

TRUST AND ITS RELATION TO MIGRATION IN KOSOVO

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Abstract. *Human migration is not a sudden phenomenon in Kosovo. 20th century was largely characterized by migration mainly for economic and political reasons. However, special attention should be paid to the last massive wave of approximately 50 000 of migrants that left Kosovo during the period of end of 2014 – beginning of 2015. We connect it with a very low level of trust existing in the Kosovar society. Trust is an underlying psychological state, which is informed by both our emotions and our (cognitive) mental processes (Wade & Robison, 2012). Trust is also seen as a process, which involves past, present, and future (Khodyakov, 2007). Petzold (2009) emphasizes the important role trust/mistrust plays in human motivation that relate especially with regards to what will the future be, which also means that we should seek for the causes of the causes that generate trust/mistrust. Furthermore, literature offers definitions of several kinds of trust: social, political, and institutional trust. Different authors have emphasized the importance of political trust both as a concept and construct in political psychology (Schoon & Cheng, 2011). For the purposes of this paper we take into examination academic literature on trust and mistrust and contextualize it at the Kosovar society dynamics and developments. We argue that it is lack of political and institutional trust one of underlying major causes of people leaving Kosovo. Finally, a general outline of directions for future research is presented at the conclusion part of the paper.*

Keywords: migration; trust; Kosovo; politics; institutions

INTRODUCTION

Migration is not a new phenomenon in Kosovo. Relevant statistics show that the magnitude the phenomenon has historically had on Kosovar society. It is considered that the main reasons for migrating were economic and social reasons, in all time periods and political reasons, in time periods before 1999. According to the 2011 Population Census data, in Kosovo there were 128,808 immigrants (arrived), which comprised 7.4% of the population. Around 97% of immigrants had Kosovan citizenship; therefore, the vast majority of immigrants in fact were returnees to their country. Taking into account the citizenship of its residents, Kosovo is fairly homogeneous country. 98.6% of respondents who responded to 2011 Population Census were Kosovo citizens (ASK, 2014).

According to Dobruna, Ejupi, & Hollaj (2015) “financial inflows, including migration remittances and travel expenditures from Kosovo’s diaspora, have had – and still have – a multifaceted impact on society, particularly by improving the well-being of the citizens, reducing poverty, increasing access to education and health care, increasing household spending and consumption, etc. Socio-economic, political, and civil unrest has led to various waves of migration, which have had a profound impact on the countries development prospects”.

Particular interest for researchers of migration dynamics in Kosovo and not only as well as for different actors (governmental and non-governmental agencies, donors, media, society etc.) represent the latest important developments in this field. Dobruna, Ejupi, & Hollaj (2015) state that “the end of 2014 and

the first months of 2015 mark a period of mass exodus, where the European Union experienced a steep rise in the number of Kosovo citizens entering its territory via the Serbian border into Hungary and then into Western European countries. There is no reliable data attesting to the number of people who have left the country yet, but according to some estimates nearly 50.000 Kosovo citizens have fled illegally from the country. Other sources even suggest that the overall number of illegal immigrants reached as high as 100,000. This sudden mass of illegal immigration indicates that the country is encountering serious economic and social development hardships”.

It is an issue of pivotal importance examining the factors influencing such an unexpected wave of migration emphasizing underlying causes that are usually overlooked in the common discussions. For example, did trust play any role in encouraging migration of Kosovar citizens during the period of time end of 2014 – beginning of 2015?

DEFINITION(S) AND MEANING OF TRUST

As defined by Wade & Robison “trust is an underlying psychological state, which is informed by both our emotions and our (cognitive) mental processes”. However disagreements of scholars on several dimensions and the meaning of trust are highlighted by Khodyakov (2007): A close analysis of the ways the term ‘trust’ is used in the literature reveals a disagreement among scholars about the definition, characteristics, and even the nature of trust. The multiplicity of meanings of trust creates a measure of conceptual confusion, because confidence, reliability, faith, and trust are often used as synonyms. Moreover, there is no consensus among social scientists about the object of trust.

Petzold (2009) differentiating between trust and mistrust states that “(trust and mistrust) should always be analyzed from the individual as well as the collective perspective in order to reveal the complex network structure of social relationships and the multitude of causalities related to this term: I trust you because ..., you trust me because ...,

we trust you, but ..., they trust us despite ... – or perhaps not, because there currently is or has been in the past some cause for mistrust, because the level of trust is insufficient, etc. Trust and mistrust complement each other: without the one and the other, we run increased risks”. We need to take into account both levels of trust in order to differentiate between different layers that constitute the concept as well as to see the level of interaction of the same layers.

Generally, from the individualistic point of view trust has been studied in the framework of personality studies. Different grand theorists (Erikson, Rosenberg, Allport, Cattell, etc) in personality theory viewed trust as an important element in the personality structure. Trust is seen an outcome of early childhood experiences and as such it shows a greater degree of stability as oppose to change in relation to time.

