Trust, Kinship and Civil Society in a Post-socialist Slovakian Village

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Trust, Kinship and Civil Society in a Post-socialist Slovakian Village. In spite of the rich theoretical literature in the social sciences, trust is a concept which has showed comparatively little applicability to the field of anthropology. Anthropological accounts of trust are scarce because of the recognized difficulty to contextualize this notion in people's everyday practices and ideas. This paper argues that, in order to constitute a useful analytical tool, trust must be empirically explored as a social fact. In the context of rapidly transforming Eastern Europe, actors make attentive uses of trust and mistrust as strategic means to define relatedness and to achieve control of economic transactions. The end of state socialism and the dramatic changes brought about by the democratic transformation have taught the villagers of Kráľová to look for secure avenues of social and economic interaction. I argue that here mistrust is not to be seen as the negation of social relations, cooperation and collective action. Mistrust becomes an expression of people's preoccupation with the uncertainty of present times, as well as the reflection of the social processes underpinning human action. On the other hand, trust is never absolute, even in family and kin relations, where strong emotions and impending moral obligations may undermine its social nature.
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Introduction

Trust is a powerful notion in the social sciences and its importance lies in the quality of human relations. Any form of human interaction, from love to business relations has a degree of trust inherent in it. Also, the smooth functioning of formal organizations and institutions needs a degree of trust from the sides of the citizens, in order to achieve legitimacy and be perceived as just.

Trusting becomes the crucial strategy to deal with an uncertain, unpredictable future, i.e. to convey expectations that others will not turn against us. Thus, trust has two main characteristics: it is about belief (in others' goodwill) and commitment. When trusting, actors are committed to action and risk in regards to a particular aim.

The recent popularity of the notion in the social sciences is illustrated by the large number of works that have dealt with trust in all disciplines. By far the richest literature on trust in interpersonal and institutional relations is to be found in economic and sociological theory. In economic theory, trust can be applied as a parameter to evaluate cooperation and competition in transactions beyond the mere rational scope of individual choices (Deutsch 1973; Williamson 1985; Dasgupta 1988; Coleman 1990; Hardin 1991). A degree of trust is necessary in every economic transaction where there is risk of deception. In this context, the relevance of trust depends on the degree of knowledge that the trustor has of the trustee's intentions. Trust and knowledge can reduce transaction costs by enhancing cooperation. Therefore, high degrees of trust favour economic transactions and, at macro-level, constitute an important prerequisite for institutional functioning and economic progress.

In sociological theory (and in the political sciences), trust determines patterns of interaction. Trust is a useful variable to deal with social order, conflict, identity building and the functions of formal organizations (Coleman 1990; Putnam 1993; Misztal 1998; Seligman 1997; Sztompka 1999). Generalized social trust is necessary to foster cooperation, mutuality and reciprocity in interpersonal relations. On the other hand, a lack of trust and the prevalence of mistrust hamper social order and collective action (by many authors referred as "civil society"). Again, at macro-level, social and cultural contexts characterized by low-levels of generalized trust to manifest problems such as corruption, the spreading of patron-client relations, slow economic development and political instability (Luhmann 1979; Eisenstadt and Roniger 1984; Gambetta 1988).

In spite of this rich literature, anthropological accounts of trust and of its variations in social and cultural contexts are scarce (Aguilar 1984; Hart 1988; Rabinowitz 1992; Roeber 1994; Menning 1997; Overing 2003; Torsello 2003a). There may be several reasons for this. First, trust is a notion of problematic empirical definition. Whereas it is clear, theoretically, what are the social functions of trust, in practice it is often difficult to distinguish between trust, goodwill, confidence and more general notions such as friendship and solidarity? Secondly, defining trust as a basic component of a group or a country may lead to generalizations about its cultural nature and characteristics. These generalizations clearly contrast with the anthropological search for diversity instead of unity and with its tendency to escape holistic approaches to human practices. Thirdly, trust is not only a social, but also a cognitive process. The act of trusting a person interests not only the sphere of the actual human relationship, but also the perceptions, emotions and morals which underpin action. However, it is exactly moving beyond the classical dichotomy: individual-societal perspective, between actions and ideas, that innovative approaches to the quality and context of human interaction can be introduced.

