

# Open Research Repository

## Voiced versus Acted Trust: Managing Social Uncertainty and Marginalisation in Rural Southern Italy and Central Eastern Europe

Item Type	Book chapter
Authors	Torsello, Davide
DOI	<a href="https://doi.org/10.11647/obp.0282.01">10.11647/obp.0282.01</a>
Publisher	Open Book Publishers
Rights	CC BY-NC 4.0
Download date	2024-10-12 00:49:09
Item License	<a href="https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/">https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/</a>
Link to Item	<a href="http://hdl.handle.net/20.500.14018/14219">http://hdl.handle.net/20.500.14018/14219</a>

# I. Voiced versus Acted Trust

## Managing Social Uncertainty and Marginalisation in Rural Southern Italy and Central Eastern Europe

*Davide Torsello*

---

Trust is a form of social interaction and of cognitive evaluation of the risks of such interaction, hence it is a socio-cognitive process subject to multiple variations. At the core of trust is the tension between individual rational choice and collective expectations of social performance generated when the trustor enters into a fiduciary relationship with the trustee. In spite of the rich theoretical models which are imbued with the scientific traditions of each discipline and of the sophisticated elaborations of simulation games, trust has still received comparatively poor empirical elaboration. I shall identify a number of reasons for this shortcoming. First, scholarly observation of the mechanisms of trust building has seldom paid adequate attention to the social conditions in which trust is required (Rothstein and Eek 2009). This problem becomes particularly evident in simulation and laboratory games which create a reality abstracted from the social world in which trust is deeply embedded, dramatically reducing the analytical potential of this notion. As such, trust is one of the most effective analytical tools to understand mechanisms of social exchange, empathy, solidarity and power, but only as long as the social conditions underlying such mechanisms are considered (Hardin 1995). Secondly, the application of trust to conditions of high social uncertainty is often problematic. Sociological tradition, from the works of Niklas Luhmann (1979) and James Coleman (1990) onwards, has been attributed to trusting the power to mitigate widespread social uncertainty. Trust, as one of the

side-products of modernity, could help to reduce the complexity and the volatility of social roles (Giddens 1990; Seligman 1997). However, as many sceptics have revealed, trust is at the same time about the sum of all these benefits and the absence thereof. If it is commonly assumed that a lack of trust severely undermines the proper functioning of, for example, a democracy, it is similarly recognised that distrust may have a functional role in politics, social and even market relations when high social uncertainty is at stake (Gambetta 1988; 1993; Hardin 1995; Levi 2000; Torsello 2005).

This leads to the third point: the blurring of the functional boundaries between trust and distrust. Even if we accept the assumption that trust is a prerequisite of cooperative behaviour, this does not exclude the fact that distrust may also foster human interactions. To put it in other terms, the (social) conditions generating distrust and hampering cooperation in some cultural contexts may, in others, generate trust and thus enhance cooperation. Robert Putnam (2000) has attempted to resolve this theoretical impasse by distinguishing between “bridging” and “bonding” social capital, as a way to differentiate between exclusive and more general trust (Yamagishi 2002). This approach, however, fails to explain both the high variability of trust in different institutions (Hann 2008) and the inadequacy of the trust-distrust dichotomy (see also Lewicki et al. 1998; Letki 2006). This chapter argues that the complexity brought about by high social uncertainty and marginalisation requires actors to invest in forms of trust which can continuously and efficiently be re-negotiated and rendered impermanent. These forms not only include strategic resorts to trust and distrust, but also the blurring of the boundary (more analytical than factual) between interpersonal and institutional trust. The study of the socio-cognitive processes underlying trust in conditions of generalised uncertainty becomes, therefore, a complex and often unproductive task to the social scientist. I will demonstrate that trust can, in these conditions, be tackled only through an integrated approach based on the distinction between voiced and acted trust. Voiced trust refers to the forms of communication through which social actors express their ideas about trustworthiness. Acted trust, on the other hand, refers to the individual choices and actions which generate and use trust in interpersonal and individual-institutional relationships. I argue that, in order to analyse the difference

between these two domains of trust, an analytical distinction between three dimensions of trust must follow: instrumental, emotional and moral trust. I will make use of ethnographic data collected in two case studies: southern Italy and Central Eastern Europe. These are cases characterised by high degrees of social uncertainty. I define social uncertainty as: 1) incomplete information about the trustee, 2) high probability that the trustee will aim to exploit the trustor, 3) rapidly and frequently changing social roles.

The first part of the chapter introduces some of the most relevant theoretical foundations of trust in conditions of high social uncertainty, underlining the domains to which trust can be applied as a socio-cognitive process. The second part deals with the social and cultural conditions in which trust is built and expressed verbally in the case studies. The third part introduces the empirical data obtained in the two case studies through ethnographic research.

## Analytical Approaches to Trust

Trust is defined here as “the psychological state comprising the intention to accept vulnerability based upon positive expectation of the intentions or behaviour of another”. From this definition it emerges that trust can be about dispositions, decisions, behaviours, social networks and institutions. The richness and multiplicity of these domains is one of the main deterrents to the construction of a single empirical model which accounts for the variations of trust in societal contexts. In order to deal with the complexity of these notions scholars have limited the sphere of analysis, following a number of analytical approaches to the notion. One of these approaches distinguishes between trust in persons and in abstract entities, or institutions. Giddens formulated the difference between facework commitments (trust in persons) and faceless commitments (trust in abstract systems) (Giddens 1990: 87–88). The former, to him, is functional to the latter in the common effort to regain control over the uncertainty of modernity (what he terms “social re-embedding”), which requires continuous faceless commitments. However, since the degree and kind of risk, the major component in the trust relation, is different in the cases of interaction between individuals and interaction between institutions, the two become mostly separate

forms of social exchange. In the case of institutional trust, the access to information about the institution, the frequency of the interaction, the distance (geographical and social) from the trustee and the specific purpose of the fiduciary relationship are conditions for the assessment of trustworthiness.

