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Social Trust in the Baltic Sea Region

Ole Borre

Zusammenfassung

Zwischenmenschliches Vertrauen, oder auch soziales Vertrauen, gilt im Allgemeinen als Schlüsselfaktor sowohl für die wirtschaftliche als auch für die demokratische Entwicklung. Ein Vergleich der Staaten in der Ostseeregion zeigt soziales Vertrauen auf der Ebene der einzelnen Bürger in Zusammenhang mit deren Engagement in sozialen und politischen Verbänden sowie in Zusammenhang mit Erziehungswerten wie Phantasie und Unabhängigkeit anstelle von Gehorsam und Anpassung. Sozialer Status und politisches Zugehörigkeitsgefühl sind hingegen weniger wichtig. Dennoch ist selbst nach Analyse dieser Faktoren das soziale Vertrauen in den westlichen Staaten deutlich größer als in den östlichen, ehemals kommunistischen Staaten. Dies deutet darauf hin, dass zur Herausbildung von sozialem Vertrauen nationale und historische Erfahrungen ebenfalls von Bedeutung sind.

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Introduction¹

Living in a complex society requires a good deal of trust in other people. This includes trust in anonymous others, or what Anthony Giddens calls *faceless commitments*.² A person who keeps thinking that the water in the water pipe may be poisoned, or that the car coming against him may turn across the street without warning, will soon be deemed paranoid and advised to subject himself to psychiatric treatment. The capacity for trusting people whom one does not know is a necessary prerequisite for living in a modern society. For this reason social trust, or interpersonal trust, is considered an important sociological variable, as well as a precondition for economic behaviour beyond the simple exchange of goods. By extending trust to strangers, one is able to obtain valuable information and form rational expectations as a basis for interaction with other members of society.

But social trust is also an important political attitude. In many totalitarian societies the citizens are unwilling to reveal their critical opinions even to close friends or colleagues because they fear that the information will be passed on to the authorities. And in a country that is torn by internal conflict, many citizens prefer to join the silent majority rather than risk being considered a menace to one or the other of the struggling parties. Hence, the level of social trust becomes an indicator of a healthy civil society.

In the following we shall seek to put social trust into a broader perspective

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by studying its correlates in the ten countries bordering the Baltic Sea, Germany being divided into East and West Germany. Does the level of social trust vary systematically among these countries, and among different groups within each country, or is social trust and distrust concentrated in particular groups in one country, but other groups in other countries? Can we explain the national level of trust by focusing on individual factors, or is there an important amount of variation in the national figures? First, however, we look back towards earlier findings and hypotheses.

Previous research

For their pioneering five-nation study in 1959–60, Gabriel Almond and Sidney Verba used a simple interview question to measure social trust:

Generally speaking, would you say that most people can be trusted or that you can't be too careful in dealing with other people?

Their hypothesis, that social trust is a component of a democratic political culture, or what they called a participant civic culture, was corroborated both in regard to the different levels of social trust in the five nations and at the level of the individual respondents. As for the first, the proportion who thought that most people can be trusted varied from a high level of 56 to 58 percent in England and the United States to a low of seven percent in Italy, West-Germany taking an intermediate position with 24 percent trusting.³ Thus the two countries with a long democratic tradition contrasted strongly with the two that had recently been subject to a fascist rule. Later studies which repeated the question corroborated this interpretation: between 1960 and 1990 the proportion with social trust increased in Italy to 35 percent, while in West Germany the level of 39 percent was reached already in 1976.⁴

Meanwhile the interview question had spread to surveys in a number of countries via comparative projects such as the *Eurobarometer* and the *European Values Survey* (EVS). On the basis of data from the 1980s Ronald Inglehart studied a sample of 23 nations and found clear structural relations between the level of social trust and the national income per inhabitant.⁵ Based on data from the 1990s he found in a sample of 43 nations a clear relation between the percentage showing social trust and the length of unbroken democratic rule. Almost all those countries that had a democratic rule already by 1920 had a level of trust between 40 and 70 percent, while almost all those that did not have a democratic rule by 1990 had a level between 15 and 40 percent. Altogether, democratic stability was explained by social trust just as much as by average national income.⁶

