intervention of the state in economic relations. These mechanisms have been transferred to the more abstract sphere of politics, first of all, by means of the concept of the “division of powers”, which means that institutions competing with each other for power will restrain each other’s possibilities for systemic usurpation. Moreover, distrust is also institutionalised through additional “safeguards”: a multi-party system, election rules, the right to competition, monitoring, and formalities that regulate the time span and periodicity of office terms.<sup>38</sup> In other words, democracy is enshrined here as *enlightened suspicion* that replaces *blind trust*<sup>39</sup>.

However, the constitutional rules and formal safeguard mechanisms alone are not sufficient in order to avoid the abuse of power by institutions. Permanent distrust in the political system put up by the society becomes one of the fundamental substantial institutions for democracy to truly work. This ensures safeguarding precaution and results in the legitimacy of the institutional system. R. Hardin acknowledges that distrust is one of the most principal conditions for modern democracy: power inequality between state institutions and society is too immoderate, yet we have no alternatives to these institutions; consequently, we are dependent on them.<sup>40</sup> This power inequality prevents trust and trustworthiness, since we cannot expect reciprocity from institutions while cooperating with them. Therefore, in this context, trust indeed functions as a counterproductive expression of the society’s relationship with the political system.

Institutionalised distrust creates the background for implicating many “agencies of accountability” in the system that may enforce trustworthiness. These agencies (courts, police, controllers, examination boards, etc.) put

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<sup>38</sup> Stanley I. Benn, Richard S. Peters, *The principles of political thought*. New York : Free Press, 1959, p. 281.

<sup>39</sup> Jamie Harrison, Rob Innes, “Rebuilding Trust”. In Jamie Harrison, Rob Innes, Tim van Zwanenberg (eds.), *Rebuilding Trust in Healthcare*. Oxon: Radcliffe Publishing Ltd, 2003, p. 180.

<sup>40</sup> Hardin, p. 152.

pressure on persons, institutions, or systems that are our targets of trust<sup>41</sup>. Their main function is to keep the regime accountable. But enforcement agencies must be trustworthy themselves. If citizens do not trust these agencies, they will not trust their officials to fulfil their duties<sup>42</sup>.

Rosanvallón maintains that splitting social ties and declining social trust contribute to increasing distrust in government<sup>43</sup>. Yet it should be clarified that, in legal terms, institutionalised political distrust is not the same as perceived political distrust in concrete political institutions. To avoid confusion, it is expedient to differentiate between *formal* and *substantial* political distrust. Formal political (dis)trust would be expressed in the relation towards concrete political institutions. Meanwhile substantial political distrust refers to the permanent distrust of institutional politics/ the system as such, keeping in mind that those institutions dispose of a larger share of power than the society. Hence, in this liberal thinking, political participation – voting, writing petitions, demonstrations, and boycotts – is the expression of substantial political distrust. We participate in elections in order to control the powers of institutions and express our substantial distrust towards them. The more social trust persists in the society, the greater the need of the society to participate in the control of institutionalised power, in other words, to expose substantial institutionalised political distrust. In modern democracy, this substantial distrust is exposed through conventional forms (e.g., voting in elections, writing appeals, participating in election campaigns, and membership in parties) as well as unconventional forms (e.g., signings petitions, joining demonstrations or boycotts) of political participation. The more vibrant civic engagement, the more vigilance is exercised by the society towards the institutional system.

But here we should note that the state of vigilance makes a difference between family-based trust and social trust. When we trust someone in a close familiar network (e.g., family), we do not necessarily feel vigilant about the person. But when it comes to social trust, most probably, we would feel vigilant towards the institutional system, for it is through social (generalised) trust that we become responsible for each other. Interpersonal trust creates responsibility

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<sup>41</sup> Sztompka, 1999, p. 47.

<sup>42</sup> Partha Dasgupta, "Trust as a Commodity". In Diego Gambetta (ed.), *Trust: Making and Breaking Cooperative Relations*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1988, p. 50.