On the other hand, in the case of interpersonal trust a number of socio-cognitive factors are more directly involved, including experience of social interaction with the trustee and momentary assessments based on visual perception, moral and emotional arousal. This approach, although of strong appeal to the application of trust in the study of institutions, treats the two types of trust as completely separate entities (Rousseau et al. 1998). The second approach distinguishes between trust in competence and in intentions. Barber (1983) distinguishes between two sub-categories of trust. The first category is defined as an "expectation of technically competent role performance", the second "expectations that the partners will carry out their fiduciary obligations". Yamagishi (2002) underlines that these two types of trust are not mutually interchangeable, since the degree of assurance needed by the trustor to assess trustworthiness in the two cases is different. The problem that this approach gives rise to lies in the analytical difference between trust and trustworthiness. Whereas trust is the assessment of trustworthiness, trustworthiness concerns the actual behaviour of the trustee who responds in a trustworthy manner or not (Yamagishi 2002: 42). Trust, unlike trustworthiness, is inherently cognitive *and* social, in that it serves the task of processing cognitive judgments towards the decision to trust. Hardin points out there has been insufficient attention paid to trustworthiness since this has too often been inferred from trust (Hardin 1996). According to him, trustworthiness is the moralised expression of trust which might "be fully explicable as a capability or as a product of rational expectation without any moral residue" (Hardin 1996: 28). This position, however, follows the assumption that the decision to trust is driven by the rational choice of the trustor who seeks to minimise the risks of the social interaction (and/or economic transaction) in order to maximise the benefits of the action. This perspective, however, fails to take into due consideration the several possible deviations from the rational choice model (Barbalet 2009). There may be instances when distrust is more rational than trust, and

it functions to establish and maintain social relations, or others when emotions affect the predisposition to trust more compellingly than rational calculation does.

The third approach takes a culturalist perspective and points out that particular institutional arrangements and cultural norms can affect the process of trust building.

Yamagishi et al. (1998) treat the relevance of these arrangements, introducing the distinction between the “institutional view of culture” and the “emancipation theory of trust.” The former is characterised by strong power differences, hierarchies and a group ideology which supports the existence of “artificial” groups based on cooperation and strong endogenous trust. The latter is the process through which actors build general trust (trust in general social terms), by recognising the limits of relying on endogenous trust only, and by eventually deciding to widen the opportunities they have for trust. The difference between endogenous (within close groups) and exogenous (beyond strict group formations) trust is perhaps an extension of the distinction between positive and negative social capital, strong and weak ties already present in the works of Putnam (1993), Granovetter (1973) and others (Buchan et al. 2002). If these approaches with anthropological and sociological studies of value orientation are linked, the distinction between cultures inclined towards individualistic rather than collectivist values, as well as vertical vs. collateral (or horizontal) ties can be adopted (Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck 1961). With a good degree of generalisation, both southern Italy and Central Eastern Europe have been described as societies characterised by the dominance of strong ties over weak ties and institutional views of culture. This approach, however, also fails to take into account the specificity of the trust mechanism which allows the individual to rely strategically on others even when the cultural constructions and values would prescribe them not to do so.

In a recent article, Chris Hann has engaged with the challenges of dealing with comparison in time and space by using ethnography (Hann 2021). The sophisticated argumentation comes from the analysis of a rich array of ethnographic studies of socialist Eastern Europe. Here, of course, some ethnographies are more comparable than others, demonstrating that economic, geographic and demographic aspects marked the differences. What Hann hints at is a form of socialist morality

that seemed to be underpinning the dichotomy between moralism and amoralism, trust and mistrust in rural contexts.

## Methodology

I shall present research data based on ethnographic fieldwork undertaken in Central Eastern Europe and southern Italy in 2001 and 2006 respectively. The temporal framework of the empirical research is highly significant to the scope of this chapter since I chose to deal with two historical points at which social uncertainty was at its height. In Central Eastern Europe the ongoing post-socialist transformation had reached its first phase of consolidation, marked by profound socio-economic changes, high degrees of social and work mobility, institutional transformations paving the way towards EU accession, and conflicting new values. In southern Italy, 2006 was the last year of the EU structural funding intervention for “under-developed” regions. At that point the benefits (and drawbacks) of the six-year programme were already visible and the spectre of persisting social, political and economic problems of this region after the end of the intervention had become manifest.