This paper is a contribution to fill some of the gaps in anthropological theory on the application of trust to societies in transformation. I maintain that in order to understand the social functions of trust at ground level it is necessary to

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investigate the relationship between trust and social uncertainty when this is at stake, in rapidly changing societies. This is particularly true in the case of post-socialist Europe, where individuals are led by the external conditions to balance their choices with the pursuit of short and long-term interests.
The main research questions of this paper are: What is the thread between social uncertainty and the functioning of social and economic institutions? What are the social bases on which trust and mistrust are constructed and they underpin processes of social interaction? Are the family and the kin group free from social mistrust?

Methodology

I undertook fieldwork research in the village of Kráľová[2] (southern Slovakia) spending over 15 months of continuous residence in the community. Most of the data have been collected through interviews, observation and participation in local agricultural, social, religious and cultural activities. Historical background data were obtained from archival references and from cadastral registers. An important contribution to my research has come from a household survey operated over a sample of 100 household selected randomly. The questionnaire contained questions on four different sections: demography, property relations, trust and social networks[3]. Formulating the questions in the shape of a questionnaire provided a useful tool for manifesting my interest in village relations and people's ideas about them. On the other hand, by being allowed to penetrate into villagers' homes and discuss the questionnaire I was making an important step to gain their trust.

The first section of the paper introduces the village in a historical perspective. The second section analyzes villagers' attitudes and opinion about changing relations of trust. In the third section, I present some results from the observation of local practices that point out at the different approaches actors may have to trust in respect with the degree of social relatedness and the temporality within which interaction takes place.

The village: a historical introduction

The village of Kráľová is situated in the south-western part of Slovakia, in the fertile and largely agricultural region of the Danubian Lowland in the Šaľa district. It lies on the western bank of the Váh River, at only four kilometres distance from the present administrative and industrial centre of Šaľa (about 22 000 inhabitants). The village is inhabited by 1531 persons, 723 of which are economically active. The population is 83.1 percent ethnic Hungarian[4], 15.5 percent Slovak and 1.4 percent of other ethnic composition (2001).

The village belonged historically to the northern territories of the Hungarian Kingdom, in the fertile and largely agricultural Danubian Lowland. Kráľová's feudal land tenure system was characterised by the absence of noble families residing in the community, the presence of a small percentage of large landowners who kept the economic and social control of the community for almost two centuries and by the high degree of fragmentation of plots. In 1918, after the dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, the village became part of the newly founded Czechoslovak Republic. The community belonged to Czechoslovakia throughout the socialist period with exception for the World War II interval (1938-1945) when Hungary occupied a part of the southern Slovak territory including the village region. In 1950, socialist collectivisation was begun on the whole Czechoslovak territory and the process continued violently until the end of the 1950s, encountering a fierce resistance of village peasants. It was only in 1960 that the socialist cooperative was able to start its activity farm all village land. Afterwards, in 1973, merging of the cooperative transferred the institution's management board from the village to the town of Šaľa unifying this with four other neighbouring cooperatives. The 1960-1970 decade constituted a dynamic period for the region. The steady industrialisation and urbanisation processes brought in the region a vast inflow of workforce from the middle Slovakian countryside. Also many villagers found employment in the local factory and in other industrial centres in the capital, Bratislava.

Following the end of state socialism (1989) and the split of Czechoslovakia (1993), the village presently belongs to one of the most economically dynamic areas in Slovakia thanks to large foreign investment in industry.

My choice of Kráľová is not accidental. I was looking for a community which could illustrate the vicissitudes of social change in the Slovakian rural society. Of course, some practical reasons counted too. The choice was also influenced by my knowledge of the Hungarian language, and by the willingness of a family from the village to rent me a room, which allowed me to penetrate deeply into the everyday family life and business.

