

Institutional trust in the regions of the Czech Republic

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Annotation. The level of trust, both generalized trust and trust in public and political institutions, is one of the key aspects of the democracy and social life in general. The aim of this paper is to describe and explain regional differences in the level of trust in political institutions in the NUTS 2 regions in the Czech Republic. On the regional level the differences in the degree of political trust exists. However, these differences are connected rather with individual characteristics of respondents than with contextual regional factors. In addition, the differences between urban and rural regions were identified. The more urban region is the lower level of political trust was observed. Finally, the size of the municipality influences the level of institutional trust, especially the trust in municipal boards. The smaller the municipality is the higher confidence in municipal board was observed.

Key words: institutional trust, regional differences, Czech NUTS 2 regions.

1 Introduction

The level of trust is one of the key aspects of democracy performance on the one hand and social life in general on the other. Both, the level of social trust within the social groups and societies, and the level of institutional trust in the different social, public and political institutions are important for the current society. Trust is often included in the concept of social capital and is considered one of its most important components. The concept of social capital itself is one of the most popular conceptions in present social sciences. It was popularized first by Pierre Bourdieu [1986] and James Coleman [1990], later by Robert Putnam [1993, 1999, 2002]. Social capital is analyzed in the context of different aspects of social life – civil society, institutional performance, wealth, education, economic situation, community life or the crime rate. Also the explanation of regional variation of social capital - international or within the national state - became a research interest of social scientists in recent

years [Putnam 1993, Beugesdijk, Schaik 2005, Middleton, Murie, Groves 2005, Oorschot, Arts, Wil, Gelissen 2006].

In this paper we use generally accepted definition of social capital [Harper, Kelly 2003, Halpern 2005]. Social capital represents social networks together with attitudes, values, norms and sanctions. Social capital enables cooperation and collective action in the society. Therefore generalized as well as institutional trust are important socio-cultural components of social capital and as such are investigated. Previous research proved that institutional trust is highly correlated with generalized trust [Grootaert 2001, Levi 1996, Bartkowski 2003, Meer 2003, Uslaner 2003, Stolle 2001, Stolle 2004, Stachová 2005]. So it is possible to regard institutional trust as generalization of social trust, specific form of general trust in people. In this paper will focus specifically on the abstract institutional trust, trust in political institutions that is also important dimension of social capital in the society. We assume that the results of trust analysis tell us also something about social capital in the Czech society.

The aim of the analysis is to describe the regional differences in trust in political institutions on the level NUTS 2 in the Czech Republic and to identify factors that influence the level of this type of trust. Not only individual characteristics were taken into account in this analysis, but also the contextual variables that characterize the social and economic situation in the locality where the respondents live. We assume that attitudes of citizens are influenced by both types of factors [Kostelecký 1995, 2005; Kostelecký, Čermák 2004; Rahn 2003]. We would like to answer several research questions:

- 1/ Are there any regional differences in the degree of trust in political institutions on the level NUTS 2 in the Czech Republic?
- 2/ Which factors are related to the level of institutional trust?
- 3/ Do contextual factors (especially the municipality size) play any role in the explanation of regional differences in the level of institutional trust?

2 Data

Data source for the analysis is firstly the public opinion research of CVVM (Public Opinion Research Centre, IS CAS CR). Ten surveys during the year 2004 were conducted, in which the questions on the trust in institutions were included. Thus the file of 10 465 respondents representative on the level NUTS2 is available. This file consists of individual as well as contextual variables. Secondly we add the data of Czech Statistical Office – regional statistics from the population census. This data characterize the situation in the district where the respondent live. In the Table 1 you can see the list of the used variables.