I studied two villages: Kráľová nad Váhom in Slovakia, and Melpignano in southern Italy.<sup>1</sup> The choice of two small “communities” was justified by the need to explore through participant observation the social dynamics of trust building in interpersonal and individual-institutional relations. The population scale of the two villages (1,530 inhabitants in Slovakia and 2,234 in Italy, data from 2007) was roughly equivalent. The Slovak village lies on the Trans-Danubian Plain, the most fertile agricultural region of the country where, until the advent of socialism, agriculture was the dominant economic activity. Socialist collectivisation of land ownership dramatically changed the economic geography of the region and in the 1970s most of the agricultural workforce was transferred to industry, rendering the socialist cooperatives the only productive agricultural institutions. Since the

---

1 I conducted the fieldwork session in Slovakia as part of my PhD research programme at the Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology, Halle/Saale (Germany). The fieldwork undertaken in southern Italy was part of my post-doctoral research program at the University of Lecce, Italy.

post-socialist transformation, the agricultural cooperative still manages over two thirds of the village land, whereas, since 2000, a growing number of small enterprises, accompanied by foreign investments in car manufacturing and electronic devices, has attracted much of the village workforce in what has become one of the most prosperous regions in the country.

The southern Italian village is located about twenty kilometres from Lecce, the capital of the province, which lies at the southernmost tip of the Apulian peninsula. Originally an agricultural centre (producing mainly olive oil, tobacco and fruit), it is today an important tourist spot which recently gained national recognition following the institution of *La Notte della Taranta*, presently the largest popular music festival held in southern Italy, with a growing presence of international artists and tens of thousands of tourists who visit every summer.

I followed three methods for the collection of ethnographic data. The first was participant observation, the second was the use of structured and semi-structured interviews with political figures, local entrepreneurs and citizens. The third was a survey questionnaire which I submitted to a sample of 100 households (about one third of the households in the Slovak case and one fourth in the Italian case). The samples were generated randomly and the questionnaire was initially tested with a small number of informants. The questionnaire included three sections: general demographic data, trust and opinions on the performance of public institutions. The outcomes of the survey were discussed with some of the key informants before being analysed.

## Voiced Trust

The results of the surveys have been used to investigate the general trends of voiced trust. Two questions tested the perception of trust and how it changed over time. The first question was: "Do you think that since 1989<sup>2</sup> it has become: a) more difficult to trust people; b) less difficult to trust people; c) things have not changed". In the Slovak case, 76% of respondents chose a), 22% chose c), and only 2% b). In the Italian

---

2 In the Italian case the question was: "Do you think that in the last fifteen years it has become...".



case, on average among the three communities 89% chose the answer c), 2% b) and 9% a).

The second question introduced a list of institutions and social actors to which the respondents were asked to attribute a level of trust ranging from 1 (minimum) to 5 (maximum). Table 1 reports the findings of this question. There are some general trends to be observed in these findings. First, both case studies present a clear polarisation between institutions and persons who are closer (in spatial and social terms) to the respondent, and institutions and people who are more distant from the respondent. The reported trust level was much higher in the first cluster including family, close relatives, friends, colleagues, neighbours, villagers, and municipal administration. The second cluster includes distant relatives, the state, the church and the EU. The difference between the average reported trust in the first and second clusters is consistent in both case studies. This suggests that vicinity, which can be measured in terms of frequency of encounters or of interaction with institutions and persons, can enhance trust. The second comparative finding is that there is very little deviation from the results of the first cluster in both cases (Tables 2–3). The number of items with a range difference of between 0 and 0.4 is 5, whereas only in 2 cases is there a range difference of over 0.4 (trust in neighbours and in the municipal administration, this latter scores 0.9 higher in the Italian case). On the other hand, the second cluster presents a more diversified structure of answers with all cases in different ranges. The interpretation of this finding is that increased distance from the trustee generates greater idiosyncrasy in the reported trust level. This is the case to which social conditions apply more significantly. The case of the state is particularly telling of this difference. The higher score in southern Italy suggests that in Slovakia the socialist experience has led citizens to express negative judgments in the operations of the state, whereas southern Italians still believe (as they did at the time of Banfield's research) that state intervention should help to improve their conditions. In spite of this, however, the range level of trust in the state in the latter case remains just above 2.5.

The third finding concerns the municipal administration. In Slovakia it scores just above average (2.7), whereas in southern Italy this proves to be the most trusted institution (3.6), ranking above distant relatives, neighbours and colleagues. In several instances the respondents in

Melpignano underlined that the work of the municipal administration, and above all that of the mayor, has contributed to strengthening public perception of the successful and powerful role of the community in promoting economic development. After showcasing the successful preservation and marketisation of local tradition, the Melpignanesi shared a strong voiced trust in the figure of the mayor. The same cannot be said for Kralova, where respondents were much more ambiguous about reporting trust in the municipal administration, especially in the case of young and middle-aged persons who branded the activities of the former mayor as “prosecutions of socialist-style politics”.

Finally, the item “villagers”, which had mid-range scores in both cases, was helpful for detecting ambiguity in expressions of trust. In Slovakia some respondents were ready to blame other villagers for a lack of generalised trust since “people became wolves to each other”. They mostly imputed the general difficulty in trusting fellow inhabitants to uncertainty generated by the post-socialist transformation. They did so without realising that the category of “villagers” also included (close) relatives and kin members, who were the strongest depositories of personal trust. In Italy, on the other hand, some respondents criticised and even showed frustration with the lack of communication within the village. In 30% of Slovak surveys it emerged that improvements in local economic conditions could come from the citizens themselves, whereas in Italy only 12% indicated this view. On the other hand, the idea that the municipal administration is mainly responsible for development and improved life conditions was shared by 47% of Italians but only 13% of Slovaks.