[2] I conducted extensive fieldwork research in the village from May 2000 to September 2001 as part of my PhD research program at the Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology, Halle/Saale (Germany). Follow-up research trips and updating have been repeatedly undertaken up to present.

[3] More accurate details on the survey results can be found in other publications: Torsello 2005 and forthcoming.

[4] The region where the village is situated constitutes the southern Hungarian minority belt of Slovakia. The Hungarian minority in Slovakia counts about 600 000 people, making Slovakia the second country (after Romania) for concentration of Hungarians.

Social interaction after 1989

Many village informants complained that one of the outcomes of the post-1989 transformation has been the diminishing occasions of interaction between community members. This, matched to the high degree of uncertainty generated by the transformation has posed serious concerns about the community life.

During socialism, people used to work fewer hours per day than in present times, many worked together in village brigades and after work it was customary to stop in the pubs for a drink and chat together. All these daily life episodes have dramatically decreased in the post-socialist period. Today villagers are less free of managing their spare time because they are busy to make ends meet. During the agricultural season, most of village males hurry home after work to change their clothes and farm their family plots which back in the 1980s was partly considered as a "hobby" (see Czegledy 2001), or extra-work performed to obtain self-realization and to improve the quality of the family nutrition. After 1989, family plots have come to serve important complements to the domestic economy. On the other hand, the number of those (males and females) who spend seasons or even years working in western European countries (mainly Austria, Germany and Italy) has steadily increased in the last five years.

Increased social "distance" between village members is one outcome of the changes in social relations and cognitive orientations underpinning trust. In the findings of the survey, to the question: "Do you think that after 1989 it is possible to: 1) trust people more; 2) trust people in the same way; 3) trust people less than before", 2 percent chose the first option, 22 percent the second and 76 percent the third.

Another result of the survey enquiry concerned more properly the sphere of trust. Respondents were asked to attribute a level of trust (from 0 to 5, the highest score) to 14 different institutions. These include: family, close relatives, distant relatives, neighbours, friends, villagers, work colleagues, the church, local officials,[5] politicians, the agricultural cooperative, village social and cultural clubs, the state and the EU. The highest mean level of trust was obtained by the *family*[6] with 4.56, followed by the category *close relatives* (3.86) and *friends* (3.54). The *cooperative* (JRD) (1.87), the *state* (1.35) and finally *politicians* (1.19) occupied the lower end of the spectrum. Mid-range positions were occupied by *work colleagues* (2.98) and *social and cultural clubs* (2.79). On the other hand, *villagers* scored rather poorly with 2.42.

[5] These include the village mayor, the vice-mayor, the two accountants and the two clerks who all work in the municipal office.

[6] This is intended here as the complex of people residing in one household and their offspring who do not reside in the household.

From these data it emerges that opinions about trust depend on the degree of interaction between people and institutions: as a general rule, the more frequent the interaction the higher the trust. Upper trust scores (all average levels above 3) are composed of family, relatives, friends, neighbours and distant relatives. This is the closest cluster to people, the one to which trust relations can be ascribed as vital components of the everyday social life. Lower trust scores (below 2.5) are expressed towards institutions that villagers perceive as more distant and less familiar (the state, the cooperative, local officials and the EU). People have fewer or no occasions of everyday interaction with local officers, producing less positive levels of trust.

The category of *villagers* is the most problematic. Villagers are, more than *distant relatives* and the formal organizations, the persons with whom interaction takes place daily. The comparatively low level of trust in this category expresses vividly informants' preoccupation with the degree of social interaction that characterizes post-socialism. The problem is that, when faced with the question "What is your trust level towards villagers?", the respondent may, more or less consciously, eliminate from his mental maps those persons to whom he has already referred in other social categories such as "relatives", "neighbours" and even "friends". There may be two ways of dealing with this methodological obstacle. The first is to render problematic even those categories (such as the family and kinship) to which higher trust levels are attributed. The second is to relate generalized, social trust to individual interest. Ethnographic analyses of trust in interpersonal relations suggest that stereotypes about groups, processes of identity formation and ethnic boundaries may become blurred if individual interest oriented trust is at stake (Rabinowtz 1992; Menning 1997). From what has been presented so far, the case of Kráľová appears to prove this idea. Low trust in community-level social relations is a product of social uncertainty (Yamagishi 2002), but it is also brought about by diminished instances of social interaction.