<sup>43</sup> Rosanvallón, p. 10-11.

in a small circle, whereas generalised trust inclines us to feel responsibility for the whole community. This is exactly what makes us vigilant and inspires our political participation – the broad sense of responsibility for the whole community one belongs to.

Exposing substantial institutional distrust does not mean that we need to feel formal political distrust at the same time: on the contrary, social trust may strengthen trust in political institutions/politicians, while social trust functions as a safeguard, a precaution against the possible usurpation of power by institutions.

But could we also claim the opposite: decreasing social trust also decreases the need to control these institutions substantially? This question is very relevant in modern contexts where social ties are diminishing. Rosanvallon contends this statement. He does not agree that institutionalised distrust could be decreased in modern democracy. In his opinion, the substantial distrust in institutionalised democratic systems cannot disappear; it is the scope, the forms, and the goals of expressing it that are changing. Voting is no longer the sole means of political participation. Forms of political participation are becoming increasingly “non-political”, e.g., protests, political consumerism, Internet blogs, and politically orientated performances – for these forms are not organised through conventional political channels. But this does not mean, according to Rosanvallon, that citizens have lost their interest in or motivation to reduce the powers of institutions.<sup>44</sup>

Another relevant question (which has not been addressed in Rosanvallon’s study) is what enables substantial political distrust while forms of expressing distrust are changing and social trust in general is decreasing. Are these new forms of control of substantial political distrust (often referred to as protest politics in sociological literature) destructive towards the political system? Or is social trust, alongside with technological development, scientific progress, secularisation, rationalisation, and socio-economic change, transformed into other types of trust, for instance, into individual self-confidence, as we do not rely on fate, or on others so much? And could it be that it is this self-confidence that inspires today’s substantial institutional distrust in the political system?

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid, p. 19-27.



To sum up, there is a trust-related contradiction in liberal political society: social trust between individuals, which is the prerequisite and the outcome of active civic engagement and political participation, also strengthens the legally prescribed (institutionalised) political distrust, or vigilance towards institutions, in substantive terms. However, this dialectic of trust becomes even more controversial when speaking about post-communist societies. In post-communist states, liberal democracy is not the naturally evolved form of the political system; therefore, paraphrasing Rosanvallon, these societies have not institutionalised distrust as an aspect of the political consciousness of the citizenry. On the contrary, post-communist societies are used to enforced institutionalised trust – as a projection of the relationship between the communist government and the society. Since in post-communist societies, the democratic political system was installed from above, we can hardly talk about institutionalised distrust in the sense of consolidated democracies. Obviously, there is institutional and substantial distrust (or mistrust) in post-communist societies, but it is reflected in the political consciousness and does not inspire activism on the part of society, or efforts to control the powers of the political system. In other words, formal and substantial distrust does not contribute to the political participation here, as this distrust is not perceived in the same ways as in consolidated democracies. Here we can talk about a paradox of “counter-democracy”, whereby in these societies, only nominal levers of political control (institutionalised trust) persist as they do not derive from the political resolve of the citizens. Finally, the inherited and sometimes even increasing alienation between citizens widens the gap between the political system and the society.

### **3. Trust and post-communist transformation**

For thorough post-communist research, trust is not only relevant as a category *per se*, but as the impetus for common social and political action, more specifically, for political participation and perceived political efficacy. In order to conceptualise the transformation of trust in a wider political and cultural context, it is expedient to deconstruct the category of trust taking into account the pre-communist past, communist legacies, and the transformation phase.

### 3.1. The pre-communist phase

Needless to mention, almost all post-communist countries did not experience strong statehood since, after World War I, the emerging democracies were more than fragile and very soon turned into autocratic regimes.