## Acted Trust

The research findings presented so far introduce a situation not too distant from the basic assumptions on trust in conditions of high social uncertainty. Both cases are characterised by high levels of reported trust in items contained in the first cluster (the family, kin, friends). As for those institutions with which respondents have fairly frequent interactions, these score high or mid-range positions. Other institutions are reported as being less trustworthy. Perhaps the only evident difference between the two case studies is the prominence of

mid-range trust in the Italian case, whereas the Slovak responses are characterised by stronger oscillations, suggesting that the southern Italian respondents were more cautious in reporting both trust and distrust. What these findings fail to pinpoint, however, is that voiced trust is the expression of people's ideas about persons and institutions, and is a form of communication which need not coincide with acted trust in decision-making processes. This ambivalence can be studied by questioning the difference between interpersonal and institutional trust and by considering the three dimensions of trust. In order to do so, I will focus on three categories: family and kin, villagers and the municipal administration.

### Interpersonal Trust: The Kin Group

In spite of its high range of voiced trust, the family did not always prove to be the object of acted trust in Slovakia. For instances of help during the harvest and other agricultural work, money lending, borrowing of tools and machinery, help with repairing houses, babysitting and assistance to elderly people, kin were not the chosen option since trust was directed mainly towards friends, neighbours or work colleagues. The weight of kin obligations, the rigidity of behaviour etiquette and the complex system of reciprocity accompanying kinship relationships have loaded trust among kin with moral connotations. It is believed to be morally good to trust one's relatives since the family is the main depository of interpersonal trust. Often, however, the emotional dimension affects the rationality of trust-related choices. Due to the heavy burden of obligations that kin relations pose to the actors, there is a tendency to limit visits to relatives during festivities and ritual occasions (such as the village festival). Some elderly informants complained that their work-aged children had less and less free time to spend with them, according to some because of hectic work schedules, and according to others because of a widespread disinterest in the elderly.

On the other hand, middle-aged members of large kin networks preferred to reduce interactions with kin, expressing a sense of "fatigue" with these forms of social interaction, which some described as "heavy". When the weight of obligations, which is related to the growing

importance of the kin group during uncertain times, becomes too pervasive, family-oriented moral trust is replaced by emotionally driven (and hence instrumental) trust addressed towards friends. These become the only valid social networks outside the sphere of kinship, as they are comparatively free of obligations of reciprocity. This is partly a strategic answer to social uncertainty, and partly the outcome of the resiliency of socialist values, such as sociability, communality, the ability to rapidly adapt to conditions of shortage, and the strong divide between public and private life. In southern Italy, there is a clearer distinction between the reasons for which trust can or cannot be sought from the family. Here financial help is often sought outside the kin sphere, whereas help with babysitting or lending of tools and machinery is preferably entrusted to kin. The need to reciprocate favours is particularly strongly felt only in less frequent trust relationships, such as those between distant relatives. The lower trust in distant relatives for southern Italian respondents than Slovak respondents is an indication of the spatial character of voiced trust in southern Italy. Relying on distant relatives is a more hazardous option than relying on non-kin such as neighbours or friends, since the chances to reciprocate the act of trust are rarer and, as such, less in the control of the trustor. There is a moral component in this kind of distrust which emerges from the often-quoted proverb: *parenti serpenti* (relatives are snakes). On the other hand, relatives who live in the same community are entrusted on an almost daily basis with favours, help, loans, gifts and other forms of service.

The rationale underlying this choice is not merely moral, but also instrumental, since continuous interpersonal interaction actually reduces the social leverage of trust. Moreover, positive emotional approaches to trust among close kin are amplified by values such as commitment to family relationships, the strength and density of networks, and the number of reliable relatives. These aspects are considered as positive values in the communities I investigated. Usually, the larger a person's kin network, the more reliable that person is in the whole community, since the number of possible checks with other relatives increases. Unlike in Slovakia, these values show a degree of continuity with the past and have never actually hampered the consolidation of interpersonal trust among close kin.

## Villagers

The category of “villagers” or “community members” is among the most problematic. Unlike verbal expressions of trust in relatives, this category is less likely to indicate identification between trustor and trustee. The general character of this social category calls for more neutral expressions of trust which are not imbued with the sentimental and emotional traits of trust in kin. Nonetheless, in Slovakia I encountered strong emotional (verbal) expressions of distrust towards villagers. To some, the category represented the common problems in their daily social reality and acquired a more notable temporal (rather than spatial) dimension. Distrust in villagers was conveyed as a sign of the times, epitomising the difficulties of the post-socialist transformation.

Acted trust, however, follows different pathways. There are over a dozen social and cultural associations active in the community and the revival of their activity has been one of the most remarkable results of the last twenty years (Torsello 2008). If, under socialism, community-level associations were mainly dependent on the support of local political (the Communist Party section) and economic (the agricultural cooperative) institutions, during the 1990s spontaneous activism became a significant achievement. In the early 1990s the Hungarian majority of the village became involved in this form of activism as a way of shielding themselves against the threat of assimilation (Tóth 2003), but in recent times this has also been morally and emotionally valued as a communal answer vis-à-vis the general loss of community life in rural villages. In the village examined, the rich activity of social and cultural associations, particularly in the last decade, strongly contrasts with the low voiced trust in “villagers” suggesting that this ambivalence is rooted both in the emotional and moral aspects of socialisation and ethnic identity. In the Italian case the ambivalence between voiced and acted trust among community members is also evident. In spite of the wary attitude towards generalised trust, purchasing from street or market sellers coming from the same town, preferring food cultivated in the same town of origin, employing personnel from the same community and avoiding street markets, festivals and cultural events in other towns are all widespread practices. Identification in local social interaction confirms the trend, observed frequently in Italian

rural contexts, that *campanilismo* (parochialism) is still alive and can actually become a deterrent to interpersonal trust when relationships with outsiders are in question. As in the case of the difference between close and distant relatives, space influences trustworthiness. Trust in villagers and members of the same community is, again, not only a matter of emotional or moral expression, but also a distinctive feature of the actual possibility to temporally control the trustee through personal or mediated interaction.