Trust and civil society in the village

One of the stories that theorists of the post-socialist transition tell is that the low level of generalized trust accounts, in post-socialist Eastern Europe, for the difficulty in establishing satisfactory levels of "civil society" and collective action. In a comparative study of three countries: Estonia, Slovenia and Denmark, Bjornskow (2002) argues that civic engagement is the social capital proxy that is most related to individual income. His data indicate that levels of civic engagement in Estonia and Slovenia are comparable but only represent one half of the Danish level (Bjornskow 2002: 13). This argument is followed by others (Letki 1999; Raiser et al 2001; Bougarel 2002), who indicate in the enhancement

of collective action and secondary associations one of the ways in which Central Eastern European countries can consolidate democratisation and economic development.

Following this perspective one would be tempted to conclude that, considering the generalized uttered mistrust in village relations, Kráľová's inhabitants cannot achieve high levels of collective engagement in public life. This position, however, does not find confirmation in the observation of village practices. It is true that Kráľová's people often complained about the decreased opportunities of village-level social interaction, but this reflects more their nostalgic reconstruction of the past in which, in spite of the limitations of the totalitarian regime, there was a satisfactorily good standard of well-being and less stress on household survival strategies.

Today, there are about fourteen social and cultural clubs active in the village. These include: the Pensioners Club, the Hunters Club, the Fishermen Club, the Holy Mary Congregation, the Red Cross Association, the Parish Group, the Football Club, the Csemadok, the Scouts, the Choir, the Theatre Club, the Hungarian Youth Cultural Club, the Latin Dance Club and the Fitness Club. Their activities vary according to the type of club, but roughly speaking there are in Kráľová at least three weekly scheduled events and a large monthly event.[7] The Hungarian Cultural Association (Csemadok), made up by an adult and a youth section, is particularly active in sponsoring and organizing village events, especially in the case of large seasonal festivals.

Here, I will describe three of such occasions. The first is the Children Day (on June 1st), a socialist holiday which is still celebrated in the village. The entertainment program was mainly, but not exclusively, dedicated to the children. In the mid-afternoon, after most villagers had come back from work, participants met in the football stadium. Here children followed their own program including gymnastic performances, running competition, games and quizzes. On the other hand, adults enjoyed the show drinking beer and eating stewed beef, sausages and fish soup offered by the Hunters and the Fishermen Clubs. Later in the afternoon the village Football club made its contribution, with a tournament between the three village football teams. Music and a disco accompanied the rest of the day until late in the evening. Participation to this event was large, not only on the children side, but also by adults, many of them actually remained until late at night to chat and drink.

[7] Weekly events are mainly club meetings, training and rehearsal sessions in the case of sport and artistic clubs. Monthly schedules include weekend bus trips to concerts, festivals or other cultural events in Hungary and Bohemia and village cultural events (concerts, theatre and choir performances).

The second event is the August campfire, held in one of the few forest spaces along the riverside. Villagers explained that this is a new festival, introduced only in 1999, but from its size one can judge that it will last long. Village families arrange small stands in which sausage, fish, potatoes, corn, stewed meat and cakes could be tasted after purchasing tickets at low cost. There are usually more music venues, one with traditional Hungarian, Slovak and Gipsy music, and others with rock and disco music led by local DJs. Children games and a small fair completed the festival. In the last four editions a few thousand people took part in the campfire, many of them from the neighbouring town and other villages. This eventually called the attention of the local media in the news program, leading the event to become part of the regional cultural attractions in summer time, even if the villagers fear that excessive external participation may jeopardize the character of village festival.

