

## **The uncharted political realm – social capital, political values and practices stimulating informal networks in Macedonia**



**Nenad Markovikj**

*Assistant professor, Political Science Department, Faculty of Law “Justinian I”  
Ss. Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje*  
[nenad.markovic@gmail.com](mailto:nenad.markovic@gmail.com)

**Ivan Damjanovski**

*Assistant professor, Political Science Department, Faculty of Law “Justinian I”  
Ss. Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje*  
[damivan@gmail.com](mailto:damivan@gmail.com)

### **Abstract**

In political science in general, and especially in theory of social capital, informal structures play a visible part. Entailed as a constitutive part of social capital alongside formal structures and relations, informal structures seem to be perceived as a very ambivalent phenomenon. That is the very reason why examining the preconditions and the available social space for their creation seems important. It is none the less important in the case of the Republic of Macedonia, since the Macedonian example displays many connecting points to other transitional countries, but also has its own idiosyncrasies, interesting for social capital and informality as two related issues.

The main focus of this academic effort is to determine what the preconditions for creating informal networks are, and where the fertile social soil for creating such networks in Macedonia is located. Additionally, it tries to explain the very foundations upon which these networks are based by analyzing two vital aspects: values and practices. However, the article does not deal with specific informal networks and has no intention of going into details of their structure and functioning. Thus, the text focuses on values and practices present in the domestic political system that stimulate creation of informal networks, claiming that the major factors that contribute to the creation of informal networks are the specific structure of social capital, institutional trust, the structure of the political parties and the political processes as well as the religious and ethnic barriers.

**Key words:** social capital, informal networks, transition democracies, R. Macedonia

### **Analytical focus and selection criteria for the units of analysis**

The analytical focus of the paper is on the values and practices that stimulate the creation of informal networks in the Republic of Macedonia. The selection criteria are based on the four-dimensional model of social capital of Stolle and Rochon (2001: 145-146) within which the analyzed values and practices can be placed. This model entails the following aspects:

- 1) The first set of indicators entails participation and engagement generally in politics and more specifically in the community;
- 2) The second set of indicators entails measurements on generalized trust and reciprocity within the community;
- 3) The third set of indicators entails trust towards public officials and institutions;
- 4) The fourth dimension is a collection of attitudinal variables important to social capital such as tolerance, approval of free riding, as well as optimism.

Building on this theoretical model, the analysis tries to satisfy all aspects of the model, analyzing political values in Macedonian society from the standpoint of social capital in general, and more specific focusing on political participation and its nature in the local context, trust and reciprocity, trust in institutions as well as tolerance as a more general feature of Macedonian society as a multiethnic one. The only two features that are being abstracted from the analysis are free riding and optimism, which presents the only deviation from the theoretical model.

### **The demand for informality – the question of political values**

Abundance of literature in political science clearly includes informal social relations and networks as a cornerstone of social capital, be it in a positive or a negative connotation. Thus research on social capital clearly suggests that ‘social capital networks may be informal or formal’ (Rose and Weller 2003: 201) i.e. that ‘social capital is defined as norms and institutions, formal or informal’ (Bryce 2005: 7). As Stolle and Hooghe point out ‘if society-centered accounts are correct, and social capital is mainly produced by the day-to-day interactions between citizens, our main attention should be directed at fostering formal as well as informal

types of social contact' (Stolle and Hooghe 2003: 3). This strand of theory dates back to Tocqueville whereas 'Tocqueville (...) made it clear that the associations need not be institutionalized, with fixed limits and formal memberships' (Gundelach and Torpe 2005: 51).

It goes without saying that there is no questioning of the place of informal social contacts and networks within the structure of social capital in contemporary research on social capital. What can be problematical is whether existence of strong informal networks (formal associations as well) is by default perceived as a constructive societal phenomenon. On the one side, the nearly canonical position of Putnam proclaims a positive correlation between creation of informal networks and social trust (Putnam 1993: 2008). Other authors are more skeptical when it comes to the effects of informal networks due to the fact that 'formal and informal social interactions contribute to the emergence of societal norms and generalized values, even though not all types of interactions are equally productive of these traits' (Stole 2003: 20) adding that 'large numbers of associations and elevated levels of associational membership are not necessarily linked to trust, reciprocity and horizontal cooperation. Associations can thus not automatically—not always and not everywhere—be seen as the structural embodiment of the attitudinal components of social capital' (Stole 2003: 20).

A second challenge occurs when one tries to distinguish between different types of networks given their specific structure *apropos* the fact that:

'Any society—modern or traditional, authoritarian or democratic, feudal or capitalist—is characterized by networks of interpersonal communication and exchange, both formal and informal. Some of these networks are primarily "horizontal," bringing together agents of equivalent status and power. Others are primarily "vertical," linking unequal agents in asymmetric relations of hierarchy and dependence.' (Putnam *et al.* 1993: 173).