Another individualistic approach views trust place less emphasis on early childhood experiences but generally stress circumstances of the individual’s life that relate to his educational, economic, class, ethnicity and gender variables. Finally, trust is viewed as well in terms of its collectivistic dimension, which relates to cultural, communities and social institutions factors (Delhey & Newton, 2004).

In collectivistic terms, trust is viewed generally for cultural and institutional theories. These theories (Hudson, 2006; Mishler & Rose, 2001) stress the learned nature of trust that has to do with contact the person has with the world and the experience one has in contact with it. The main divergence of the two theories is related to the fact that “cultural theories emphasize the importance of early experiences with little change later on, while institutional theories emphasize the role of more proximate and contemporary experiences with institutions. Institutional theories accept that culture can condition attitudes towards institutions, as can the past performance of institutions, but neither culture nor past performance is deterministic. The two assumptions lead however to different conclusions of how change in trust can be brought about” (Schoon & Cheng, 2011).

Looking at the different levels and dynamics of trust, recognizing the positive impact efforts of different actors show on building trust in time is close to the idea of Khodyakov (2007) who views trust as a process. Halapuu, Paas, and Tammaru (2013) reviewed various forms of trust as reflected in literature. Political trust which is defined as a basic evaluative orientation toward the government founded on how well the government is operating according to people's normative expectations is similar to the general social trust in a sense, as it assumes trusting unknown others. Institutional trust links citizens to the institutions that are intended to represent them making thus the existence of democracy possible. Moreover, Newton (2001) connects trust with a number of political variables. Political trust refers to the confidence people have in their government and institutions (Schoon & Cheng, 2011).

According to Hetherington (1998) political trust has to do with several variables that vary on different specifics: presidential approval, institutional evaluation, one's policy considerations, the quality of policy outcomes, media (as a distributor of positive and negative information people receive about government), perceptions about social and cultural change, but also of some social characteristics, such as age, race, education, income and gender. Newton (2001) considers important another type of trust: social trust (also named horizontal trust) that plays a substantial role on paving the way to stability and peaceful relations which in turn are foundations of fruitful cooperation of people; thus, this type of trust has also to do with people. Studies have shown social trust to positively correlate to different conditions of economic, social, and political conditions (Rothstein & Eek, 2006).

As summarized, various forms of truth can be very distinct from each other as well as mean the same thing in specific situations. For example, very often institutional trust is part of political trust since the former are led by political figures or groups. The trust building process is influenced and determined a great deal by political actors and institutions by their actions, performance and policies.

HOW TRUST RELATES TO THE LAST WAVE OF MIGRATION IN KOSOVO?

The direct link between migration and level of trust in academic literature is generally weak, which makes it difficult to empirically show the causality between the two phenomena. Thus, in order to establish such a direct link on the role play trust in encouraging people to massively leave the country we should firstly find conceptual adequate pathways that will trace the way for empirical research designs in this direction. For example, we should closely look for changes at the level of political and institutional trust in society as reported in the existing relevant research and literature.

The average Kosovar citizen has continuously been surrounded by difficult circumstances in terms of educational, economical, ethnical, and gender variables. The Kosovar economy is one of the poorest in Europe and that have its impact on all other aspect of everyday life. On the other hand, there has historically been a not easy relationship of the ordinary citizen with institutions considering the efforts Kosovar society made for decades towards creating and now building a state. On the community level, the literature in community psychology recognizes the fact that war disrupts the balances created in the society, balances that need time to be recreated after the war is over. All the above mentioned life aspects have contributed in a quantitatively and qualitatively decreased level of trust in the society. Moreover, Kosovo aims in building a liberal democracy, a state that will be in the service of each and every citizen independently from their age, sex, ethnicity, social class, and sexual orientation. This requires strong institutions in order to guarantee the balance of power, which in turn will allow an independent functioning of the institutions as well as substantial individual efforts from individuals and groups within the society. These efforts cannot be successful if they are not build over a strong and wide base of trust among all the actors involved.

Evidence shows that people's satisfaction with the performance of key executive, legislative and judiciary institutions in Kosovo has

had a general decrease during the last year. More specifically, satisfaction of people with their institutions was 21% of in April 2015 compare to 46% satisfaction in April 2014. The drastic decrease might have been influenced by political crisis that followed parliamentary elections that were held on June 8th, 2015 (UNDP, 2015), which resulted in delayed constitution of the parliament and government for a period of time of six months. According to Leach and Sabatier (2005) “trust involves faith or confidence in another’s propensity to keep promises, to negotiate honestly, to show respect for other points of view, and to express some level of concern for the welfare of others”. Looking at the political landscape of Kosovo with specific attention at the government and parliament we see that the relationships between political actors are characterized by mutual distrust, continuous blockage of the institutions, inability of conducting a continuous fruitful dialogue with the other(s), and find plausible solutions. The described tense political atmosphere characterized by profound mistrust certainly negatively influences the performance of many institutions including the judiciary.