In other cases, however, some inhabitants, mostly of the upper-class, often as a matter of social distinction, preferred to shop outside their town, send their children to schools in the province capital, and avoid participating in village festivals and other community events. Many of these decisions were justified by a common dissatisfaction with the community of origin, accompanied, at times, by emotional distrust.. Even in these cases, ambivalence was not absent, as those same members who declared they did not trust local shops could not avoid purchasing from them on a weekly basis when it was inconvenient to travel to the city. On other occasions, participation in large community events such as religious or civil festivals was sought as a way of confirming belonging to a common regional (rather than communal) identity, sharing genuinely good food, enjoying music and dance and staying out late at night. Again, the emotional attitude towards trust could be replaced by instrumental attitudes (moved by pleasure-seeking behaviour and choices too) and this occurred especially in short-term, limited interactions with persons outside the affective sphere.

## Institutional Trust

In the case of institutional trust, ambivalence between acted and voiced trust was very widespread. In both cases, the distance of the social actors from the institution was the main criterion in building trust relations. In order to compare the Slovak and the southern Italian cases, I chose to deal with the issue of the municipal administration. This choice was based on three reasons. Firstly, this is the closest political institution to the communities being examined, and as such it is strongly inflected with personal relationships. Secondly, it is the institution about which community members possess the highest degree of information. Thirdly,

the moral grounds on which trust is built find their best expression in this institution, since its performances are measured against the collective interests and well-being of the community.

In spite of the different historical features of the administrative contexts. There are two strong similarities between both cases: frequent ambivalence between voiced and acted trust and the transposition of personal and institutional trust. In the latter case, the municipal administration in Slovakia has come to be mainly identified with the figure of the mayor (and less with the council, which until the present day had limited power). This marks a significant change from the former regime, since trust vis-à-vis this institution is today measured against the personal responsibility of the mayor, and not the leading party.

The first democratically elected mayor, Mark, who kept his office for three terms (twelve years) represents a very common figure in the post-socialist period: he was the son of a rich peasant family, he had important social networks with ex-party leaders, regional and district officials who remained mostly in office during the 1990s. Mark had not been an active communist and he ran as an independent candidate. This helped him to gain trust and be re-elected twice, without having to formally give up the social capital he had previously accumulated. Mark was very active in supporting the infrastructural improvement of the social clubs and the church cemetery, and introduced the gas pipeline in the community, gaining most of his support among the elderly village members (who today represent over 65% of the electorate). In 2001 he lost trust and his third election due to allegations of corruption in the gas connection business, whose bid was won by his cousin's company. The new mayor, presently in his second term of office, comes from a family of school teachers, has no personal ties with local politicians and has been described positively as a trustworthy, honest, hard-working person who has reached his position without any help or network inherited from the past. In spite of this openly voiced trust, in some cases the villagers have demonstrated that they distrusted him, as when they decided to turn to the ex-mayor for help with issues related to land purchase, building licences, development funds and social benefits. The preference to resort to informal ties suggests that local institutions are still approached through personal networks, and this is a form of continuity with past practices. Moreover, the ambivalence between

voiced and acted trust is here the expression of a need to cope with increased social uncertainty and happens mainly at an instrumental, rather than a moral or emotional, level. As most of the anthropological literature on clientelism has pointed out, a corrupt but effective patron can, in conditions dominated by high social uncertainty, be valued more than an honest one (Gellner and Waterbury 1977; Eisenstadt and Roniger 1981; Chubb 1982).

In the southern Italian case the finding of comparatively high voiced trust in “the municipal administration” is based on a positive assessment of this institution’s performance. This derives mainly from the mayor’s ability to successfully lobby the region and the province to establish the music festival and eventually to obtain annual (though constantly declining) funding for it. He has been elected twice and in March 2010 left his office to run in the regional elections, where he was appointed secretary. Not all trusted him, however. As in the Slovak case, some had been disappointed after losing employment or entrepreneurial opportunities related to the festival. Others blamed the mayor for his inability to maintain the same amount of external funding for the festival, or for concentrating his efforts on this event and neglecting wider problems such as poor infrastructure and social services. His decision to leave office was even criticised by the local press and the opposition parties as “an act of betrayal” to the town. Even though his recent election to the regional administration may still prove beneficial enough to the whole community, the step up in his political career has caused the resignation of the entire municipal council, which lost support and, more recently, credibility. Even when the mayor and the municipal council were the object of criticism and distrust, however, a common positive evaluation of the cultural events sponsored by the administration was registered. Among the town dwellers interviewed, all those who had voiced distrust in the mayor were nonetheless positive about the outcome of the music festival. Similarly, none of those who expressed low trust in the local municipality chose not to attend the festival and the other religious and civil events. One explanation for this involvement was that the event represented the “success of the community as a whole and strengthened identity among its inhabitants”.