The 'horizontality' or 'verticality' of the formed societal networks is crucial to answering what kind of informality a certain society stimulates through the content of the social capital it produces. This is important because of the general position that 'only where civil society is organized around "horizontal bonds of mutual solidarity" rather than "vertical bonds of dependency and exploitation" will it produce trust and cooperation' (Berman 2001: 36). This is even more so important in a context where 'norms of cooperation in any particular network are likely to change from one situation to another. They can represent social capital in one context and unsocial capital in another' (Hayoz and Sergeev 2003: 48). The very formation of informal

social contacts and networks seems less influential to producing social capital as much as the nature and structure of these networks.

In order to analyze the structure of social capital in the Republic of Macedonia from the standpoint of values and thus answer the dilemma whether and what type of informality do they stimulate, one first has to point out to two things: the relation between political culture, within which social values are embedded, and social capital as well as the model of measuring dimensions of social capital. In regards to the first question there is no clear consensus in academia to the causality of political culture and social capital. On one hand, institutionalists claim that political culture determines social capital being that ‘generalized social trust (...) trust in government and public officials, tolerance and optimism are all seen (...) as integral components of social capital’ (Edwards and Foley 2001: 7) and are ‘linked directly to its beneficial impact on participation and on civic engagement and democracy in general’ (Edwards and Foley 2001: 7). Neo-Tocquevilleians on the other hand take the opposite stance by underlining that the vitality of associations has a strong influence on political culture and thus citizen’s engagement, including its influence on social capital (Edwards and Foley 2001: 7). Although causality is not a matter of consensus, the connection between political culture and social capital is, notwithstanding that the institutionalists’ approach seems more logical due to the fact that social aggregates such as social capital consist of individual values and orientations, and it is not *vice versa*.

Referring to the model of Stolle and Rochon (2001), the political setup (parties, institutions and processes), as well as tolerance shall be analyzed separately, whereas the first two dimensions of social capital are of interest in this chapter. However before one proceeds to commenting specific indicators of political culture *apropos* the model of social capital, it is highly beneficial to point out to one fundamental issue connected to the model of social capital – norms of general reciprocity. Being seen as a precondition for building a productive model of social capital ‘norms of generalized reciprocity and networks of civic engagement encourage social trust and cooperation because they reduce incentives to defect, reduce uncertainty, and provide models for future cooperation’ (Putnam *et al.* 1993: 177). Investing in the concept of *general good* seems the opposite of the *quid pro quo* model of social capital (for more see Edwards and Foley 2001) inasmuch as:

‘...it has become more difficult to mobilize individuals around shared endeavors, at least with regard to long-term projects, is combined with an understanding of modern individuals as reflexive persons. Individuals are no longer potential full-time activists, but make independent choices on a case-by-case basis. They are not obedient foot ‘soldiers’ fighting (unquestionably) for certain causes, but demand to be heard and to be involved directly in decision-making processes.’ (Torpe and Ferrer-Fons 2007: 97).

This increasingly instrumental approach changes the social landscape, and in transitional societies is tightly connected to the issue of social patronage/clientelism. Adding up to this point one must define patronage/clientelism whereas ‘patron-client relations (...) involve interpersonal exchange and reciprocal obligations, but the exchange is vertical and the obligations asymmetric. (Putnam *et al.* 1993: 174-175). It is exactly this phenomenon that reveals the underpinnings of a specific social ambient such as the Macedonian one. Political scientists noted that ‘voluntary associations do not always function as democratic sources of social capital’ (Hooghe and Stolle 2003: 13), and there is no reason to doubt that the same goes for informal networks. In this regard indicators on social patronage and clientelism designate whether formal or informal networks are more prone to function based on norms of general reciprocity or on the basis of personal exchange.

Latest studies in the field of political culture in the Republic of Macedonia have shown a worrying trend in this regard. Namely as data from 2012 indicate (Markovic *et al.* 2012), respondents show a visible inclination towards social patronage and clientelism (even submissiveness) in three vital dimensions: 1) unconditional return of favor; 2) bigger importance of personal connections *vis-à-vis* merit; 3) unconditional following of instructions of authorities. This reveals an atmosphere of perceived social clientelism, a patronage model of social exchange and submissiveness to authority that could hardly stimulate creation of horizontal networks vital to social capital development. Although one could generally claim that perceptions of reciprocity are high, it is clear that this reciprocity is not based on social trust but rather on reliance to clientelistic networks and informal relations based on familiarity. Additional indicators speak in favor of this claim. This goes on the line of the general efforts of avoiding the classical Putnamian trap of ‘ignoring (...) the dark side of social capital’ (Miladinovic 2012: 61) i.e. not examining the quality of social networks and informal relations, but rather focusing on their quantity and frequency.