Dissatisfaction of Kosovars related to the work of key institutions apply as well in relation to sectorial policies. Directly connected to political and institutional trust, are the number in relation to political direction of the country, economic development and democracy index. In April 2015 4% of the Kosovars are satisfied or very satisfied with what political direction of the country which is 17% less than the same period of year 2014 (which was a low result as well). Democratization and economic reliability index are also very low: on the scale 0 – 3, 0.98 for the former, 0.80 for the later (UNDP, 2015).

Kosovo’s average per capita income is about one-tenth that of EU levels, and the incidence of poverty remains high. Standardized poverty lines used by the World Bank—defined by a threshold of US\$5 per person per day (at purchasing power parities)—lead to poverty rates of about 80 percent (World Bank, 2015). Using the domestic poverty line of €1.72 per day (2011 data) as defined by the Kosovo Agency

of Statistics, 29.7 percent of its population of 1.8 million are considered poor.

Widespread unemployment and a lack of quality jobs have contributed to poverty and income insecurity. With an estimated unemployment rate of above 30.0 percent in 2013 and an employment rate of only 28.4 percent, Kosovo has one of the weakest employment records in Europe. Kosovo’s 40.5 percent labor force participation rate is substantially below the 70 percent average estimated for the countries represented in the World Bank’s Europe and Central Asia (ECA) region. The lack of jobs has direct consequences on income, as households with unemployed heads have the highest extreme poverty indices.

The people of Kosovo rank corruption the most important problem facing them after unemployment (UNODC, 2011). Kosovo’s corruption index is 33/100, ranked in 110/175 countries (Transparency International, 2014). Rothstein & Eek (2006) argue that when it comes to establishing beliefs about social trust, people *make inferences* from the behavior they encounter from public officials. Since social trust can be interpreted as people’s moral evaluation of the society in which they live, they argue that the behavior of public officials is one important device that people use when forming beliefs about to what extent people in general in their society can be trusted. The causal order is important because both trust and corruption have consequences—and the literature suggests that these consequences are largely the same. Societies with more trust and less corruption have better governance, stronger economic growth, spend more on redistribution, and have greater respect for the law among the citizenry (Uslaner, 2002). In the societies that corruption has reached high levels there is no evidence that this morally wrong phenomenon is widely accepted independently whether people are engaged in the process themselves. They refuse to accept corruption from people in public institutions blaming the system “for making a good man bad” when it comes to the corruption of ordinary citizens (Rothstein & Eek, 2006).

Hardin (1994) gives an important role of institutions in shaping our value of trust es-

pecially in economic relations. It is also interesting to emphasize that this process goes through concrete measures that institutions are designed to perform. Referring to this idea Kosovar institutions seem to continuously in a vertical way have decreased the value of trust in society. Furthermore, other authors (Rothstein & Uslaner, 2005) stress the importance of role of the government in creating equalities and social cohesion in the society. When it comes to the effects of social trust as an informal institution, according to Svendsen & Svendsen (2003, cited in Rothstein & Eek, 2006) state that “can be the following: In a group (or society) where the default position (the common knowledge) is that most people can generally be trusted, transaction costs will be lower and many forms of mutually beneficial cooperation will therefore take place that would not have been possible if social trust was lacking”.

CONCLUSION

Kosovar institutions and politics generate minimal political and institutional trust in society. High unemployment rate, inefficient institutions, increased inequalities in distributing resources, fragile democracy, insufficient economic growth, perception of high levels of corruption are some of the factors influencing the low level trust existing in Kosovar society. People have the perception that things are going from bad to worse; they do not trust that political elite and institutions will take the necessary measures to change the situation. Migration it is a question of trust and mistrust: mistrusting that Kosovar institutions and political elite will work in their service, trusting that they will find a better life in another country in terms of life stability, protection, and wellbeing.

It is important that the relationship between trust and migration be studied further. The research designs should include measuring the influence of different agents in society (institutions, political parties, civic society, media, and international community present in Kosovo etc.) on trust as a motivator for migration as well as providing accurate answers

on the interaction of these agents in increasing essentially the level of trust in Kosovar society. It is also important to study phenomena that are not always related solely to political and institutional trust. For example, the relationship between interpersonal trust conditioned by social and cultural factors and the interaction with political and institutional trust would provide important ground for different interpretations when it comes to finding effective ways in increasing the level of trust on people in their society now and more faith into the future; thus, directly changing migration patterns and numbers and probably impacting collectivistic action towards a positive social and political changes in society.

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