## Conclusions

What contribution can the comparative analysis of the case studies give to the general theory of trust? First, the widespread ambivalence between ideas and practices renders problematic the deduction that in the two case studies, both of which are dominated by high uncertainty, endogenous trust prevails over generalised trust. Actors may find it strategically appropriate to alternate moral and emotional voiced trust with instrumental acted distrust, or vice versa. Although the family and kin group score highest in levels of reported trust, there are instances in which social practices avoid resorting to kinship ties. Similarly, voiced distrust in local political institutions does not necessarily lead citizens to avoid seeking interaction with key personalities such as the mayor or provincial officials. Hence, voiced and acted distrust are not necessarily causally related as much of the literature wrongly assumes.

Secondly, the hypothesis that the dominance of interpersonal trust in conditions of high social uncertainty hampers institutional trust is not confirmed in the case studies. True, institutional trust is, in conditions of uncertainty, supported by interpersonal trust because actors rely heavily on personal networks and informal practices. However, this type of reliance permits them to convert interpersonal trust into institutional trust, and not, as much of the literature argues, to replace it. Institutional trust is transposed into interpersonal trust because in certain social conditions (ranging from collective to individual-oriented values, rapid and frequent changes in social roles and increasing inequality), spatial and temporal checks of trustworthiness are more successfully established and implemented. To the actors, the ambivalence between voiced and acted trust is the best strategy to perform these checks.

Thirdly, the idea that short-term trust may be ascribed to the domain of rational choice, whereas empathy and emotional sharing promote long-term oriented trust based on common identity structures, also seems weak. On the one hand, emotionally driven expressions of trust may easily leave space for instrumental trust actions. This happens when a high perceived incidence of being deceived and a high level of informality in institutional relations influence the process of individual decision-making. On the other hand, identity-based, long-term commitment may still play an important role in boosting cooperation, but this is deemed

to exert mainly a short-term influence on the processes of trust building (both in the interpersonal and institutional domain). As both cases suggest in different ways, trust and distrust are alternative solutions to the constant need to re-configure cognitive ideas of the changing social reality. This shows that the dominant long-term strategy is based on ambivalence between ideas and actions rather than simply on in-group trust and commitment formation as commonly argued.

These research results are in line with other empirical research pointing out the difficulty of fruitfully applying the two dichotomies of trust-distrust, interpersonal vs. institutional trust in conditions of prolonged and generalised social uncertainty. The comparison between Central Eastern Europe and southern Italy emphasises how different social conditions and value orientations, affected by different historical paths of institutional development, can produce rather similar outcomes in the field of ideas and practices of trust. The Slovak case is characterised by a general concern for the benefits and losses of trust. Because of the profound social and institutional transformation of the last two decades, actors' values and cognitive constructions of trust are still extremely vulnerable and oscillate between lower and higher scores, from strong endogenous trust in the family and in identification-based interest groups, to wariness in interpersonal relationships. The southern Italian case presents a condition in which trust-building choices reflect a constantly instrumental drive. Here, the dominance of mid-range trust scores actually portrays the need to strike a delicate balance between endogenous trust and exogenous distrust. Enduring difficulties in economic development and the pervasiveness of personal and informal ties in institutional arrangements, rather than rapid transformation, lead actors to resort to the ambivalence discussed above. In both cases, however, ambivalence between voiced and acted trust, as well as the transposition of interpersonal and institutional trust are optimal solutions that reduce and give meaning to social uncertainty.

## References

- Apolito, Paolo. 1990. *Tarantismo, identità locale, postmodernità*. Milano: Feltrinelli.
- Bagnasco, Arnaldo. 2006. Ritorno a Montegrano. In: E. Banfield. 2006. *Le basi morali di una società arretrata*. Bologna: Il Mulino, pp. 7–37.

- Barbalet, Jack. 2009. A characterization of trust, and its consequences. *Theory and Society* 38, 367–382, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11186-009-9087-3>.
- Banfield, Edward R. 1958. *The Moral Basis of a Backward Society*. New York: Free Press.
- Barber, Bernard. 1983. *The Logic and Limits of Trust*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press.
- Benassi, David and Enrico Mingione. 2001. Life strategies and social integration in contemporary Italy. *Focaal* 38, 41–54.
- Buchan, Nancy, Rachel Croson and Robyn Dawes. 2002. Swift neighbors and persistent strangers: A cross-cultural investigation of trust and reciprocity in social exchange. *American Journal of Sociology* 108 (1), 168–206, <https://doi.org/10.1086/344546>.
- Campbell, John. 1964. *Honour, Family and Patronage*. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Carrino, Annastella. 1995. *Parentela, mestiere, potere. Gruppi sociali in un borgo meridionale di antico regime*. Bari: Edipuglia.
- Coleman, James. 1990. *Foundations of Social Theory*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Chubb, Judith. 1982. *Patronage, Power and Poverty in Southern Italy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Delamont, Sara. 1995. *Appetites and Identities. An Introduction to the Social Anthropology of Western Europe*. London and New York: Routledge.
- De Martino, Ernesto. 2005. *The Land of Remorse. A Study of Southern Italian Tarantism*. Translated by D.L. Zinn. London: Free Books.
- Douglas, Mary. 1992. *Risk and Blame. Essays in Cultural Theory*. London: Routledge.
- Eisenstadt, Samuel and Luis Roniger. 1981. The study of patron-client relations and recent developments in sociological theory. In: S. Eisenstadt and R. Lemarchand (eds), 1981. *Political Clientelism, Patronage and Development*. Beverly Hills: Sage, pp. 271–295.
- Fukuyama, Francis. 1995. *Trust. The Social Virtues and the Creation of Prosperity*. New York: Free Press.
- Gambetta, Diego (ed.). 1988. *Trust: Making and Breaking Cooperative Relations*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- Gambetta, Diego. 1993. *The Sicilian Mafia. The Business of Private Protection*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Damasio, Antonio. 1994. *Descartes' Error: Emotion, Reason and the Human Brain*. New York: G. Putnam.