On that note, the Macedonian case indicates that the corrupt model of social exchange and patronage is accompanied with one of the lowest levels of social trust in the region and wider. Following the model of Stolle and Rochon (2001), as well as the Putnam's 'holy trinity' of social capital, meaning reciprocity, network connections and trust (Miladinovic 2012: 60), social trust in Macedonia is probably one of the most worrying dimensions. When one speaks on behalf of hard evidence, research from 2012 indicates that only 'small minority of respondents (only 11.9 per cent) said people generally can be trusted, whereas significant majority of them (86 per cent) answered that one should be careful in establishing relations with other people' (Markovic *et al.* 2012: 32).

Putting this indicator in perspective indicates not only low levels of social trust, but also a significant decrease of social trust in Macedonia in the last decade. Namely, as quantitative data indicate (MCIC 2008), the level of respondents in Macedonia that were willing to trust other people in 2008 was 23.1 per cent, which compared to 2012 displays a downfall of more than 10%. Although 11.9 per cent of positive answers seem much higher than 8 per cent in 1995 (Salaj 2007: 159) the level of distrust in other people still remains a hindrance to citizen's engagement.<sup>1</sup>

Speaking on behalf of associational capacity and participation, one could conclude that on declaratory level there is readiness among the citizens in Macedonia to engage in associating for pursuing their own interest (Markovic *et al.* 2012; MCIC 2009) but that 'in face of (...) uncertainty in establishing social arrangements, there is a seemingly greater readiness in starting partnership for personal gain' (Markovic *et al.* 2012: 32). This could lead to the conclusion that the readiness for association would lead to greater participation in different associations. However, this is not entirely the case since, when it comes to participation, experts point out one very important phenomenon, i.e. that in Macedonia 'there is an obvious apathy (distrust) in participating in any organized form of political life such as parties, NGOs etc.' (Markovic *et al.* 2012: 32). Analyzing quantitative data in the last decade (Markovic *et al.* 2012; MCIC 2008; MCIC 2009) on participation in different associations it becomes clear that associational capacity of Macedonian society as well as voluntary work capacity is rather limited and that political parties are more attractive than NGOs when it comes to associational forms (MCIC 2009: 30), especially among the younger population (Taleski *et al.* 2006: 47). This is accompanied by a negative perception and distrust in trade-unions, media as well as the civil sector (NGO sector)

although high numbers of registered NGOs in the country direct one to the conclusion that association is highly instrumental and based on the *quid pro quo* model.

However, since Macedonian citizens declare themselves as very religious (Troshanovski and Popovikj 2011: 35), one would expect that the religious sentiment and associational capacity might be high in this sphere, thus being a solid ground for building informal trust networks and a positive model of social capital. However, once again the instrumentalization of participation is visible since analysis of the model of religiosity in relevant studies (Troshanovski and Popovikj 2011) shows that while declaratively religious, Macedonian citizens are very skeptical when it comes to predominance of religion in society, trust in religious authorities, as well as relatively passive when it comes to performing religious rituals and attending temples. This is the case of so called ‘social religiosity’ (see Damjanovski 2012) that is more a consequence of widespread social conformism rather than a genuine devotion to religion.

Taking in consideration these specific parameters of social capital from the ‘bottom-up’ angle, one could easily conclude that demands for creating networks/relations, be it formal or informal in the Macedonian case is highly instrumental and ‘contaminated’ by an atmosphere of social distrust<sup>ii</sup> and unwillingness for participation in terms of networks of reciprocity. This could hardly lead to creation of horizontal and cooperation based networks, regardless of whether they are rooted in formality or informality. Such a democratic deficit in the political base would easily lead to the conclusion that this would reflect on the political actors and processes, a claim that would need further elaboration.

### **The politically uncharted – political parties, institutions and processes – values and practices**

The ‘bottom-up’ side of social capital *apropos* creation of informal relations and institutions only partially answers the question of various stimuli and incentives for emanation of such relations and networks. As institutionalists previously suggest, and as Stolle and Hooghe (2003: 3) confirm, ‘if institution-centered accounts are correct, we should be looking at promising public policies and institutional structures that facilitate social capital’. This line of argumentation becomes even stronger given that the already mentioned four-dimensional model

of Stolle and Rochon (2001) heavily focuses on political processes and institutions as well, and takes them into account when measuring vital dimensions of social capital.

The perspective of the political parties, institutions and processes is vital to analyzing incentives for informality in the case of the Republic of Macedonia. On the one hand, the very structure of the political parties in the country stimulates creation of informal networks due to the specific structure of the political parties, especially party hierarchy and discipline. On the other hand, the limited level of institutional trust and alienation from politics creates a fertile ground for informal structures. Finally, the ‘overspill’ of the political process in the country into ad-hoc informal institutions created by the political setup in the country, speaks of a matrix of behavior that practically diverts the political process from the institutions and party interaction, to informal political institutions, which can be considered as a self-debilitating factor for maintaining the political process within the institutional design.