The third occasion is the celebration of St. Stephen. This is a newly established event already in its fourth year. The Csemadok (Hungarian Cultural Association), with the help of the municipal office and three other village clubs (the Pensioners' Club, the Hunters' Club and the Fishermen's Club) sponsors the evening event. The program combines the formal assembly of the Csemadok with leisure activities such as a banquet, a lottery, a concert, a theatre performance and the final disco. The first part of the event is reserved to members, even though the security guards would not restrict others from the entrance. The second part is open to anyone who purchases a ticket and usually includes dinner, music, dances, the choir and other artistic performances from the village clubs. In 2001, when I attended it, the evening counted over 300 participants and the money collected in that occasion was used for sponsoring more cultural programs during the year.

The last five years, following favourable political and economic circumstances[8], have been particularly productive for the village's cultural clubs. The number of these associations and the involvement of Kráľová people in their events stand alone to demonstrate that a lack of generalized trust does not necessarily bring about the absence of civic ties and secondary forms of association.[9]

What is, then, the thread between uttered mistrust and the active collective life of the community? Should generalized mistrust prevail in the village, its

[8] The village clubs and especially the Hungarian Cultural Club received state subsidies under socialism. In the first half of the 1990s their economic situation became difficult due to the cuts in state budget for cultural events and also to unfavourable ethnic policies. The situation improved steadily since 1998 when cultural clubs became able to access foreign funds and, due to the requirements of the EU accession scheme, more funding became available to minority cultural organizations.

[9] Another case of collective action, about which I dealt extensively elsewhere (Torsello 2003a), is religious festivals. As in other post-socialist contexts, religiosity has increasingly gained importance in the community in terms of the values attached to its social expression, but also as a moment in which conveying collective efforts.

inhabitants would not be capable (and willing) to organize formal structures and moments of collective action, as some theorists seem to argue. Moreover, collective participation in these events fosters interpersonal trust and reduce distances, thus the generalized mistrust paradigm becomes a weak thesis (see also Hann 1996). This is particularly true because participation in the village's social and cultural clubs does not follow kinship lines, but it is mediated by the individuals' interests in public events.

Trust and kinship

Alongside the thesis of low generalized trust, a second position commonly assumed by those who examined the social relations in post-socialist countries emphasizes that kin ties and interpersonal networks have increasingly acquired importance in the life of individuals. Anthropological studies have proved that the demise of state socialism has often brought about the breaking of solidarity, avenues of social cooperation and the actual reduction of moments of interaction (Kaneff 1996; Pine 1996).

Pine, in her study of a mountain village in southern Poland, points out that after 1989 villagers (and particularly women) have retreated to the household (Pine 2002: 104). This is the outcome of the dissolution of the socialist relations of productions which had consolidated the position of female members as both economic producers and social reproducers of the household. The household has become the locus of everyday survival strategies and this is what consolidates alliances and solidarity among kin members, fostering the production of trust. However, the question is what happens when the excessive importance of kinship leads people to "over-invest" in family ties?

As expressed above, community members complain about the lack of moments of everyday social interaction, whereas family and kin networks have gained momentum. Actors have been forced to adapt to the changing situations and doing this meant questioning values, cognitive orientations and strategies which belonged to the former regime (Hann 2002). Therefore, when the subsistence of the household is at stake, the whole set of obligations, emotions and rational calculations on which trust is grounded can become significantly affected. Kinship, in conditions of profound social change, is the main depository of interpersonal trust, and actors perceive a moral obligation to comply with this reality.

Referring to a mountain village in southern Italy, Banfield's influential thesis (1958) indicated that local people proved mistrustful not only vis-à-vis local and state institutions, but also in relation to other relatives and neighbours. His famous "amoral familist" ethos would have led individuals to prefer the pursuit of the interests of the strict family circle (i.e. the nuclear family), neglecting and exploiting other ties[10].

This paradigm has recently been applied also to describe the everyday reality in post-socialist countries (Sztompka 1999; Misztal 2001; Rose-Ackerman 2001). The thesis maintained by these authors is that these countries' low levels of generalized trust (both in institutions and personal relations) would be the legacies of the socialist past that, with its daily practices, eradicated the social bases of trustworthiness. As in southern Italy, the moral of trusting remains mainly pertinent to the kinship sphere. This is confirmed by the quantitative findings mentioned above, and by some peculiar forms of village practices.