In general, theories are not quite clear about the causal direction of the relationships between the level of trust, the income level, and democratic performance. It is probably best to think of these variables as interacting in a system: an increase in either variable is hypothesized to have a positive effect on the other two. However, this type of positive feedback appears not to work as expected in predicting the development of social trust in some mature democracies. For example, in some western countries the level of social trust has not been rising over the last couple of decades in spite of

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the fact that the level of income has risen considerably. What may be true for the development into a modern society needs not be true for the continued development into a postmodern society. The most prominent example is the United States, where the decline of social trust has caused some alarm. In 1995 Robert Putnam noted that the percentage showing social trust in the USA had fallen from 58 in 1960 to 37 in 1990, a decline which he believes to be a reflection of dissolution of communities, a growing individualism, and a crisis of the institutional life.⁷ West Germany also exhibits a case of declining social trust, at least in some periods, and its level of 32 percent in 1999 does not match its economic growth compared with the 1970s.

Actually, the Scandinavian countries are the only ones in which the level of social trust has been above 50 percent both in the 1981 and 1990 survey of the *European Values Survey*.⁸ In Denmark and Sweden the level had risen to 66 percent in the 1999 values survey, and the 2001 election survey in Denmark showed a level of 74 percent. This may be thought strange, as the 1990s have been marked by ethnic tensions in Denmark and an economic downturn in Sweden, and crime has been a cause of concern in both countries. Apparently, the complacency found in the Scandinavian political culture tends to override the political problems discussed so eagerly in the mass media. By contrast, the level of trust is as low as 17 percent in Latvia and 19 percent in Poland, even though these countries are characterized by an advancing economy and a positive development of civil society.

In the following, we shall attempt to account for the variation in social trust at the level of individual citizens of the ten countries in the Baltic Sea area, using various hypotheses as the point of departure.

Social networks

Mass society theory of the 1950s held that a pluralist society, as opposed to a mass society, was characterized by networks of organisations and voluntary associations. These networks acted as a buffer zone between the government and the people. Extremist ideologies had few chances of dominating a society in which most people interacted in overlapping associations and received impulses from many directions. These networks and groups were able to mobilize public opinion whenever the government seemed to go too far in its policies or to lose contact with the general population. Kornhauser's *The Politics of Mass Society* is a prominent example of such theorising.⁹

In recent years broadly similar ideas have found expression in Robert Putnam's concept of *social capital*, which is defined as "trust, norms, and networks" which generate stability and progress in a society or local community.¹⁰ According to this theory, social trust is one of the three main components of social capital, and we may suppose that it develops in close interaction with the other two components.

According to this theory we can expect social trust to be related to association memberships among our respondents. The *European Values Survey* (EVS) 1999 asks questions about membership of several types of organisation. Arranging the countries by the percentage of respondents who

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are association members, we find indeed a fair correlation with the level of trust:

Table 1: Pct. members of voluntary associations and pct. with social trust.

	pct. members of voluntary associations	pct. with social trust
Sweden	96.1	66.3
Denmark	84.4	66.5
Finland	80.0	58.0
West Germany	52.5	32.9
East Germany	43.7	42.6
Estonia	33.1	22.8
Russia	32.2	23.7
Latvia	31.5	17.1
Poland	25.8	18.9
Lithuania	16.5	24.9
average	49.6	37.4

source: European Values Survey 1999.

The Scandinavian countries have membership rates of 80 percent or more, and a trust level over 50 percent. The two German regions have intermediate membership rates and trust levels. The five eastern countries (Russia, Poland, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania) all have membership rates below 40 percent and trust levels below 30 percent.

Particularly worrying is the tendency of the five eastern countries to cluster in the low end with low levels of social capital. The average level of social trust in these countries is 21 percent, while the average of the other five is 53 percent. Between these two groups of countries there is a "gap" of 32 percent, which we shall attempt to explain as an effect of social, economic, and political factors. Table 1 suggests that network theory goes part of the way in explaining this gap, provided that association membership is related to social trust at the level of individual respondents. And in this regard table 2 provides confirmation. Across all ten countries there exists a sound correlation between social trust and the number of associations at the level of individual respondents.

Table 2: Relation between social trust and association memberships in the Baltic Sea region.

no. of association memberships	pct. with social trust
no membership	25
1 membership	38
2 memberships	52

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3 memberships	60
4 or more memberships	75

source: European Values Survey 1999.