### ***Political party structure and informality***

When it comes to political party structure, two specific phenomena have to be taken into account when commenting on the Macedonian case: 1) Macedonia is a southeast European country, suffering from most of the democratic deficits that countries in SEE have and 2) Macedonia is a transitional society with no previous experience in pluralism. These two factors are of importance because of the easier understanding of the deficits in the structure of political parties, its effect on the political system overall and ultimately in creating informal networks.

Limited research exists on the topic of political party structure in Macedonia. However, available analyses point out to one general phenomenon connected to the associative power of society, i.e. as Klekovski states (see in Markovic *et al.* 2012: 10):

“Macedonian society leans towards a phenomenon known as “uncertainty avoidance”, manifesting in the lack of capacity to undertake individual responsibility. Politics is important in the public sphere, but there is an obvious apathy (distrust) in participating in any organized form of political life such as parties, NGOs etc. This leads to distrust in institutions due to their irresponsiveness and inefficiency that has been built up throughout the years’.



By using categories of the Hofstede model (Hofstede, 2010), Klekovski described the origin of the instrumentalization of political participation in post-communist societies, vital to answering the question of party structure. On this line of argumentation Van Biezen (2003) points out to two major deficits in the party structure of transitional societies: 1) The predominance of the party leader was in part the result of the informal and highly personalized networks surrounding the party president (where ‘clientelism and personal ties with the party president played an extremely important role in establishing the territorial structures of the party, and personalist features tended to dominate internal party conflicts’); and 2) process of selection of candidates for public office as highly centralized and concentrated – either formally or informally – around the party leadership. Adding to this, Van Biezen also comments party loyalty and allegiance by stating that:

‘Parliamentary indiscipline is likely to occur when neither the local party organisations nor the MPs selected for the party have developed a strong sense of built-in partisanship (...) it is a very important component in recruiting members to the legislature that there be some preexisting loyalty to the party itself. (...) therefore, it may have been the general lack of such a strong sense of party attachment that has induced parties to seek for alternative mechanisms that might reduce possible dissenting behavior among their public office holders. Controlling the recruitment process of future public office holders from above may therefore be one of the means by which parties in newly developing democracies compensate for the weakness of reservoirs of party loyalty and try to ensure party cohesion through “enforced discipline”’ (Van Biezen 2003: 217).

This particular model of party enforced party loyalty and strong “presidentialism” in the parties has been the major stimulus for building informal political networks of loyalty in transitional societies. Furthermore, academic literature suggests that these deficits mostly stem from the early transition where ‘most parties (other than those well-organized in clandestinity) will initially suffer from the lack of articulated links with society’ (Pridham and Lewis 1996: 10) and where ‘in the absence of a developed space between the public and private spheres, these groups bridged the gap’ (Millard 2004: 47) hence ‘the élites both reflected and shaped the political opportunity structure’ (Millard 2004: 47).

Speaking of Macedonia as a specific case within these general framework of political party structuring and functioning in transitional societies, one could firmly conclude that Macedonia suffers from the main deficits that have been located within the party systems in post-communist countries, especially in southeast Europe. As two independent and seven-years-apart

analyses show (Siljanovska, 2005; Cekov and Daskalovski, 2013) the major shortcomings of the political parties in the country are numerous and not limited to:

- Elitist policy making;
- Unclear border between party and state (*partitocrazia*);
- Lack of democratic and consensual culture among parties (“foe” relations);
- No elite circulation in the parties (especially after loss of elections);
- Domination of party leadership accompanied by party *camarillas*;
- Exclusion of other social actors from the policy making process;
- Undemocratic internal party organization and lack of intra-party democracy;
- Explicit or implicit ban of factions and tendencies within the party structure;
- Wide competencies of certain party presidents in recruitment of the party leadership at central and local level;
- Wide competencies in election of public functionaries;
- Absence of the practice of resignation after election loss (practical not formal principle);
- Extensive competencies of leaders in policy formulation and chairing party bodies (executive and central committees);
- Substantial competencies in blocking party decisions;
- Extensive competencies in abolishing lower bodies (branch offices) in some statutes etc.

*Summa summarum*, the structure of Macedonian political parties and the modalities of their functioning create the perfect ambient for emanation of informal networks that influence politics from behind the scenes. Concentration of power combined with the lack of allegiance (and instrumental participation) by the party base, and the general social distrust, gives directions to a process where party elites create necessity networks of loyal party members in order to effectively stay in power and steer political processes by using clientelistic/patronage modalities of recruitment. Additionally, wide competencies in policy formulation, recruitment of party elites, strong parliamentary discipline of MPs, vetoing party decisions as well as abolishing lower bodies speak of a wide range of available instruments for discipline-enforcing to party members that might question the position of party elites. Furthermore, the explicit or implicit ban on forming party factions/tendencies and the lack of party elite circulation (even after loss of elections) make stronger the claim that the party structure is often a décor of political parties, and

that the political process is taking place outside the envisaged party structures. This process has its reflection in the overall democratic ambient as well.

