

## SOCIOLOGY

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### Debating the role of trust in the society of postmodernization

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**Abstract.** Trust as a sociological construct has been widely debated in recent times. Trust has been viewed as an important “basis” of the social consensus. However, the impact and the mechanism explaining the trust functioning and its impact on the social relations has yet to be explored. Ronald Inglehart in his theory of postmodernization underlines the role of trust along with such important values as tolerance, responsibility, friendship and self-developing. The purpose of this paper is to analyze the empirical data of the WVS. This analysis allows us to build new ways of conceptualization of trust in social theory.

**Keywords:** *trust, postmodernization, social capital, values, capitalism*

Trust has become an important element of social life. Recently in many societies a high demand for trust has appeared, as trust is claimed to be missed from the social space. Although there is no final definition of trust in social theory, nor there is a fully conceptualized methodology of the empirical research of trust in society, some theoretical basis must be used for debating the essence of trust in society. Most commonly used theoretical approaches to trust are: rational choice theory of R. Hardin and school of economy, the theory of social capital of R. Putman, the theory of trust as culture by P. Stompka and the theory of postmodernization of R. Inglehart. Only the last approach demonstrates the empirical data on trust in a society integrated in the World Values Survey research.

The theory of R. Inglehart is aimed to explicit the new level of the social evolution, which author calls “post-materialism”, developing it from the Marx’s theory of capitalism. R. Inglehart emphasizes the role of values and welfare in the social life. Therefore, trust in the theory of postmodernization is seen in the context of welfare and democratization.

The aim of the article is to get a closer look at the arguments of R. Inglehart about trust, its’ role in the society of postmodernization and how these arguments are reflected in the empirical data of World Values Survey 2009-2014 (WVS).

The idea about connection between trust and democracy in the modern society was raised also by A. Giddens [5]. His point is that personal freedom in modern societies requires a higher level of social impersonal trust, which is formed and supported by social institutions and expert knowledge. P. Stompka underlines the role of democracy as a power of free individuals which allows them to exercise control over the performance of the social institutions [10]. Civil culture gains the importance and backs up trust in trust in the society. C. Welzer in association with R. Inglehart argues that the democratization of the society derives from preliminary cultural changes [1]. The discussion concerning the ideas of R. Inglehart explores what kind of changes in cultural attitudes should derive for reaching postmaterialistic social state. S. Flanagan follows the ideas of libertization against authoritarianism in the values. While Oddbjorn Knutsen strengthens the raise idea of ecological awareness versus the values of a rapid economic growth. The discussion is yet to continue, but some tendencies may be outlined. Personal freedom re-

leases individual resources and contributes to the rational individual choice, which individual becomes free to make without any pressure from the surrounding. How can be trust viewed under such circumstances and what in turn does it contribute to? We shall follow the arguments of R. Inglehart about the trust in the society of postmodernization and see if his ideas received any empirical support.

Before approaching the issue of trust we must outline the characteristics of a person in society of postmodernization. As argues R. Inglehart, a person of postmodernization finally receives freedom from materialistic needs, what allows independent personal development and self-expression. In social terms this process means considerable changes in the system of personal values and thus in a way of living. A person, who is keen to self-expression, does not orient himself to the social status or income. In the labor he would put personal interest in job a head prestige or profit. Also such matters as quality of free time and communication gain big importance. Consequently, activity of such person in social life changes too. R. Inglehart mentions that social life moves off all the traditional standards in all aspects including marriage, religion, sexual orientation, etc. Generally speaking, a person of post-materialism can be described as one who is interested in own development, who is discovering himself in different challenges, is keen to personal actualization and existential security and, what is important, who is free from any influence from the environment. R. Inglehart underlines, that freedom here is not just a state of being independent from social pressure, but it is a much stronger feeling of personal existential autonomy, which must be confirmed through individual life with every free choice and action [1].

What would be the role of trust in such society and where it would derive from? R. Inglehart admits the role of trust in society of postmodernization as meaningful, because it contributes into intensification of social interactions and reciprocity. The nature of trust, as may be read through the lines, arises from the fact of humanity. Even the growing individualism, as R. Inglehart emphasizes, may be humanistic, not egocentric [1]. Therefore, a person trusts another person because of human nature, which requires “acknowledgement” of another person, his free will and subjectivity. Trust enhances social relations between people and any society can exist without them.

Basing on the R. Putnam's theory of "social capital", R. Inglehart specifies that in society of postmodernization trust mostly will be represented in the "bridging" relations between people. The "bonding" relations, actually, may damage the social capital since they encourage a person trust only people from his environment or referent group [1]. This thesis is underpinned by F. Fukuyama, who argues that social capital creates a possibility of social relations without any hierarchy or formal norms. Basing on a free will, people choose voluntary cooperation and then work out together norms and rules of such collaboration. Although the author of notion "social capital" J. Coleman gave the most important role to negative norms and sanctions as to supporting mechanisms of social capital, F. Fukuyama spreads the normative component of self-organization to all kinds of social relations and suggests that self-organization contributes to emergence of positive, fair social norms [4]. Under these conditions interpersonal trust receives encouragement because it derives from the awareness of own dignity, rests on the consensus and supported by the norms.