In the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, when Western societies experienced liberation movements against absolute monarchies and the Spring of Nations (resulting in the creation of nation states), most Central and Eastern European countries underwent quite different processes. For example, as early as 1721, big parts of the territories of Estonia and Latvia were incorporated into the Russian Empire. Poland's and Lithuanian's territories lost their independence after three partitions, the last taking place in 1795. The territories of the modern Czech and Slovak Republics belonged to the Austro-Hungarian Empire, but, due to the social unrests and uprisings, their civic and political rights were particularly restricted while the serfs were emancipated quite late. Historically, all post-communist nations were under the rule of despotic governments, which created political distrust in alien rule and social generalised distrust between individuals due to a hierarchical model of the society where powerful elites exploited the uneducated peasants and slaves.<sup>45</sup>

Although after the World War I, the newly established nation states began to develop their (pseudo)democratic systems (with reservations – general and equal elections, electoral competition, and peaceful change of governing parties), this process did not reach the consolidation phase and did not become the “only game in town”. Societies remained mostly traditional; most people continued to live in rural areas, on semi-subsistence farms (in agricultural economies). As Jacek Kochanowicz admits, in such traditional agrarian societies, the number of social contacts was limited; trust was bounded only within the circle of people with whom one was familiar, while foreigners and strangers were distrusted. Moreover, since farmers lived in semi-subsistence economies, trust in market institutions was of limited importance as well. Finally, common people did not perceive political trust, or trust in the government as a relevant issue, since the pre-modern government was far from individuals. The state mostly relied

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<sup>45</sup> Read more: Douglass C. North, *Structure and Change in Economic History*. New York: London, 1981.

on coercion, but not on confidence.<sup>46</sup> As described above, in Western societies, partial trust was gradually transformed into more generalised trust along with the process of modernisation (technological and science progress, urbanisation, and globalisation of market systems). But, as will be explained below, this kind of modernisation has never really taken place in post-communist societies.

### **3.2. Communist rule**

The establishment of communist regimes in some countries in 1940 and then again after World War II was associated with modernisation, both politically and economically. However, scholars show that only limited modernisation was achieved in post-communist societies relative to the Western context, or goals set in social theories. Kochanowicz argues that, despite the so-called modernisation, communist societies retained strong elements of the traditional social organisation and cultural legacies of the rural society. Roughly speaking, communist modernisation just transferred peasant traditions to the cities. Even a large part of urban workers were kept commuting from villages, hence the traditional family structure still prevailed. Moreover, the pre-war urban culture (the axis of individualism-based modernisation) was also destroyed by the regime.<sup>47</sup> The peasant cultural-type cities meant that generalised trust was not evolving, as it was supposed to evolve in industrial individualist societies where, due to many social contacts, partial morality (including partial trust) was replaced with more generalised morality (including generalised trust). With this peasant culture, the real trust-based contacts remained limited while other social contacts with less familiar people and strangers included more distrust, as was the case in traditional societies. This restriction of trust created the background to the formation of the so-called familialism: trust in the communist society was not generalised, but atomised within small family circles and did not pass

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<sup>46</sup> Jacek Kochanowicz, "Trust, confidence and social capital in Poland: a historical perspective". In: Markova, I. (ed.), *Trust and Democratic Transition in Post-Communist Europe*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004, p. 69-70.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 74.

beyond these circles. Some authors note that the traditional organisation of the family was tightly related to very egoistic attitudes towards the outside of the family circle; this behaviour, lacking the perception of the common good, is described as “amoral familialism”<sup>48</sup>. As Kochanowicz puts it,

The economics of shortage and the lack of a notion of the common good during Communism legitimised a particular understanding of honesty which enabled shirking, cheating, and petty stealing from the workplace as long as it led to supplying the family with things necessarily for survival and functioning in society<sup>49</sup>.

Amoral familialism erased any trust at a wider societal level and prevented the emergence of civil society as a trust penetrator, with a perception of social responsibility, the common good and common action.