Those without any membership, nearly half the respondents, have a trust level of only 25 percent, while in the other end, those with membership of four or more associations have a trust level of 75 percent. The *eta* of this relationship is 0.32, and the Pearson correlation *r* is also 0.32, indicating that the relationship is linear. We may think of this as a mutually reinforcing relationship. Being member of associations tends to lead to good experiences of trusting other people, and in turn an attitude of trust leads citizens to enter associations.

Before evaluating the success of network theory in accounting for the different levels of social trust in the ten countries, we shall discuss two other theories of social trust.

Social status

The hypothesis that social status affects social trust rests on simple sociological reasoning. High-status people tend to encounter other high-status people, and a prerequisite for staying in such circles is that one can trust one another; lying or cheating is normally not tolerated. Low-status members, on the other hand, have little choice as to whom they meet; their experience is that since one meets all sorts of people, one must look after oneself.

The most plausible measure of social status in this case is income, rather than education. This is because educated persons with low income may be frustrated, and thus they are not likely to conclude that “one can generally trust other people”. Both income and school education is asked in the EVS, and income is coded into ten levels within each country. In Table 3 these are collapsed into five levels. In summing up these categories across the ten countries we therefore ignore national differences in income level. Those in the upper income level in Sweden are grouped together with those in the upper level in Russia, and so forth. Therefore, the income scale measures where one is located relative to others in one’s own country.

Table 3: Relation between social trust and household income (quintiles) in the Baltic Sea region.

household income	pct. with social trust
1. lowest quintile	30
2.	33
3.	39
4.	46
5. highest quintile	53

source: European Values Survey 1999.

Social trust varies quite a lot by income. Among those in the lower group 30

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percent show social trust; among those in the higher group, 53 percent do so. However, the difference is not as large as the difference between association members and non-members; the *eta* correlation is 0.15, and the linear *r* of the same magnitude.

It is interesting to find that if we relate social trust to the income level (average GNP) of the country, we obtain a much higher correlation, even at the level of the individual respondents, namely $r = 0.34$. That means, the respondents' answers to the question on social trust are much better predicted from the average income level of others in their country than from the income of their own families relative to other families in the country. In a wealthy society social trust is likely to spread also to those who are less well off.

Authoritarian values

When we reasoned about the effect of social status, we are inclined to regard our question about social trust as a more or less objective record of the respondent's experience. Those with a surplus of positive encounters with others are supposed to express trust, while those with a surplus of negative encounters are supposed to show distrust. Now we turn to a different interpretation of the response to the same question. As discussed already in the classic study, *The Authoritarian Personality* from 1950, authoritarian attitudes are likely to colour beliefs about the nature of society and human beings.¹¹ An authoritarian will believe that human nature is irreparably lazy, selfish, sinful, etc., whereas a non-authoritarian believes it to be fundamentally good. This difference is likely to be reflected also in the response to the question about social trust, although such a hypothesis is rarely investigated in the literature. We should expect authoritarians to show distrust, non-authoritarians to show trust in other people, not so much because they have reason to do this but because this is in accordance with their basic views of human nature.

As for an indicator of such values, probably nothing can compare with the ideals that guide people in upbringing their children. The EVS contains a long series of properties that the respondents may wish to convey to their children. From this series we have selected two that are supposedly authoritarian and two that are supposed to be anti-authoritarian. The authoritarian items are "obedience" and "good manners"; the anti-authoritarian items are "imagination" and "independence". By adding the choices of these four items we compose an index of conformism. A respondent who chooses the first two but not the last two has a conformism score of +2; one who chooses the last two but not the first two has a score of -2. One who chooses equally many from each side, or does not choose any of the four items, has a score of 0.

Table 4: Relation between social trust and child rearing values in the Baltic Sea region.

child rearing values	pct. with social trust
1. conformity	27
2.	28

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3.	38
4.	45
5. non-conformity	67

source: European Values Survey 1999.

Conformism in child education indeed relates to social distrust, as Table 4 demonstrates. Those in the two conformist categories are much less likely to show trust (27–28 percent) than those in the most non-conformist category (67 percent). The strength of the relationship comes out in an *eta* of 0.21 and an *r* of –0.195. It is a stronger cause of social trust than income.