Therefore, R. Inglehart suggests a new model of society. It is a human-oriented society where human development syndrome is in full power due to the availability of wide variety of possibilities for personal choice. What can be said about this society? It is democratic, economically prosperous, non-ideological and devoted to equality and free will in all possible aspects of interpersonal interrelations (race, gender, sexual orientation etc.). The society must be self-organized on the principles of individual responsibility which is connected with individual autonomy and free will of every individual. R. Inglehart argues that the stage of postmodernization and humanization is inevitable for any society. Therefore we must debate trust as a *generalized* trust, a quality which includes possible attitude to all people. That is why the question in WVS sounds: "generally speaking, would you say that most people can be trusted or that you need to be very careful in dealing with people?"

Following the logic of functioning generalized trust in a society of postmodernization, there must be institutionalization of this kind of trusting relations through the associations and normative context of interaction. Since we can not observe generalized trust directly, we should see it through the social relations, which would symbolize it. In a regular way we divide the institutions to economical, political, cultural and associations. R. Putnam emphasizes the role of the volunteering associations, as the main source for the social capital and reciprocity. But that would be a too narrow way to see the institutionalization of the generalized trust in society of postmodernization. However, on the other hand, there is a danger of exaggeration of the role of generalized trust in the social life. R. Inglehart starts with economical well-being of a society, basing on the prerogative of knowledge, human capital and domination in economy of sphere of services. Consequently, there must be at least a basic presumption that despite free will and self-realization, the productive process should go on and here the individual himself takes responsibility not as a worker, but as a producer of well-being. As R. Inglehart argues further in his book, this basic presumption of economic individual disappears under the growth of values of self-realization [1]. The data

of WVS shows close correlation between the level of economic development and the values of self-realization. Still it is obvious, that the value of services and the rules of the economical exchange stem from the agreement and contract between people, which created the field for their cooperation. Otherwise, it is hardly possible to compare the cost of laundry service and dentist surgery. Therefore, before trust occurs, social agreement is supposed and, sometimes, even social solidarity organized in terms, for example, of Durkheim's organic solidarity. In this case, generalized trust may be transformed in system trust or even confidence, since the system introduces relative norms and sanctions for the social exchange [2].

But following the conditions of individual structuring, one important point must be mentioned: it is the necessity of personal effectiveness. The individual can not choose to stay away from the economy, he is obliged to develop own human capital and apply it. Otherwise, he can not feel self-sufficient nor guarantee own well-being. An individual becomes an economic value himself. We can underpin this idea by thesis of M. Foucault, who notices that the end of capitalism was the end of history and since we have no historical temporality, it was substituted by economical growth [3]. The ideological emptiness of the social world and constant call for self-realization result in the subject of pleasure and happiness, a consumer already in the process of production. In such world of independent individuals trust gains important significance since it contributes to social order and serves as a form of initial socialization. The WVS demonstrates that the most trusting countries Sweden (60,1%), New Zealand (55,3%), Australia (51,4%) do not show high percentage of membership in any organizations (religious, self-help, environmental or professional). The highest activity they show in sport organizations (22,5% – Sweden, 37% – New Zealand, 31,6% – Australia) and in art, music and educational organization (12,1% – Sweden, 23,4% – New Zealand, 16,9% – Australia) [11]. We can assume that traditional forms of associations and social life are not demanded while the forms, oriented on the new visions (esp. art and science) are requested. In interpretation of critical theory it stands for escape from the society of effectiveness. As B. Groys mentions: "It is this artistic, social, and political alpinism – in its bourgeois and Socialist forms – from which modern and contemporary art tries to save us. Modern art is made against the natural gift. It does not develop "human potential" but annuls it" [7]. Research of social capital by D. Stolle also debates the positive role of the associations and social networks in accumulating the social capital [8]. Accordingly, we can foresee that in the future the activity in the art field, new techniques of self-realization closely connected with undermining the routine world will be acquiring more popularity. While in the traditional forms of interaction the new ways to perform "old" tasks will be the most rewarding, but not so acknowledged as revolutionary ideas (what is true for such new ideas of organizing management in business which demonstrate "Google" or "Faceook"). Of course, here some forms of generalized trust will be necessary. But, same question again, how can they be accumulated or institutionalized?

To answer this question we should turn to the political action and, thus, to M. Foucault again. In his ideas on

biopolitics he notices that in the modern world the genesis of the political practices resulted in the unexpected concept: the society concedes to the idea of “population” which is governed by the state [3]. Under these conditions the ideas about social solidarity, social “unity” have been changed to the notions of well-being, health rate, manners of behavior of the population. Therefore, in modern discourse we often hear the idea about society without qualities, about lack of social roots, about missed social impulse. We can also relate in this issue to the theory of “third place” (R. Oldenburg), which is aimed to overcome this gap of social disintegration by uniting individuals in volunteering activity on the base of social projecting. This search for new social integration shows that the idea of society as a place of interpersonal community disappears, while trust can not be institutionalized solely through state apparatus. Under such circumstances the institutionalization of generalized trust acquires new difficulties as generalized trust gains temporal phenomenal quality.