In terms of political trust, the communist regime presented itself as totally trustworthy, so it was considered an act of disloyalty or even a crime to overtly doubt the trustworthiness of the political system, the Communist party and state institutions.<sup>50</sup> The Communist party required trust from citizens placing this category in opposition to fear: if the individual did not trust the system, he/she became an enemy to the regime. Methodologically, the institutional system was also organised on the basis of a prescribed “trust”: no checks and balances mechanisms, no political competition, no fair and free elections, no institutional “safeguards”. On the other hand, this prescribed political trust (without any legal realm for suspicion) concurrently generated very high expectations from the state. Substantially, there was low real trust in the one-party communist system among citizens, but there was a high level of expectations in regard to what the state should offer or provide.<sup>51</sup>

Despite the formally required political trust, the communist state insisted that citizens be suspicious in terms of social trust. An atmosphere of fear of politically disloyal citizens was created. The state aimed at maintaining

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<sup>48</sup> For more information, see E. Tarkowska, J. Tarkowski, “Social Disintegration in Poland: Civil Society or Amoral Familialism?” *Telos*, 89, 1991.

<sup>49</sup> Kochanowicz, p. 75.

<sup>50</sup> Ivana Markova, I., *Trust and Democratic Transition in Post-Communist Europe*. Oxford: Oxford University press, 2004, p. 8.

<sup>51</sup> Kochanowicz, p. 72.

permanent distrust in social relations and at shattering wider networks of trust within society, since these networks might initiate opposition to the communist regime. There was no real trust in vertical relations (trust in employees, higher party members, professors at universities, etc.), but at the same time, there was dependence on them based on fear. Obviously, communist social engineering was psychologically grounded. Referring to historical colonial uprisings and revolutions, it was seen that successful were those revolutions which were capable of mobilising not only masses (at the horizontal level), but also the middle classes and elites (at the vertical level). Therefore, the communist regime did everything it could to destroy real trust at the vertical level thereby preventing social vertical partnerships, which might function as an opposition to the formal regime. Based on fear and dependence, these vertical social ties instead functioned as the backbone of the regime and guaranteed its stability.<sup>52</sup>

To sum up, the communist regime generated very peculiar specifics in regard to trust. As to *generalised trust*, communism contributed to a more pragmatic, calculated substance of trust, but not the real, good-will based trust, as it persists in the family circle. This real trust barely transferred into society and transformed into generalised trust. According to Fukuyama, the trust radius was limited only to the family circle and did not spill over to generalised trust. We might say that trust turned out to be pragmatic and selfish in the sense that it was related to some expectations for the self; this trust also involved a higher perception of risk of social action, as it was connected with fear and low trustworthiness of not-familiar people. In contrast, in democratic systems, generalised trust originates from the spill-over of real trust in family circles and is consequently related more to the perceived notion and benefits of the common good, which is at the core of social capital. As regards *political trust*, during the communist regime, it was largely characterised by declarative nature as it was imposed from above and referred to the opposition of fear. Eventually, in the political realm, the category of trust did not translate into a notion or feeling of any sort. There was no conscious trustworthiness of the subject; therefore, the capacities of building trust towards political institutions could not evolve among the citizens.

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<sup>52</sup> Sztompka, 1999, p. 152-153.

### 3.3. The transformation phase

As it was mentioned earlier, the discussion of trust shifts will be based on the phase of early transformation, as it was the most turbulent and most remarkable in terms of cultural trauma. The early transformation years indeed created the background for the culture of “winners” and “losers”, which jeopardised the sense of trust tremendously. The phase lasted approximately until 1997-1999 when the partial economic and political stabilisation took place<sup>53</sup> and the prospects for EU membership created optimistic self-confidence among individuals and boosted trust in institutions.

Despite the short period of existence of the so-called partial solidarity immediately preceding and following the proclaimed political independence and free elections in post-communist societies, the antinomy of trust and fear still remained and was even sharpened due to traumatic processes of early transformation. The expectations of citizens were not rewarded by quick results and desired political outcomes, the short successes of private business actions were often replaced by economic set-backs, corruption, and bribery, since styles of behaviour in the old regime still remained omnipresent during the transformation process. Although political and economic reforms rapidly took place, cultural patterns, identities, values, and attitudes did not undergo any sudden changes and remained reserved, based on suspicion and passivity.