The different tradition of upbringing in different countries may explain part of the national variation in social trust that we have noted. In general, the Scandinavian countries and Germany have an inclination for non-conform responses. 40 percent of the Swedish, Danish and West German respondents are in one of the two non-conformist categories. Only ten percent in Estonia and 13 percent in Poland are in these categories. But there are deviant cases. Finland has only 19 percent non-conformists, whereas Lithuania has 43 percent! Hence conformism can only be one out of several explanatory factors in social distrust. To the extent that it is a factor, however, the implication of it is that one cannot expect to increase social trust in a society in the short run. Values in child education are a deep-rooted part of a society's culture, and are not likely to change drastically from one decade to the next.

Combined effect of network, income, and conformity

We have studied three sources of social trust: networks (memberships in voluntary associations), family income, and non-conformity in child rearing. They have been shown to operate in accordance with mainstream theory across the population samples of the countries bordering the Baltic Sea; but to complete the picture we also need to show that they operate within the individual countries that have been sampled. This is brought out in Table 5.

Table 5: Regression of social trust in the countries in the Baltic Sea region on net-works (no. of association memberships), personal income, and conformity in child rearing values.

country	network effect (1 to 5)	income effect	country	network effect (1 to 5)
Sweden	.08	.02	–.09	.28
Denmark	.05	.05	–.10	.38
Finland	.06	.01	–.06	.40
West Germany	.05	.02	–.07	.17
East Germany	.06	.03	–.07	.23
Poland	.03	.03	–.02	.09

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Russia	.03	.00	-.01	.21
Lithuania	.08	.03	-.05	.12
Latvia	.05	.00	-.01	.12
Estonia	.06	.02	-.02	.13

source: European Values Survey 1999.

The ten rows of the table represent ten independent tests of the hypothetical relationships between social trust and its sources. The effects show the change in percent trusting that is associated with a change of one step in the network, income, or conformity variable, all of which are measured on a five-point scale.

As seen from the first column of figures, the effect of association membership is everywhere positive, varying from eight percent in Sweden and Lithuania to three percent in Poland and Russia. This means that among Swedish and Lithuanian respondents, the proportion showing social trust rises by eight percent for each step in the network variable, that is, by 32 percent across the whole range from 1 to 5; in Poland and Russia the same proportion rises by only twelve percent.

The second column shows the effect of family income (relative to others in the same country). This is generally weaker, varying from five percent in Denmark to none in Russia and Latvia. The third column shows that the effect of conformity in child rearing is as expected negative everywhere, ranging from ten percent in Denmark to one percent in Russia and Latvia. Except for Lithuania, the effect of child rearing values is low in the eastern countries.

On the basis of these effects we can conclude that roughly the same sources of social trust are present in all of the countries, even though some effects tend to vanish in one or two countries. Especially in Russia and Poland the effects are quite small, and in Latvia and Estonia only the membership effect is sizeable.

Nonetheless, the three sources we have studied do not account for the national differences in social trust observed in Table 1. In particular the gap between the western and the eastern countries is largely left unexplained. This is seen if we group the ten countries in a western group, containing those countries in the upper five rows, and an eastern group, containing those in the lower five rows. The pervasive difference between the western and the eastern group of countries may be illustrated by Tables 6 and 7, which show the level of social trust by groups defined by their number of association memberships and their degree of conformity in child rearing.

Table 6: Relation between social trust and association memberships in the western and eastern Baltic Sea region.

no. of association memberships	pct. with social trust	
	Western region	Eastern region
no membership	39	20

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1 membership	49	24
2 memberships	58	30
3 memberships	63	29
4 or more memberships	78	38

source: European Values Survey 1999.

Table 7: Relation between social trust and child rearing values in the western and eastern Baltic Sea region.

child rearing values	pct. with social trust	
	<i>Western region</i>	<i>Eastern region</i>
1. conformity	41	18
2.	44	20
3.	52	21
4.	58	27
5. non-conformity	74	31

source: European Values Survey 1999.

Separating the ten countries into an eastern and a western set, we find that whether we look at association membership or non-conformism both the level of trust and the effects of our variables are much larger in the western countries than in the eastern ones. In the western countries social trust rises from 39 to 78 percent as we move from those with no membership to those with four or more memberships.