***Institutional trust and the political ‘overspill’***

In order to proceed with analyzing the institutional setup and the level of trust that people have in institutions, it would be useful to turn to general attitudes of the citizens in Macedonia towards politics. As recent quantitative research indicates (Markovic *et al.* 2012) citizens of Macedonia have a very specific position towards politics. On one hand, they recognize its importance in society and the fact that all societal processes undergo the political filter (Ibidem, 8), but vast majority of them denies speaking of politics and respondents are especially reserved when it comes to letting politics in their intimate lives (Ibidem, 7). This practically means that:

‘It is obvious that this duality of intimate denial and public recognition of the importance of the political process is tightly connected to a very specific type of politization of society. This means that the political culture is structured in a way that has realistic perceptions on the importance and the presence of the political process, but this perception is followed by a disappointment in the very political process accompanied by a feeling of personal powerlessness and futility of political participation among large portions of the populace in the country. This negative occurrence results in insufficiencies on the part of personal responsibility as well as (...) odium towards entering the political arena.’ (Markovic *et al.* 2012: 10)

Besides speaking on behalf of previously mentioned instrumentalization of participation in Macedonia, the specific politization of Macedonian society would lead to strong reservations in relation to political institutions. Democratic disillusionment is also ‘fed’ by strong support for autocratic tendencies (Ohrid Institute 2007: 18-20) and technocratic government (Markovic *et al.* 2012; Ohrid Institute, 2007), supplemented by strong state-dependency and reservations towards democracy mixed with a sense of nostalgia for the previous regime (Markovic *et al.* 2012). These tendencies clearly speak on behalf of a not entirely consolidated attitudinal dimension of the democratic transition (Linz and Stepan 1996: 5) which adds up to the limited trust in political institutions.

If one of the vital dimensions of social capital is the consent of the subjects to rule and be ruled, then perceiving institutions and public officers as a trustworthy object of investing personal political capital is crucial to decreasing the space for malign informal networks and

maintaining the political process within the institutional design. However, longitudinal data speak in favor of a very limited amount of trust that citizens of Macedonia have in institutions (UNDP 2005: 13), whereas only the Police is trusted by more than half of the citizens. The low level of trust in the judiciary and the Parliament (near 30%) as well as the limited trust in the Government and the President (near 40%) leads to a conclusion that people do not perceive institutions as trustworthy (ibid) which is, as institutionalists claim, a basic precondition for creating a healthy matrix of social capital. The fact that the Police and the Army remain the most trusted institutions, i.e. the suppressive apparatus of the state, clearly speaks of a model of political reasoning where people perceive advancement of public good exclusively through repressive intuitions and indicates readiness for a trade-off between security and liberty (UNDP 2005: 13).

The link between institutional trust and informal structures lies exactly within (or better said outside) the borderlines of the political process in the country. In a situation where institutions fail to contain the political process within the political system, in the narrower sense of the word one could expect more maneuvering space for informal networks. However linear this conclusion might seem, it has its verification in the informal structures<sup>iii</sup> that the very political process in Macedonia has been developing ever since its independence. Some of these specific structures refer to:

1. *The role of the international community*<sup>iv</sup>. Although a very formal and powerful actor in the political arena in the Republic of Macedonia, the international community has played a very specific role in Macedonia especially in events of political turmoil and blockades of the political process. If one takes into account the timeline of involvement of the international community from the conflict in 2001 until the events in the Macedonian Parliament in December 2012, it becomes clear that ‘the high conflict potential of the Macedonian political arena (...) determines a specific phenomenon of mediating activities of external factors in Macedonian politics, in close relation to the problems of political dialogue among the main stakeholders’ (Markovic and Damjanovski 2013: 34). Although not being a formal part of the Macedonian political system, the international community (especially in the face of the United States of America and the European Union) often ‘fills the gaps’ that Macedonian political actors leave in the political process (see for instance Markovic *et al.* 2011), bearing in mind the ‘lack of clarity or gaps (...),

advocated (...) as a way of leaving room for maneuver, which are then filled by informal practices' (McAuley 2005: 86). This mediating role has been most visible in the case of the Ohrid Framework Agreement from 2001, the Law on territorial organization of the country from 2004 and the May Agreement from 2007 (Markovic *et al.* 2011). Even more so, recent examples have shown that this 'spillover' of the political process is nowhere near its end since informal or *ad-hoc* political structures remain a modality for solving political dead-ends in Macedonian politics.