Trust is constructed at three levels: the emotional, the moral and the instrumentally rational. This entails that in the course of their everyday life people follow complex processes of choice and strategy making. Emotionally driven actors may be led to externalise their profound mistrust in the post-socialist transformation, transferring these emotions onto the sphere of daily interpersonal relations. This is what conduces to identify villagers with the general anxiety for the present.

Conversely, this same preoccupation for the post-socialist transformation amplifies the importance of kin and family relations, stressing the idea that family interest need to prevail in order to ensure the survival (and profit) of the whole kin group. Familism, however, does not function as an ethos that replaces the everyday social trust among villagers, but it is itself an expression of villagers' strategic consideration of the value of interpersonal networks (Torsello 2003b). This has two implications: first, trust is never absolute, even among family members; second, the difference between short and long-term oriented strategies permeates the manner in which trustworthiness and untrustworthiness are perceived. The former is the content of this section.

Due to the strong emotional load on kin ties, these ties can become perceived as burdensome and even object of mistrust. The crucial role of kinship in assuring the successful economic and social reproduction of village households may indeed distort perceptions of trustworthiness. A clear indication of this is the villagers' feeling that family ties have become too oppressive and interfering with the life choices of the single individuals. It is true that the family is potentially the most precious source of help but, at the same time, the weight of obligations and reciprocity entailed in these trust relations is often too heavy and can breed negative emotions towards the kin group.

[10] Banfield's theory has been followed and criticised by a number of scholars in the generations to come. Among the recent revivals see Putnam (1993). Critiques to Banfield's argument came earlier (Silverman 1966, Miller 1974) and more recently in Italian (Meloni 1997).

One expression of the uneasiness in kin relations is their excessive formalism which may be used to conceal the real emotions underpinning these relations. Although it is not good practice to manifest negative feelings towards kin members, forms of behaviour morally conceived as "proper" in kinship relations may actually contribute to endanger trust among relatives. Dániel is a descendant of a family of large landowners, a well-reputed family in the village. Most of his relatives live in the community and so his wife's kin. He once commented:

The family is a double-edged weapon: when it's large there are so many advantages. You can count on people when you need some help and you'll get it. They've your same blood after all. But then there is so much weight in the obligations, which at times are even bigger than the advantages themselves. You are never sure of what this or that other relative may think. All you have to do is to guess that you acted or spoke in the most appropriate way.

(Dániel, b.1968) At the time of this remark, Dániel had just left his silent but crowded family table at the New Year's village dinner party to invite me for a drink with some of his friends. We were on the second floor of the village Culture House. In the main hall the atmosphere seemed one of celebration, even though not much noise and laughter was coming from the tables. Dániel explained that he often felt too embarrassed at those events, because the etiquette expected him to be with his relatives, rather than with his friends. He considered that a quick escape with their friends for a toast was a good opportunity to talk in a more relaxed atmosphere. I asked him if this excess of formalism in family relations was not only a matter of the event and of being at the eyes of the whole community. "You know –he said with emotional transport, it is always like this. You have to behave properly in public and at home. Do you think that I can go to my uncle and tell him openly what I think of him? No way! No matter where you are, things are the same. It is the family and you have to respect it".

Colby (1967) states that distrust is one of the reasons for the proliferation of complex etiquette in Mesoamerican Indian cultures. He maintains that etiquette brings in a certain amount of social control in situations where trust must be established. Etiquette reduces anxiety because it structures behaviour in a predictable way for the purpose of establishing what he defines as social exchange. In the case of Kráľová the situation is slightly different: instrumentality in interpersonal relations bridges the gap between subjectively oriented, emotional perceptions and moral obligations. Thus, in conditions of high uncertainty, the patterns and ethics of kin interaction can become prioritised to the pursuit of individual goals. This is what moves actors to define the family as a "double-edged weapon": all villagers agree on the crucial importance of the family in present days, but they are also aware of the high costs of maintaining long-lasting trust relations within the family.