In the eastern countries trust rises only from 20 to 38 percent (Table 6). A similar tendency is noted when we look at the effects of non-conformism (Table 7). Roughly, twice as many show trust in the western countries than in the eastern ones in each category. The factors influencing social trust appear to work much more efficiently in the western countries than in the eastern ones.

Part of the reason for this difference in explanatory power may be poorer interviewing in the eastern countries, which generates “noise” in the relationships. However, casual or sloppy interviewing cannot explain the different level of trust in the two groups that remains after controlling for association membership or child rearing values. In an attempt to close this gap we turn toward political explanations of social trust and distrust.

The politics of social trust and distrust

Social trust and distrust are by definition non-political concepts. To agree that “most people can be trusted”, or that “one has to be careful” does not give a clue as to the political persuasion of the respondent. Likewise, the factors we have discussed so far do not appear to have any political content. Being a member of several associations and teaching one’s children to be independent and imaginative rather than obedient and polite is no indication of one’s political standpoints. Therefore, the relations we

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have discussed so far are social and economic rather than political.

However, the low level of interpersonal trust in Russia, Poland, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania suggests that political experiences of the citizens have played a role in making them cautious when dealing with strangers. This would agree with the low level of network participation in the same countries that we saw already in Table 1. As argued in the beginning, the communist heritage may play a role in preventing the social capital from rising in these countries, although this has not been the case in East Germany.

We shall connect social trust with some political views in order to study this gap between the western and the former communist countries. Is social distrust concentrated in particular parties and among adherents of particular ideologies? If so, which are these parties and ideologies? Is the widespread distrust related to negative feelings about the political system or a tradition for not openly criticising the system? Or is it connected with ethnic and national tensions that have come to the fore in the eastern countries since the fall of the autocratic regimes around 1990? These possibilities will be investigated in turn.

Socialists and Liberals

The distinction between left and right ideology has been a major trait of western democracies for over a century. And after the establishment of party systems in the post-communist countries in the early 1990s, this distinction has emerged also in the eastern Baltic Sea region. Governments have shifted between parties of the centre-right and centre-left, presenting different policy platforms and perhaps even executing them so as to accustom the voting public to the differences between left and right ideology. How have citizens with higher or lower levels of social trust responded to such policy differences?

There are certain reasons for expecting people with low trust to be drawn toward the liberal parties. Liberal ideology encourages people to rely on themselves rather than others for earning their income and getting ahead in life. Competition rather than solidarity is seen as a basic feature of society. However, other arguments count in the opposite direction. Liberal parties appeal to the business community and the upper status layers, that is, to people who tend to form networks and organisations. Socialist parties are supposed to get their voters from those who have few resources, and who fear that they may be left behind as the economy moves ahead.

A number of questions in the *European Values Survey* addresses these ideological differences. One question asks whether people themselves, rather than the state, should take more responsibility for providing for the citizens' needs. A second question is whether competition is good or harmful. A third asks if people who are unemployed should be obliged to take available jobs. And a fourth is whether firms should have more freedom or be subjected to control from the state. Each question is answered by the respondent by using a scale from one to ten, and adding the responses to the four questions we compose an index running from four through 40.

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Dividing the respondents into four categories we find a general tendency for the liberals to be more trustful than the socialists. Across all ten countries the percentage showing social trust rises from 29 among the socialists to 46 among the liberalists. Part of this difference of 17 percentage points is due to the fact that there is a preponderance of liberalists in the western countries but a preponderance of socialists in the eastern ones. Nonetheless, the pattern is found even if we look at the eastern countries separately. Here, 19 percent of the socialists indicate trust as against 29 percent of the liberalists.

But this does not mean that left-wing parties build on support from the distrustful in all countries. In Estonia in 1999 the Reform Party had the most trusting voters (38 percent), while the Pro Patria voters were lower (30 percent) and the Centre Party voters still lower (23 percent). In Latvia the voters of the People's Party and Latvia's Way were equal in social trust (both 16 percent). In Lithuania the Centre Union and the Liberal Union voters were practically equal (28 and 27 percent trusting). In Poland the Democratic Left voters and Solidarity voters were almost even (21 and 20 percent trusting), while the Peasant Party's voters were sagging (17 percent). The highest level of trust was found among the Freedom Union voters (25 percent). Finally, in Russia there was little difference between the levels of trust among Fatherland party voters (26 percent) and Yabloko voters (27 percent), whereas the Communist voters were sagging a little (23 percent).