- Gellner, Ernest and John Waterbury (eds). 1977. *Patron and Clients in Mediterranean Societies*. London: Duckworth.
- Graziano, Luigi (ed.). 1974. *Clientelismo e mutamento politico*. Milano: Angeli.
- Falcone, Franca. 2005. *La disoccupazione: teorie, terapie ed esperienze dei giovani del sud*. Roma: Edizioni Scientifiche Italiane.
- Féherváry, Magda. 1988. *Parasztagazdaság a XX Század Első Felében* (Peasant economy in the first half of the twentieth century). Budapest: MTA Néprajzi Kutatócsoport.
- Fél, Edit and Tamás Hofer. 1969. *Proper Peasants. Traditional Life in a Hungarian Village*. Chicago: Aldine.
- Giddens, Anthony. 1990. *The Consequences of Modernity*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Giordano, Benito. 2001. 'Institutional thickness'. Political sub-culture and the resurgence of the new regionalism in Italy: a case study of the Northern League in the Province of Varese. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 26 (1), 25–41, <https://doi.org/10.1111/1475-5661.00004>.
- Granovetter, Mark. 1973. The strength of weak ties. *American Journal of Sociology* 78, 1360–1380.
- Gunst, Peter. 1989. Agrarian systems of Central Eastern Europe. In: A. Chirot (ed.). 1989. *The Origins of Backwardness in Eastern Europe*. Berkeley: University of California Press, pp. 53–91.
- Hann, Chris, M. 1998. Religion, trade and trust in South-East Poland. *Religion, State and Society* 26 (3/4), 235–249, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09637499808431828>.
- Hann, Chris M. (ed.) 2002. *Postsocialism. Ideas, Ideologies and Practices in Eurasia*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Hardin, Russel. 1995. *One for All: The Logic of Group Conflict*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Hardin, Russel. 1996. Trustworthiness. *Ethics* 1, 26–42.
- Herzfeld, Michael. 1980. Honor and shame. Problems in the comparative analysis of moral systems. *Man* 15, 339–351.
- Herzfeld, Michael. 1984. The horns of the Mediterraneanist dilemma. *American Ethnologist* 11, 439–454.
- Kornai, János, Bo Rothstein, and Susanne Rose-Ackerman. 2004. *Creating Social Trust in Post-socialist Transition*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Kluckhohn, Florence R. and Fred Strodbeck. 1961. *Variations in Value Orientations*. Evanston: Row, Peterson and Co.
- Letki, Natalia. 2006. Investigating the roots of civic morality: trust, social capital and institutional performance. *Political Behavior* 28, 305–325, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11109-006-9013-6>.

- Levi, Margaret. 2000. When good defenses make good neighbors. In: C. Menard (ed.). 2000. *Institutions, Contracts and Organizations: Perspectives from New Institutional Economics*. Colchester: Edward Elgar, pp. 137–157.
- Lewicki, Roy, Daniel McAllister and Robert Bies. 1998. Trust and distrust: new relationships and realities. *The Academy of Management Review* 23 (3), 438–458.
- Luhmann, Niklas. 1979. *Trust and Power: Two Works by Niklas Luhmann*. Chichester: John Wiley and Sons.
- Malinowski, Bronislaw. 1919. Kula: The circulating exchange of valuables in the Archipelagoes of Eastern New Guinea. *Man* 20, 97–105.
- Mead, Margaret. 2001. *Russian Culture: The Study of Contemporary Western Cultures*. Oxford: Berghahn.
- Meloni, Benedetto (ed.). 1997. *Famiglia meridionale senza familismo. Strategie economiche, reti di relazione e parentela*. Catanzaro: Meridiana.
- Miller, William, Åse Grødeland and Tatyana Y. Koschekina. 2001. *A Culture of Corruption? Coping with Government in Post-communist Europe*. Budapest: CEU Press.
- Mingione, Enzo. 1993. Italy: The resurgence of regionalism. *International Affairs* 69 (2), 305–318.
- Misztal, Barbara. 1998. *Trust in Modern Societies. The Search for the Bases of Social Order*. Cambridge, MA: Polity Press.
- Misztal, Barbara. 2001. *Informality: Social Theory and Contemporary Practice*. London: Routledge.
- Pardo, Italo. 1996. *Managing Existence in Naples. Morality, Action, and Structure*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Pine, Frances. 2002. Retreat to the Household? Gendered Domain in Postsocialist Poland. In: C.M. Hann (ed.). 2002. *Postsocialism. Ideals, Ideologies and Practices in Eurasia*. London, Routledge, pp. 95–113.
- Pizza, Gianni. 2004. Tarantism and the politics of tradition in contemporary Salento. In: F. Pine and D. Kaneff (eds). 2004. *Memory, Politics and Religion: The Past Meets the Present in Europe*. Münster: Lit Verlag, pp. 199–223.
- Putnam, Robert. 2000. *Bowling Alone. The Collapse and Revival of American Community*. New York: Simon and Schuster.
- Róna-Tas, Akos. 1998. Path-dependence and capital theory: Sociology of the post-communist economic transformation. *East European Politics and Societies* 12 (1), 107–131.
- Rose-Ackerman, Susanne. 2001. Trust and Honesty in Post-Socialist Societies. *Kyklos*, 54, 415–444, <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-6435.00161>.