In the time of early transformation, trust among society members became much more risky because of unstable institutional, economic, and social conditions. Economically speaking, the projection of trust anticipated much too high a cost of risk because of specific cultural legacies as well as the lack of legal mechanisms that could compensate associated risks. In the first decades of the transition, the post-communist system was heavily corrupted; consequently, legal enforcement of laws and justice was weak. Courts were not functioning properly, political institutions seemed to be nominal and subordinated to certain clans and cliques. Communist political capital and politics-based social relations were actually transformed into economic capital during the early

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<sup>53</sup> This conditional term of the early phase of transformation is also presented as an argument in: Lauristin, M., & Vihalemm, P. “The political agenda during different periods of Estonian transformation: external and internal factors”. In M. Lauristin & P. Vihalemm (Eds.), *Estonia's transition to the EU*. New York: Routledge, 2010.

years of transition; this was made possible by the unfair mechanisms of privatisation, which benefited the old *nomenklatura*.<sup>54</sup> As a result, some of the old Communist party members became businessmen or managers of state-owned companies, some of them remained in politics, and these communist legacy-based relationships created the background for the establishment of influential oligarchic clans in most of post-communist societies. Alongside the decadent reputation of political, economic and social structures, these new informal political and economic clans also decreased the reputation of the political system and promoted distrust.<sup>55</sup>

Similarly, Sztompka emphasizes the long-lasting trauma of the social and cultural change: the despotic previous government and rapid political, economic, social reforms undermined trust both as a common action and as an organisational ability. These basic aspects of trust transformation have conditioned, according to Sztompka, the formation of a specific culture in the post-communist region – a *culture of suspicion*, or *culture of cynicism*, as he calls it<sup>56</sup>. Like the culture of trust, the culture of suspicion is also a product of institutional and national narratives, and it affects relationships at the political, economic, and social levels. At the political level, the culture of suspicion results in distrust in formal institutions and lack of motivation to engage with the political system by any means of political participation. It also means a growing gap between political elites and citizens, the state and the society, as the latter have no motivation or feel inefficient to control the actions of the former. This sense of learned political helplessness is perceived by many sociologists as being more of a psychological product, but not as stemming from real practice, as the surveys on political participation in post-communist societies show that most of the respondents feel inefficient to influence political processes although they have not tried to do so in practice<sup>57</sup>.

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<sup>54</sup> See more in: Marc Morje Howard, *The Weaknesses of Civil Society in Post-Communist Europe*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.

<sup>55</sup> Kochanowicz, p. 79.

<sup>56</sup> Piotr Sztompka, "Civilizational Incompetence: The Trap of Post-Communist Societies". *Zeitschrift für Sociologie 1*, 1993.

<sup>57</sup> Rūta Žiliukaitė, Ainė Ramonaitė, et al. (ed.), *Neatrasta galia. Lietuvos pilietinės visuomenės žemėlapis*. Vilnius: Versus Aureus, 2006, p. 9.

Finally, society inherited a very paternalistic view of the state. The state was perceived as being responsible for all spheres of life, since, during the post-communist transformation, citizens were hardly used to taking responsibility for their own actions in personal as well as in social, economic, and political life. For all failures, the state was to be blamed. At the same time, people experienced helplessness and low self-efficacy when it came to changing the political situation and influencing political decisions. The communist experience and post-communist traumas naturally placed the state and the people in opposition.