Apparently, there is little support for the thesis that social distrust is concentrated in the voters of particular parties in the eastern countries. Rather, the difference runs across party lines: voters giving liberal responses tend to be more trusting than voters giving socialist responses within the same party.

Democratic satisfaction and political activism

As previously mentioned, comparative studies have indicated a relationship between the level of social trust in a society and the stability of democracy. This may very well be mirrored at the level of individual citizens, so that those citizens who are satisfied with the democratic performance of their political system tend also to have more social trust than the dissatisfied. The causality probably runs in both directions: those who believe that democracy is working efficiently have less inhibition in revealing their opinions to strangers, and in turn, being rewarded by communicating with strangers breeds the feeling that democracy is working.

We may here investigate the responses to the *EVS* item on how satisfied one is with the way democracy is working in one's country. Looking first at the averages for the countries (Table 8), the relationship indeed shows a tendency for the countries to cluster into a western and an eastern group; but within each cluster there is very little consistency in the relationship.

Table 8: Relation between social trust and satisfaction with democracy.

country	pct. satisfied with democracy	pct. with social trust
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West Germany	78	33
Denmark	67	67
East Germany	63	43
Sweden	60	66
Finland	57	58
Poland	45	19
Estonia	36	23
Latvia	30	17
Lithuania	26	25
Russia	7	24
average	46	37

source: European Values Survey 1999.

In the western cluster, West Germans are the most satisfied with their democracy, though as we have noted earlier, they are sagging in social trust. In the eastern cluster the countries vary quite a lot in regard to how satisfied their citizens are, from 45 percent in Poland to seven percent in Russia. In particular the examples of Poland and West Germany suggest that social trust does not follow automatically from satisfaction with democracy. The Poles are much more satisfied with their democracy than the Russians are, yet both seem to live in a culture of social distrust.

However, if we compare the satisfied with the dissatisfied, either across all countries or within each country, there can be no doubt that those satisfied with democracy tend also to be those with social trust. Across all countries the level of trust is 48 percent among those being satisfied with democracy, but only 30 percent among those who are dissatisfied. We may therefore expect satisfaction with democracy to contribute in narrowing the gap between the western and the eastern countries in our sample.

Another variable supposedly related to social trust is *political activism*. In countries where the regime has, perhaps for decades, prohibited activism, it seems likely that social trust will be undermined by a lingering suspicion in the population that sticking out one's neck will be registered by the authorities. We therefore expect countries with a high frequency of political activism to display a high level of social trust, whereas countries without a tradition for activism should have a low trust level.

As a measure of political activism, the EVS probes into the citizens' participation in five types of unconventional political behaviour: signing petitions, joining demonstrations, joining strikes, joining boycotts, and occupying buildings. On these items the respondents can be scored on an index from one to five.¹²

As shown in Table 9, the western countries, and especially Sweden, have high average scores on political activism and at the same time, a high level of social trust.

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country	average no. of activities	pct. with social trust
Sweden	2.55	66
Denmark	2.08	67
East Germany	1.79	43
Finland	1.67	58
West Germany	1.56	33
Lithuania	1.12	25
Poland	1.01	19
Latvia	1.00	17
Russia	0.89	24
Estonia	0.83	23
average	1.45	37

source: European Values Survey 1999.

We find the western group of countries spread over a range from 2.5 to 1.5 activities per respondent, whereas the eastern group clusters around a mean of 1 activity per respondent. As was the case with voluntary associations in Table 2, participation in unconventional political activities bears a clear relationship with social trust, at least at the national level. Even more than Table 8, Table 9 leaves the impression that social capital has more to do with political factors than is assumed in mainstream theory.

Nationalism and the pluralist society

A political debate that has dominated the latest decades of both western and eastern politics has been spurred by issues of national sovereignty, national minorities, and immigration. In many western countries anti-immigration parties have been added to the traditional party systems. In the eastern region the existence of national minorities has been a barrier against the drive for autonomy.