2. *The ad-hoc Committee for Inquiry of the events in the Macedonian Parliament in December 2012.* Following the events of December 2012 in the Macedonian Parliament (for more see Markovic and Presova, 2013) when the opposition, in an attempt to block the state budget for 2013, was physically removed from the Parliament (alongside the journalists), on an initiative of the President of the country Gjorge Ivanov an *ad-hoc* Committee of Inquiry was formed in order to try to clarify the December 24<sup>th</sup> events in the Parliament. Although this initiative was widely accepted (Markovic and Presova, 2013) and the Committee has finished its work after a series of relapses and holdbacks, several dilemmas arise from the process and are related to informality in politics. Taking into consideration that 'informal practices may arise out of earlier ways of doing things, or in opposition to them, or simply because people seize new opportunities and invent new strategies' (McAuley 2005: 101), the first dilemma relates to whether once again the Macedonian political process ended up outside the very institution that should resolve its shortcomings through public deliberation as a previous pattern of political problem solving. The international community has once again been a vital actor in forming the Committee of inquiry, and if it hadn't been for the pressure of the international community, it is questionable whether this Committee would have been formed at all (Markovic and Damjanovski 2013: 29). The second dilemma is the fact that the Committee has been initiated by the President of the country, and speaking of formality and informality, the President has no formal competencies to form Committees of Inquiry. Notwithstanding that the initiative was the only positive attempt to resolve this political crisis, the Parliament of the Republic of Macedonia itself is the only formal organ that has the competencies to formally initiate creation of Committees, especially of inquiry nature. Being strongly supported by the international community, one could make

a conclusion that political problems in Macedonian politics are recently resolved through informal initiatives, supported and pushed through by informal (external, to say the least) actors and implemented by *ad-hoc* political bodies based in complete informality.

3. *Leader's meetings.* On this account, and reverting back to the undemocratic structure of the Macedonian political parties, Macedonian politics has given ground to a specific type of informal structures that became a political template ever since the signing of the Ohrid Framework Agreement. According to Macedonian constitutionalists, the Ohrid Framework Agreement has been agreed and signed in a highly 'partitocratic manner' (see Ivanov *et al.* 2001), being that the leaders of the four major parties have signed it, alongside the President of the country and with mediation of the USA and the EU (Markovic *et al.* 2011: 16-20). Onwards, this format of the leaders of the four most powerful political parties meeting and deciding upon major political challenges remained a cornerstone of Macedonian democracy, although once again this 'body' is not of formal nature. Numerous political challenges, starting from electoral legislation, EU and NATO membership and even political boycott by the opposition has been 'redirected' from the Parliament as the main deliberative body to leaders meetings where the Parliament is not the only important institution that is being circumvented. The very political parties are being excluded from the political process, being that their leaders become the 'authorized' decision makers and negotiators, especially in times of political crises.

These types of practices that practically displace the political process outside the institutions present a fertile ground for public disillusionment in the public policy process and institutional capacity of a country. As McAuley (2005) noticed, 'the dominance of (...) 'informal institutions' (arbitrary actions by the leadership, selective use of the electoral system, patron-client relations' is not a consequence of the 'lack of demand, but inadequacy of supply from formal state institutions' (McAuley 2005: 85). This means that informal networks on levels above and beyond the state level shall be formed whenever the political process comes to a dead-end and in situations where formal institutions cannot find the way out of it. Taking into consideration that 'informal networks are no substitute for civil and political society associations if post-communist systems are to become democratic and tolerant rather than degenerate into a different type of authoritarianism' (Brown 2005: 197), it is clear that the political logic in

Macedonia has to undergo a thorough change in order for its democracy to consolidate, attitudinally, behaviorally and institutionally.

### ***Tolerance and barriers***

If tolerance is one of the preconditions for creating healthy networks (formal or informal) of general reciprocity and healthy social capital (see Stolle and Rochon 2001), then Macedonia shows a very limited capacity in this respect as well. If informal relations are hindered by lack of tolerance in the effort of creating social trust, then the occasional political setbacks in Macedonian society come as no surprise. In the general sense of the word, Macedonian society according to both domestic and international studies (EBRD 2010; Markovic *et al.* 2012), shows a very low level of tolerance towards marginalized societal groups although accepting other religion and ethnicity are not *per se* a problem when it comes to the public sphere (UNDP 2005; Markovic *et al.* 2012). Social solidarity is also an indicator that would create a positive reflection of the model of political culture in Macedonia *apropos* social capital and the possibility of creating informal networks, but additional concern is created when it comes to ethnic and religious barriers. Namely as one moves from the public sphere (business) towards personal friendships and ending with the most intimate phenomenon – marriage, it becomes visible that ethnic and religious distances grow (UNDP 2005; Markovic *et al.* 2012). This means that the possibility of creating social networks and relations can hardly surpass mutual interest, which is also a stimulating factor for a ‘zero sum game’ model of ethnic and religious relations, present in Macedonian society today.