- Rothstein, Bo and David Eek. 2009. Political corruption and social trust. An experimental approach. *Rationality and Society* 21 (1), 81–112, <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F1043463108099349>.
- Rousseau, Denise, Sim Sitkin, Burt, Ronald and Colin Camerer. 1998. Not so different after all: a cross-discipline view of trust. *Academy of Management Review* 23 (3), 393–404.
- Sahlins, Marshall. 1972. *Stone Age Economics*. Chicago: Aldine.
- Schneider, Jane. 1971. On vigilance and virgins: honor, shame and access to resources in Mediterranean societies. *Ethnology* 9 (1), 1–24.
- Schneider, Jane (ed.). 1998. *Italy's "Southern Question". Orientalism in One Country*. Oxford: Berg.
- Seligman, Adam B. 1997. *The Problem of Trust*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Simmel, Georg and K.H. Wolff (ed.). 1964. *The Sociology of Georg Simmel*. New York: Free Press.
- Sztompka, Piotr. 1999. *Trust: A Sociological Theory*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Švecová, Sona. 1991. A szlovák és a cseh parasztcsalád (The Slovak and Czech peasant family). *Ethnographia* 102, 89–119.
- Tarrow, Sidney. 1967. *Peasant Communism in Southern Italy*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Tarrow, Sidney. 1996. Make social science work across space and time: a critical reflection on Robert Putnam's *Making Democracy Work*. *American Political Science Review* 90 (2), 389–397.
- Torsello, Davide. 2003. *Trust, Property and Social Change in a Southern Slovakian Village*. Münster: Lit Verlag. Torsello, Davide. 2005. Managing instability. Trust, ambiguity and social relations in postsocialist Slovakia. In: P. Skalník (ed.). 2005. *Anthropology of Europe: Teaching and Research*. Prague: SET-OUT, pp. 153–176.
- Torsello, Davide. 2008. Trust, kinship and civil society in a Slovakian village. *Sociologia—Slovak Review of Sociology* 40 (6), 514–529.
- Tóth, Károly. 2003. A village on the ethnic periphery, The case of Dlhá nad Váhom, southern Slovakia. In: D. Torsello and M. Pappova (eds). 2003. *Social Networks in Movement. Time, Interaction and Interethnic Spaces in Central Eastern Europe*. Dunajska Streda: Lilium Aurum, pp. 117–140.
- Tullio-Altan, Carlo. 2000. *La nostra Italia. Clientelismo, trasformismo e liberismo dall'Unità al 2000*. Milano: Egea.
- Uslaner, Eric. 2002. *The Moral Foundations of Trust*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Viesti, Gianfranco. 2009. *Mezzogiorno a tradimento, Il nord, il sud e la politica che non c'è*. Roma: Laterza.
- Viesti, Gianfranco. 2010. *Più lavoro, più talenti: giovani, donne, Sud. Le risposte alla crisi*. Roma: Donzelli.
- Yagi, Kazuo and Satoshi Mizobata (eds). 2008. *Melting Boundaries. Institutional Transformation in the Wider Europe*. Kyoto: Kyoto University Press.
- Yamagishi, Toshio, Karen Cook and Motoki Watabe. 1998. Uncertainty, trust and commitment formation in the United States and Japan. *American Journal of Sociology* 104 (1), 165–194.
- Yamagishi, Toshio. 2002. *The Structure of Trust. An Evolutionary Game of Mind and Society*. Hokkaido Behavioral Science Report 13, Hokkaido University.
- White, Carolin. 1980. *Patrons and Partisans*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Zinn, Dorothy. 2001. *La raccomandazione. Clientelismo vecchio e nuovo in Italia*. Roma: Donzelli.

# Appendix

## Tables

Table 1: Reported trust levels.

	Slovakia	Southern Italy
Family	4.6	4.9
Close relatives	3.9	4.1
Distant relatives	3.1	2,6
Friends	3.5	3.9
Colleagues	3	2.6
Neighbours	3.2	2.7
Villagers	2.4	2.6
Municipal administration	2.7	3.6
State	1.6	2.8
Church	2.9	3
European Union	1.9	2.5

Source: author survey.

Table 2: Differences between the two cases, Cluster 1.

	0–0.4	0.5–0.9	1.0–1.4
Family	0.3		
Close relatives	0.2		
Friends	0.4		
Colleagues	0.4		
Neighbours		0.5	
Villagers	0.2		
Municipal administration		0.9	

Source: Author survey.



Table 3: Differences between two cases. Cluster 2.

	0-0.4	0.5-0.9	1.0-1.4
Distant relatives			
State			1.2
Church	0.1		
European Union		0.6	

Source: author survey.