The cleavage line here runs between those who want their country to constitute a rather homogeneous "people" or "nation", and those who welcome a more plural society with open borders. According to some indicators the nationalists have a stronger standing in the eastern countries than in the western ones. The EVS asks a series of questions regarding different groups whom the respondents would not like to have as their neighbours. The result is that in the western region, ten percent mention "immigrants and foreign workers", while in the eastern region, 18 percent do so. The lowest national figure is three percent in Sweden. The highest figures are 24 percent in Poland and Lithuania. Thus, even though it constitutes a minority everywhere, the proportion varies quite a lot between countries.

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However, there are other indicators that show roughly the same opinion level in the eastern and western region. This is the case, for example, with the responses to a question in the EVS asking for the respondent's attitude toward immigration. Should immigration be prohibited, should it at least be limited, should it be allowed provided that jobs are vacant, or should there be free immigration for all who want to come? The last two, which must be regarded as positive till immigration, add up to 40 percent in the western region and 44 percent in the eastern region.

How is social trust related to the attitude to immigration? At this point our expectations are less ambivalent than in the case of the left-right cleavage: we expect social trust to be associated with the more open, cosmopolitan outlook. As we gathered from the discussion about child rearing values, the authoritarian mind tends to think in terms of ingroups and outgroups and to be suspicious of outgroups.

Table 10: Relation between attitude to immigration and social trust in the western and eastern Baltic Sea region.

attitude to immigration	pct. with social trust	
	<i>Western region</i>	<i>Eastern region</i>
forbid immigration	29	17
set limits to immigration	48	20
only when jobs are vacant	59	24
allow all who want	73	29

source: European Values Survey 1999.

Our data in Table 10 is in accordance with the hypothesis. The attitude to immigration is related in the expected direction to social trust, especially in the western countries. However, one also notes that in each row there is a sizeable gap between western and eastern countries. The pattern is similar to what we have already seen in Tables 6 and 7 with regard to networks and conformity.

Evaluation of effects

The first question we raised in the beginning was whether social trust was related to the same set of factors in the eastern and the western countries of the Baltic Sea region. The answer that has emerged in the preceding sections is that, indeed, the factors which generate trusting citizens are much the same within each of the two groups of countries, but these factors do not explain the large difference between the western and the eastern countries. For example, given the level of participation in social and political associations, a citizen of the western region is twice as likely to express trust in strangers as a citizen of the eastern region (Table 6). The difference is even sharper when we turn from behavioural indicators to indicators of social and political values, such as conformity in child rearing. Even those in the western region who brought up their children to be obedient and conforming, tend to be more trusting than those in the eastern region who taught their children to be independent and imaginative (Table 7).

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We now assemble these separate relationships into regression models showing the controlled effects of social variables, political variables, and geographical region upon social trust. Table 11 shows regression effects in three models: one for the social and economic factors, one for the political factors, and one for all of them combined. In order to express the gap between the western and the eastern group of countries, a dummy variable is included, taking the value of 1 for the western and 0 for the eastern group.

Table 11: Regression of social trust on social and political factors in the countries of the Baltic Sea region. Unstandardised b coefficients.

independent variable	social factors	political factors	both combined
Networks	.075		.064
family income	.025		.024
conformity	-.052		-.039
socialist ideology		-.016	-.005 ¹³
democratic satisfaction		.049	.060
political activism		.059	.028
resistance to immigration		-.070	-.047
western country	.20	.22	.15
multiple correlation	.41	.38	.42

source: European Values Survey 1999.

A social model is presented in the first column of figures. It is dominated by network participation, measured as association memberships, as predictor of social trust, with an effect of 7.5 percent. Conformity in child rearing is second in place, while relative family income is a less important predictor. Together, the three variables leave a gap of 20 percent between western and eastern countries, as indicated by the coefficient of the dummy variable.

A political model of social trust is presented in the second column. The important predictors are here political activism, resistance to immigration, and democratic satisfaction, while ideology is less important. Controlling for these factors leaves a gap of 22 percent between the western and the eastern countries. By comparing the multiple correlations of the two models (bottom row) we find that social trust can be predicted almost as well from political attitudes as from the social variables in the first model. The correlation is not impressive in either model; but our simple measure of social trust, based on a two-way response to a single question, probably contains a large amount of unreliability. This sets an upper limit to the magnitude of the correlation.