This distance and model of interethnic/religious exchange is also facilitated by three additional factors. The first one is the political model produced by the Ohrid Framework Agreement in 2001, which according to some authors is highly communitarian (Ivanov *et al.* 2001) and creates space for ‘ethnic entrepreneurship’. The second factor is the political parties that are of exclusively ethnic nature and create a vicious spiral of ethnic expectations that simply widen the gap between the communities (see in Bozinovski 2012). The third factor is the increased ethnic parallelism in the post-OFA period (Markovic 2012) that also inhibits bridging the gap between the communities (especially the two biggest ones – Macedonians and Albanians) and enabling the creation of bridging social capital (Miladinovic 2012: 62).

Ethnic and religious barriers are very important for divided societies not only due to the fact that their decrease could affect the political stability, but it could also improve the model of social capital and investing in networks of general reciprocity, be they formal or informal. But in case those barriers are relatively high in the personal sphere and where political actors and the institutional design additionally burden the possibility of creating such networks, one could easily claim that there is very little chance of creating bridging informal networks that would stimulate norms of general reciprocity in the ethnic/religious field. Given ethnic barriers and attitudes on ethnic issues (see Markovic *et al.* 2012), it is highly likely that the informal networks will be formed based on bonding social capital, with exclusion of other non-members of a specific ethnic/religious group.

### **Conclusion**

Informal networks have become of a visible interest for political science, especially in transitional societies where they stem from the model of political values and practices present in these societies. The Republic of Macedonia seems as no exception bearing in mind that there is vast social space for creation of informal networks. On the one hand, this social space is created by the very structure of social capital measured through specific indicators. On the other hand, the structure of political parties, the nature of the political process as well as institutional support only stimulate creation of such networks. Finally, ethnic and religious barriers also contribute to emanation of informal networks based rather on bonding than bridging social capital. By analyzing political values that directly influence the structure of social capital, and by using a specific model of social capital through which these indicators can be analyzed, one could unquestionably claim that informal structures in Macedonian society are a product of the specific model of political values and practices that in all aspects enable and even stimulate presence and influence of informal structures in the political process. This model of values and practices is heavily based on social clientelism and patronage thus determining the quality of the informal networks as funded on corrupt social capital.



---

<sup>i</sup> These indicators are complemented by limited trust in institutions and democracy in general. However these indicators will be discussed in the following chapter.

<sup>ii</sup> Ethnic and religious barriers will be discussed in the third chapter.

<sup>iii</sup> There is a terminology dilemma in using the term 'informal structures'. A more adequate term might be 'ad-hoc political structures'.

<sup>iv</sup> Although in terms of EU conditionality, the international community is *per se* a formal actor, in terms of resolving internal political conflicts it is not, let alone formally envisaged as such in the political design of the country.

## **References**

Berman S (2001) *Civil society and political institutionalization*. In: Edwards B, Foley MW and Diani M (eds.) *Beyond Tocqueville: Civil society and the social capital debate in comparative perspective*. Hanover: University Press of New England/Tufts University, pp.32-42.

Bozinovski V (2012) *Parallel democracy: ethnic political parties and their impact on public opinion divisions on key policy issues*. Paper presented at 17<sup>th</sup> annual conference of the Association for Study of Nationalities, New York, USA, 19-21 April 2012.

Bryce HJ (2005) *Players in the public policy process: Nonprofits as social capital and agents*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Cekov A and Daskalovski Z (2013) *Analysis of intraparty democracy in Macedonia*. Skopje: Konrad Adenauer Stiftung and Center for Research and Policy Making.

Damjanovski I (2012) *Old minorities, new controversies: the Macedonian Muslim community between ethnicity and religion*. Paper presented at 17<sup>th</sup> annual conference of the Association for Study of Nationalities, New York, USA, 19-21 April 2012.

Edwards B and Michael FW (2001) *Civil society and social capital: a Primer*. In: Edwards B, Foley MW and Diani M (eds) *Beyond Tocqueville: Civil society and the social capital debate in comparative perspective*. Hanover: University Press of New England/Tufts University, pp.1-17.

European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (2010) *Life in transition: after the crisis*. Available at: [http://www.ebrd.com/downloads/research/surveys/LiTS2e\\_web.pdf](http://www.ebrd.com/downloads/research/surveys/LiTS2e_web.pdf) (accessed 21 June 2015).

Gundelach P and Lars T (2005) *Social reflexivity, democracy and new types of citizen involvement in Denmark*. In: Van Deth JW (ed.) *Private groups and public life: Social participation, voluntary associations and political involvement in representative democracies*. London and New York: Routledge, pp.48-64.

Hayoz N and Sergeev V (2003) *Social networks in Russian politics*. In: Gabriel B and Eric UM (eds.) *Social capital and transition to democracy*. London and New York: Routledge, pp.46-60.

Hofstede G, Hofstede GJ and Minkov M (2010) *Cultures and Organizations: Software of the mind*. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Hooghe M and Stolle D (2003) *Introduction: generating social capital*. In: Hooghe M and Stolle D (eds.) *Generating social capital: Civil Society and institutions in comparative perspective*. New York: Routledge, pp.1-19.