The use that some villagers make of part of their economic assets (land, machinery, labour and agricultural products) is re-dimensioned towards the need of investing in social networks. For instance, farming on family land can become more evidently a social else than an economic act, involving a complex system of mutuality, reciprocity and exchange of labour and products between kin members even when these practices are unviable. One particular practice observed is that kin members are summoned to help working on the family plots (ploughing, seeding and harvesting) even when the size of the plots (in average from 0.5 to 0.75 ha) does not require the extra workforce. The long-term rationale behind these choices is that relative ties and trust are strengthened through mutual help, and that once help has been provided this can be expected in reciprocation. Besides, by involving kin members in the process of domestic production it is possible to reduce the instances of envy and suspect about the actual outcomes of the production.

On the merely economic, short-time interest, side, however, investments in social rather than economic assets have their drawbacks: frequent gifts, labour exchanges and rental of machines and tools may hamper the household's production processes. Those who seem ready to shoulder these costs in terms of the more lasting benefits that they can get from maintaining "active" their networks with kin members are those who prove unwilling to renounce to the benefits of building trust and solidarity among kin members. These are mainly owners with relatively small plots but large kin networks in the community. Conversely, owners who partly sell their products on the market on the ground that they farm relatively larger plots (from 1 to 2ha) show less propensity to resort to redundant workforce.

Recently, following the EU accession of the country, kinship ties are slowly losing importance. Increased and improved social and work mobility especially among the young generation severely undermine the idea that the family is the ultimate depository of interpersonal trust. On the one hand, the number of young villagers who study or spend significant time living abroad has steadily grown since the 1990s.

On the other hand, a number of village mothers (aged between 35-50) increasingly migrate seasonally to western European countries to work as elderly care-takers or hospital nurses.

This is not to argue that trust in family members is decreasing, but there is a tendency towards the weakening of the bases of daily interaction among kin members. What social uncertainty has brought about in the 1990s today seems to

be replaced by augmented physical distance among relatives, which in turn may lighten the burden of kinship obligations. It is too early, however, to interpret the real social outcomes of this trend, which will be visible in the years to come.

Conclusions

The analytical use of trust to describe patterns of interpersonal and kin relations has not found sufficient space in anthropological theory. The complexity of the notion and the risk that this may be used as a mere "blanket term" of difficult empirical contextualization is what discouraged ethnographic treatment of trust.
Under post-socialism the importance of managing interpersonal relations makes up one of the strategic ways to adapt to the profound historical changes. How, then, to interpret the outspoken mistrust dominant in the community? The survey results clearly indicate that the family, friends and close relatives are the best scoring in trust level. At instrumental level family members are the potentially most profitable sources of help and assistance in case of need. After all, being a relative is always a matter of blood. However, too much emphasis on family relations has its drawbacks. Rigid etiquettes of behaviour and costly social networks may lead people to accumulate negative emotions and eventually threaten the delicate structure of kin relationships. Kinship may become a costly option when one needs to follow attentive behavioural strategies in order not to lose the vital support from relatives. This, however, does not mean that kinship is to be conceived as the domain of absolute trust. Rather, it seems more appropriate to underline that kinship networks are identified with the pursuit of personal interests, on the one hand, and the preoccupation of being able to manage the present, on the other.

As for the link between interpersonal trust and collective action, the community has shown to possess satisfactory levels of civil society, considering the rich activity of its social and cultural clubs. This is, again, in contrast to the quantitative findings that ascribe to respondents low levels of trust in the general category "villagers". If one had to judge, as many observers of the post-socialist transformation do, from the ideas and expressions of generalized mistrust, there would be little space to the understanding of local practices. This leads to the point that "familism" is not the best analytical receipt to understand the post-socialist transformation. As in the case of kinship relations, the tension is felt between the need to invest in long-term social relations and the everyday personal goals. Kinship and civil society become two important social arena in which in which it is possible to test the validity of trust as an analytical tool to explore social change.

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