The third column shows the coefficients of a model that combines the social and the political model. In this combined mode, the most important predictors of social trust seem to be network participation and satisfaction

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with democracy. But also conformity in child rearing and resistance to immigration are rather important in distinguishing the trustful from the distrustful. Political activism is somewhat less important, as this variable tends to duplicate network participation as a predictor. In this combined model the gap between east and west has been reduced to 15 percentage points, indicating that geographical region is still an important factor in social trust even after controlling all other factors.

Conclusion

This study has focused on social trust, or interpersonal trust, because of its standing as a key variable indicating the strength of civil society. We have compared ten countries in the Baltic Sea region dividing Germany into West and East Germany. We have found that within each country, social trust is positively related especially to network participation, and negatively related to authoritarian values. Everywhere, the distrustful are primarily people standing outside the networks of associations and valuing conformity in child rearing. Politically, these people are found both on the left and right; they are characterised by being politically passive, even though they are dissatisfied with the way democracy is working, and are opposed to immigrants.

These findings make sense, and they are by no means trivial if we compare them with other studies in the field. However, the model's failure to account for the generally higher level of trust in the western countries, compared with the eastern ones, deserves a comment. There are at least two plausible factors that may explain the residual gap of 15 percentage points in the level of social trust. One is the possibility that social trust is related to absolute income rather than relative income. The interview studies do not contain information about the (dollar or euro) value of the respondents' incomes. Were we to include the mean national GNP in the regression model, the gap would be reversed to a negative one, because the income level in the eastern countries is vastly lower than that in the western countries. Incidentally, the fact that East Germany sides with the western group of countries would also be accounted for, since the mean GNP in East Germany is much higher than in the other pre-communist countries. The outcome would be a line of thinking, popular among some modern economists, who view social capital as a special type of production factor that enhances market and credit transactions.

The other plausible factor is, of course, the history of eastern regimes. As mentioned in the beginning, comparative studies have found a rather strong relationship between the level of social trust and the number of years of unbroken democratic rule. On the one hand, a civil society must have grown to maturity before democratic institutions, built so to speak on top of it, acquire sufficient legitimacy to survive those political and economic crises that are bound to come sooner or later. On the other hand, those political elites who man the democratic institutions in the early phase must be committed to democratic procedures; for example, one or more non-violent changes of government must have taken place before democratic norms spread to the population at large. These historical experiences may well be in the back of our respondents' minds, but they do not come out in the

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interview questions. Mass interview surveys provide many important clues for the study of political cultures, because they permit a study of individual citizens at given points in time. But they need to be supplemented by institutional and historical studies in order to pay justice to the complexity of their subject.

1 Dieser Aufsatz ist ein überarbeiteter Vorabdruck aus: Schartau, Mai-Brith et al. (eds.): *Political Cultures, Values and Identities in the Baltic Sea Region*. Berlin 2006.

2 Giddens, Anthony: *The Consequences of Modernity*. Cambridge 1990.

3 Almond, Gabriel and Sidney Verba: *The Civic Culture: Political Attitudes and Democracy in Five Nations*. Princeton 1963.

4 Newton, Kenneth: "Social and Political Support in Established Democracies". In: Pippa Norris (ed.): *Critical Citizens: Global Support for Democratic Governance*. Oxford 1999, 169–187.

5 Inglehart, Ronald: *Culture Shift in Advanced Industrial Society*. Princeton 1990, 36–37.

6 Idem: *Modernization and Postmodernization. Cultural, Economic and Political Change in 43 Societies*. Princeton 1997, 174.

7 Putnam, Robert D.: "Bowling Alone: America's Declining Social Capital". In: *Journal of Democracy* 6 (1995), 65–78.

8 Newton 1999, as footnote 3.

9 Kornhauser, William: *The Politics of Mass Society*. London 1960.

10 Putnam, Robert D.: *Making Democracy Work*. Princeton 1993.

11 Adorno, Theodor W. et al.: *The Authoritarian Personality*. New York 1950.

12 The questions asked whether the respondent *had* participated or *might* participate in each activity. Those who might participate were here scored $\frac{1}{2}$, so that the index ran 0, $\frac{1}{2}$, 1, $1\frac{1}{2}$, 2 ... etc.

13 Not significant on the one percent level.