Ivanov G *et al.* (2001) Draft amendments of the Constitution of the R. Macedonia- a contribution to the Public debate. Skopje: Ss. Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje, Faculty of Law.

Linz J and Stepan A (1996) *Problems of democratic transition and consolidation: Southern Europe, South America and Post-Communist Europe*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Macedonian Center for International Cooperation (2008) *Trust in civil society*. Skopje: MCIC. (In Macedonian).

Macedonian Center for International Cooperation (2009) *Social responsibility of citizens*. Skopje: MCIC. (In Macedonian).

Markovic N and Presova D (2013) Challenges of parliamentary democracy in Macedonia. *Politicke Analize* 14(1): 36-44. (In Serbian).

Markovic N and Damjanovski I (2013) State of democracy in the R. Macedonia- free fall or temporary crisis? *Politicke Perspektive* 2(1): 23-41. (In Serbian).

Markovic N (2012) Widening the gap: ethnic parallelism in Macedonia one decade after the ohrid framework agreement. Paper presented at 17<sup>th</sup> annual conference of the Association for Study of Nationalities, New York, USA, 19-21 April 2012.

Markovic N, Ilievski Z, Damjanovski I and Bozinovski V (2011) *The role of the European Union in the democratic consolidation and ethnic conflict management in the Republic of Macedonia*. Available at: <http://rrpp-westernbalkans.net/dms/downloads/Library/Research-Results/Macedonia/European-Union-in-the-democratic-consolidation/European%20Union%20in%20the%20democratic%20consolidation.pdf>. (accessed 21 June 2015).

Taleski D, Damjanovski I, Markovic N and Bozinovski V (2006) *Youth Aspiration Survey*. Skopje: Friedrich Ebert Stiftung and IDSCS.

Markovic N *et al.* (2012) *Political culture in the Republic of Macedonia*. Skopje: Friedrich Ebert Stiftung & IDSCS. (In Macedonian).

McAuley M (2005) Bringing culture back into political analysis: the reform of the Russian judiciary. In: Whitefield S (ed.) *Political culture and post-communism*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, pp.81-104.

Miladinovic S (2012) Two faces of social capital in structural trends: bonding and bridging. In: Predrag C and Biresev A (eds.) *Social and cultural capital in Western Balkan societies*. Nis: Sven, pp.59-74.

Millard F (2004) *Elections, parties and representation in post-communist Europe*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Ohrid Institute for Economic Strategies and International Affairs (2007) Presentation of poll conducted in March 2007: Available at <http://6thstar.com/oi/upload/anketa%20eng%20njilliams.pdf>. (accessed 21 June 2015).

Putnam R (2008) *Bowling alone- the collapse and revival of American community*. Beograd: Mediterran. (In Serbian).

Popovikj M and Troshanovski M (2011) *Religious dialogue in the Republic of Macedonia (Field research report on the attitudes and perceptions of the citizens)*. Skopje: Konrad Adenauer Stiftung and IDSCS.

Pridham G and Lewis P (eds.) (1996) *Stabilising fragile democracies: Comparing new party Systems in Southern and Eastern Europe*. London and New York: Routledge.

Putnam R et al. (1993) *Making democracy work – Civic traditions in modern Italy*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press.

Rose R and Weller C (2003) *What does social capital add to democratic values*. In: Badescu G and Uslaner EM (eds.) *Social capital and transition to democracy*. London and New York: Routledge.

Salaj B (2007) *Social capital*. Zagreb: Faculty of Political science. (In Croatian).

Siljanovska-Davkova G (2005) *Organizational structures and internal party democracy in the Republic of Macedonia*. In: Karasimeonov G (ed.). *Organizational structures and internal party democracy in South Eastern Europe*. Sofia: Gorex Press, pp.26-61.

Stolle D (2003) *The sources of social capital*. In: Hooghe M and Stolle D (eds.) *Generating social capital: Civil society and institutions in comparative perspective*. New York: Routledge, pp.19-42.

Stolle D and Rochon TR (2001) *Are all associations alike? Member diversity, associational type and the creation of social capital*. In: Edwards B, Foley MW and Diani M (eds.) *Beyond Tocqueville: Civil society and the social capital debate in comparative perspective*. Hanover: University Press of New England/Tufts University, pp.143-154.

Torpe L and Ferrer-Fons M (2007) *The internal structure of associations*. In: Maloney WA and Rosteutscher S (eds.) *Social capital and associations in European democracies – A comparative analysis*. New York: Routledge. pp. 96-117.

United Nations Development Programme (2005) *Early Warning Report*. Skopje: UNDP office Skopje.

Van Biezen I (2003) *Political parties in new democracies: Party organizations in Southern and East-Central Europe*. London and New York: Routledge.