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FELLOWSHIP

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PROJECT

Social capital, networks, and trust in the time of radical changes

No success comes by individual effort. The whole life of a person is integrated into the relational network of ties. This network is changing throughout the life course and the position of a person is changing either. Some positions can be more favorable than the others, some are less favorable. If an individual can identify and sustain favorable position, it might be a key reason of success not only from micro perspective of a particular individual but also the key issue to form a resilient community that individual belongs to. Along with that, relational patterns are challenged by various societal changes, political and economic turbulences, cultural transformations, military conflicts, and migration processes. These contexts form and affect the social capital as a network resource that is structurally embedded into the regular interactions of people; it provides individuals, groups, and communities with the access to different material and non-material resources, from finances and property to emotional support and information flows. Overall, the network approach in studying social capital enables the interpretation of the social reality in relational terms through the dynamics of network interactions.

Therefore, my research standpoint is the duality of the context and relational structures that, on one hand, are formed in the context and are affected by the social values and norms, and on the other hand, these relational structures as a form of social capital, are changing during the life course, and they can drive the societal changes. Specifically, the social capital as a form of relationally embedded access to various resources can reproduce inequalities in the society. However, in the time of radical political or economic transformations, or military conflicts, the new network configurations can bring new challenges in existing inequalities as well as opportunities for disadvantaged groups to achieve more through their relational structures.

I aim to assess critically the role of social capital in the life of communities and the changes of network structures considering the existing and emerging inequalities during the full-scale war in Ukraine. In practical terms, my objective is to accumulate the previous research on social capital, networks and trust, that were conducted by other scholars, to question the outcomes of those studies from the perspective of constantly changing society (case of Ukraine), and add the empirical evidences from the surveys I conducted myself, and the empirical survey data collected in Ukraine, that enables me to illustrate the key arguments of (i) what is the ground for resilient social capital and network structures to evolve during societal changes (with main focus on trust), and (ii) how that kind of social capital is transforming and what consequences it brings on the micro level, on community level, and on macro level.

Hence, two key research questions of my research project are (i) what the ground for the evolving of resilient social capital and network structures during radical societal changes is (with the main focus on interpersonal trust), and (ii) how that kind of social capital is transforming and what consequences it brings on the micro level, on community level, and on macro level. This would enable social diagnosis with the network perspective where social capital is either a dependent or independent variable in the constantly changing broader context.