

***How the declining social capital in  
Bulgaria boosted critical  
low trust in the institutions?***

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BULGARIAN PARTICIPATION IN THE ESS:  
ACADEMIC AND POLICY  
BENEFITS AND CHALLENGES  
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## **Social capital: is a common understanding possible?**

- Tensions: The concept reflects the tensions in social sciences (economics vs. political economy)
- Ambiguity: the term deploys from the heterodox economics in attempt to overcome the problems of neoclassical economics
- Oxymoronic: is there non-social capital? (Ben Fine)

# Definitions of social capital

- All those resources than an actor can mobilize and/or profit from because of his **embeddedness in a network of relations** with other actors. (Esser 2012);
- Social capital **is the aggregate of the actual or potential resources** which are linked to possession of a durable network. (Granovetter);
- **Norms** are those common **values** of a group which influence an individual's behavior through being internalized as **preferences** (Becker). The social makes the individual.;
- The state is the culmination of a process of **concentration of different species of capital**: capital of physical force or instruments of coercion (army, police), economic capital, cultural or (better) informational capital, and symbolic capital [and] leads indeed to the emergence of a specific, property **state capital**. (Bourdieu);
- Social capital is “defined by its function... a variety of entities having two characteristics in common... **some aspect of social structure** and they facilitate certain actions of individuals who are within the structure” (Coleman);
- Stocks of social capital, such as **trust, norms, and networks**, tend to be self-reinforcing and cumulative. Virtuous circles result in social equilibrium with high levels of **cooperation, trust, reciprocity, civic engagement, and collective well-being** (Putnam)

## **Social capital: highlights**

- Relations, inter-relations and connectedness matter
- “Invisible glue” that helps societies keep the balance between stability and progress
- Embedded in society
- Historically and socially determined
- Descriptive and normative implications

## Social capital: on the other side

### ■ System social capital:

- Refers to the existence of shared norms, aimed at an efficient control of the members' behavior within a collectivity;
- Includes all members

### ■ Relational social capital:

- In a possession of a group within the society
- May occur social dysfunctions (social goods vs social bads)

## Approach to the political context

- General and major changes in political establishment 30 years ago
- Society-centered origins of social capital
  - Bottom-up: civil society and voluntary activities; engagement
- Institution-centred origins of social capital
  - Top-down: how social capital is embedded and shaped by political institutions
- Interrelations: how social capital affects institutions' performance vis-à-vis the trust they attract

## Pre-transition political context

- Existence of a horizontal network together with a vertical hierarchy which cumulating point was the communist party
- Workers engaged in different forms of social communication
- Set normative matrix – ideology of state socialism
- High organized social density
- Close ties between workers enabled transfer of their costs to other groups through the state

## Transition political context

- Shock doctrine
- Destroyed the habitus of system social capital
- Erasure the tradition of social and political participation
- Stigmatization
- Collapse of social cohesion
- Dark political times (Wendy Brown): hyper fast incurring processes
- Austerity measures and decompressing state



## Transfer of resources

- Bulgarian transition's design couldn't happen the transfer of economic, social and cultural resources during systematic changes
- Instead of sustainable development, Bulgarian society marked a **sustainable decline**
- Activating the relational social capital
  - Individuals from the upper floors of the communist party
  - Specific skills and competences
  - Own ethical system
  - Externalized costs for making profit to society

## Results

- Corruption
- Inefficient public spending
- Low level of accountability
- Low trust between individuals, groups and firms
- Weak society
- Anomie
- Critically low confidence in institutions
- Failed democratic representation

# Empirical evidence

## No trust at all in\*

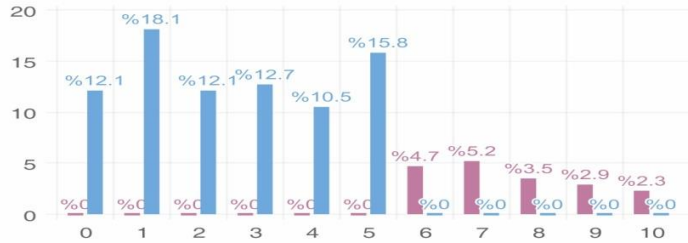


\*Based on data by the

# Empirical evidence

## Trust between people\*

2008

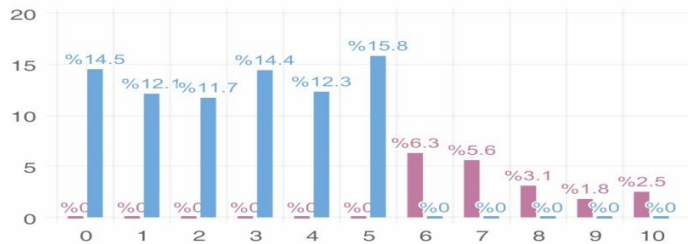


Most people can be trusted  
You can't be too careful



**65.5 % think you can't trust most people**

2010

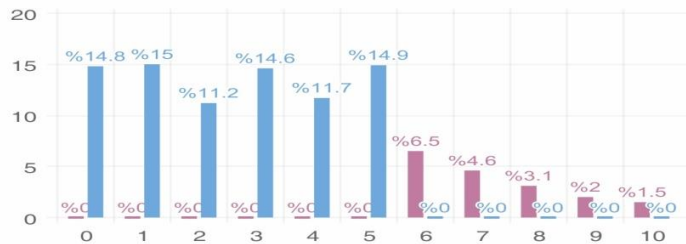


Most people can be trusted  
You can't be too careful



**65 % think you can't trust most people**

2012



Most people can be trusted  
You can't be too careful



**67.3 % think you can't trust most people**

\*Based on data by the

# Empirical evidence

## How satisfied with: \*

### Life as a whole

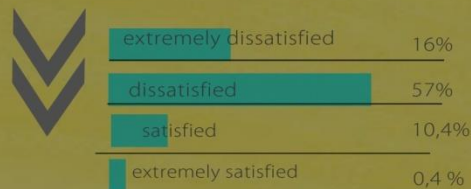


### Present state of economy

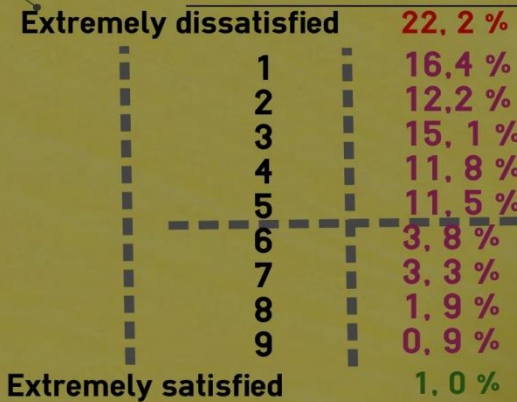


90,1 % are dissatisfied

### The way democracy works



### Government



\*Based on data for 2012 by the