The constant raising of the idea of socialization has encouraged yet another discussion on trust and its’ roots and another theoretical approach to the problem of trust in post-capitalist society. It is a discussion on identity, which was questioned by A. Giddens in postmodern society [6]. Although R. Inglehart claims that the individual gains the perception of own “self” quite easily during his up-bringing on the conditions of existential security, the question still remains on the mechanisms of self-comprehension as a creative, free from pressure, mature individuality and on the reflective identity with other people. Did the conditions of postmodernization give rise to the new identities and new rules of interaction? Despite globalization mostly people see themselves as parts of local community. For Sweden, New Zealand and Australia it is more than 60% agreement. In the same way the importance of the family and close friends is not argued [11].

Following the logic of society of postmodernization the uniqueness of every individual is taken for granted. But how does this uniqueness receive support and acknowledgement from the society of unique individuals? (Surely, this must be not simple “like” on the “facebook”). A. Seligmen points to the fact that in the modern society the uniqueness of an individual was considered along with the social roles [2]. So the difference between the directives of social role and the individual deviation from them gave the impression of the originality and individuality of a person. However, this deviation from the role was based on the idea of showing personal “self”. So judging from the deviation from the role and knowing the ensemble of the roles of this individual, one could make out the presentation about this individual and decide trust him or not. N. Luhman expresses similar ideas when he analyzes the basics of personal trust. The permanence of the personal performance and positive deviation in own role contributes to personal trust. Once the personal trust was established it may be questioned by jokes and variable ac-

tions etc. [9]. In the society of postmodernization personal identity receives a possibility to be as flexible, as a person wants. Thankfully to the global tendencies one can try being yoga, Muslim or Christian or atheist or combine these religions in accord with his preferences. The role directives and expectations are losing their sense. But what we see through is a person without stable performance and it is extremely difficult to foresee the behavior of such person. Basing on these ideas A. Seligmen admits that the distance between a personality and his roles is getting bigger and bigger and the threat of role conflict increases accordingly. That is why it is becoming more and more problematic for people to establish the first contact of trusting relations. This phenomenon, naturally, receives high attention from the state. The state becomes a guarantee of the “secure” interaction and thus it passes the laws for every social interaction. Now a person may be sure that his actions can be checked with legal regulations and can be punished as well. What used to be a form of collective consciousness now becomes an impersonal prevailing obligation. Although R. Inglehart demonstrates the reduction of the collective pressure on individual as a positive change in the society of postmodernization, it has other quite negative effects. One more tendency of such status quo, as A. Seligmen notices, is a return to primordial identities. With the disappearance of group identities a person strongly needs some rooting grounds for own self-presentation. Primordial identities such as race, nations, gender, sexual orientation are those criteria of identification. They refer to spiritual similarity, which does not need trust for mutual reciprocity and is not questioned by a person, because they seem to be the most basic, natural ones. Today we can see the mobilization of nationalistic movements, the demonstration of sexual belonging in everyday dress codes, constant race conflicts etc. This tendency received unexpected massive continuation on the level of macro social processes: these are constant demonstration against the economical and social policy in Western Europe, political separation of regions such as Catalonia in Spain or Scotland in the UK, national outbreak in Ukraine, undermining of global domination between the USA and Russia etc.

These outlined tendencies show that people today still need the ideas of morality, of feeling of collective unity and personal belonging to something different than own “free-from-any-connections self” and personal ideas of self-realization. Generalized trust in this situation is questioned since it requires some primary social consensus. And this social consensus is much easier to build on the basis of common primordial identity, such as nation. Will generalized trust receive support from social institutions or will it reside in informal private social interaction? It is not clear now, but we can see that the theory of postmodernization gives a rich basis for further theoretical discussion on essence and role of trust in society.

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**Просвирнина О.Г. Дискутируя о доверии в обществе постмодернизации**

**Аннотация.** Доверие как социологический конструкт в последнее время активно обсуждается. Доверие рассматривается, как важный «базис» социального консенсуса. Тем не менее, влияние и механизм экспликации функционирования доверия и его влияния на социальные отношения еще предстоит изучить. Рональд Инглхарт в своей теории постмодернизации подчеркивает роль доверия наравне с такими ценностями, как толерантность, ответственность, дружба и саморазвитие. Цель данной статьи – анализ эмпирических данных исследования «Измерение мировых ценностей». Этот анализ поможет нам построить новые пути концептуализации доверия в социальной теории.

**Ключевые слова:** доверие, постмодернизация, социальный капитал, ценности, капитализм