As mentioned before, the mainstream of cultural theories underlines the modern substance of trust, creating the antinomy between trust and risk. Risk, in fact, is a self-reflexive notion, since one decides on the trustworthiness of another subject: whether it is expedient to take risks and what gains or losses trust might produce. In the communist regime and later on in post-communist societies, this antinomy of trust and risk hardly makes sense. As it was mentioned above, the communist regime and the so-called trustworthiness of the communist regime were grounded in the mechanisms of coercion, terror, and fear. The unstable post-communist institutional arrangements also deeply contributed to fear. The unpredictable situation did not allow for any reasonable-based evaluation of trustworthiness, which is why it did not include any “making a bet” mechanism. Therefore, while trust in democracy is opposite to *risk* as a self-reflexive notion (which also includes responsibility for one’s decisions), under post-communist conditions, trust comes in opposition to *fear*, which we cannot control. In this sense, trust is no longer a rational response. The dimension of fear utterly erases real trust, as well as prohibits any common social interaction. Together with the loss of human dignity, it brings about passivity, non-involvement, and non-communication.<sup>58</sup> Consequently, the perceived generalised and political trust in post-communist societies barely associates with social commitment or a good-willing attitude. In comparison, in old democracies, political participation is largely based on community networks and a common sense of responsibility for social/political actions (though these networks, according to Putnam and Norris, are also waning). Meanwhile in post-communist democracies, the lack of generalised

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<sup>58</sup> Markova, p. 8.



trust or even distrust, intolerance, apathy, or suspicion towards society makes political participation apathetic and lacking vibrancy, since common political action is not supported at the societal level.

Moreover, in its antinomy to fear, political trust loses its substance of rationality and self-reflexiveness. This perceived juxtaposition undoubtedly creates favourable conditions for political elites and populist parties to escalate fear-related agenda in the political realm. According to Rosanvallon, fear escalation weakens citizens' vigilance towards the substantive political system, political institutions, and rules. It erases the natural willingness of society to use institutionalised levers to expose the *substantial* political distrust thereby sustaining the constitutionally prescribed mechanisms of the liberal democratic regime.

### **Conclusions**

The present article aimed at analysing the notion of trust from different theoretical perspectives and at examining the trajectories of trust transformation in mature and post-communist societies. The theoretical conceptualisation of the category of trust displayed competing approaches towards trust, emphasising a rational, or cultural, moral side of trust. The variety of suggested insights towards trust might be useful in defining two different forms of trust: social (generalised) and political trust. For social trust, the most comprehensive theoretical narrative is suggested by social capital theories, which include both rational and inborn-cultural attributes to render the notion of trust. Political trust is found its reflection in the philosophical discussion on the dialectics of liberalism and trust as well as in the idea of democracy as a system of institutionalised distrust.

To sum up the theoretical considerations on trust in post-communist societies, several remarks should be made. First, scholars analysing communist regimes and their aftermath suggest that social trust in post-communist democracies lacks attitudes based on good will and mostly relies on benefit estimates. Due to the communist experience, social trust became limited to the "strategically egoistic" attitude in order to fulfil one's needs, even if using illegal methods. This perception is gradually transformed into sub-consciousness; the notion of social trust becomes pervasive, and robustly attached to rational calculations. On the contrary, although social trust in western-type modernised

societies is also related to the rational choice, civil society, with its perception of the common good and common action, also requires a non-rational dimension of trust. With these further considerations into post-communist transformation, we might observe that the pragmatic, calculative, formal trust is more likely to persist in the societal (general) realm, whereas real, good-natured trust is bounded almost entirely by the family or close friends. In other words, in post-communist societies, generalised trust is rather of a pragmatic nature and refers to the estimates of the usefulness of the trust action. It might even be said that in post-communist societies, as a certain moral value, culturally generalised trust lacks its substance of good will, social responsibility, and long-term reciprocity in social relations.

Second, political trust in post-communist societies is weakly associated with self-reflexiveness and rational choice due to the damaged perception of trustworthiness and trust antinomy to fear, but less to risk. The exposure of fear restrains post-communist citizens from active political engagement, prompts political alienation, and perverts the state-society relationship. Finally, the deeply rooted suspicion and state of fear in individual consciousness create favourable conditions for politicians and political parties to escalate fear factor as the efficient instrument to attract political support at the domestic as well as foreign policy levels.