Table 1. Analyzed variables

Dependent variables(1)	Independent variables		
	Individual(1)	Contextual	Year
Trust in President	Satisfaction with political situation	Average wage(2)	2004
Trust in Government	Satisfaction with life	Proportion of businessmen(2)	2004
Trust in Parliament	Subjective household level of living	Proportion of dependent component of population (age 0-14 a 65+)(2)	2004
Trust in Senate	Age	Rate of unemployment(2)	2004
Trust in Regional Councils	Sex	Number of crimes per 1000 inhabitants(2)	2004
Trust in Municipal Councils	Education	Divorce index(2)	2004
-	Married or not	Abortion index(2)	2004
-	Businessman or not	Municipality size(1)	2004
-	Pensioner or not	Proportion of Catholics(2)	2001
-	Unemployed or not	NUTS II(1)	2004

(1) Source: CVVM, public opinion survey "Our Society", 2004 (Sociological Data Archive IS AS CR, Prague, <http://archiv.soc.cas.cz>).

(2) District data. Source: CSO.

3 Analysis

As for the level of institutional trust in the Czech Republic we can say this level is relatively stable in time and also the order of the institutions regarding the degree of expressed trust is relatively stable as the results of empirical surveys of CVVM in the years 1998-2006 show [Kunštát 2002, 2008; Chludilová 2003; Horáková 2004, 2005, 2006; Čadová 2007]. President is the most trusted political institution in the Czech Republic. People express also quite high trust in municipal and regional councils. On the other hand Parliament, Senate and Government have low levels of trust of Czech citizens.

Table 2. The level of trust in political institutions in the Czech Republic in 2004 in %

	Trust in					
	President	Government	Parliament	Senate	Regional Councils	Municipal Councils
Definitely and rather trust	73,6	31,9	22,9	20,1	42,2	61,1
Definitely and rather distrust	23,7	64,1	71,9	72,2	33,7	29,4

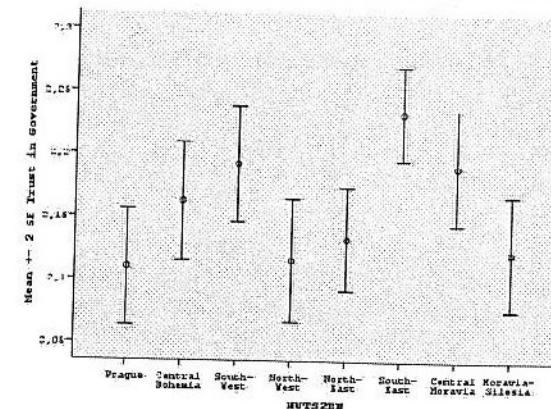
N (number of respondents): 7 943-10 177

Source: CVVM, SOÚ AV ČR, v.v.i., 2004 and own calculations.

The results of ANOVA analysis of variance show that the regional differences in the level of institutional trust between the NUTS2 exists – with the exception of Senate and president. Particular regional differences in the level of trust in political institutions you can see in the graphs. We used the Tukey Honestly Significant Difference test, which uses all pairwise comparisons between groups.

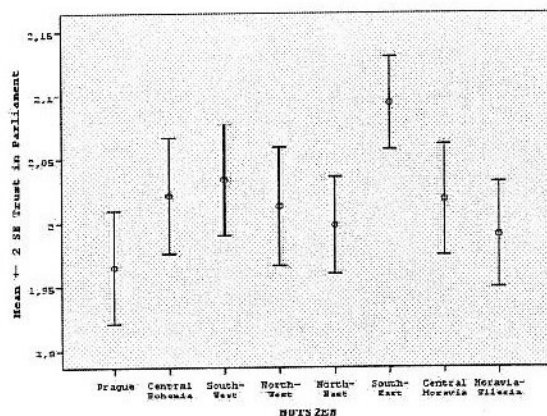
Regarding the trust in government Southeast region, where the trust is highest, significantly differs from Prague, Northeast, Northwest and Moravian-Silesian region (see Graph 1). Similarly, the highest trust in Parliament can be observed in Southeast, whereas the lowest rate is in Prague, Northeast and Moravian-Silesian region (see Graph 2).

Graph 1. Trust in government in NUTS2 regions (standard error of mean)



Source: CVVM, SOÚ AV ČR, v.v.i., 2004 and own calculations.

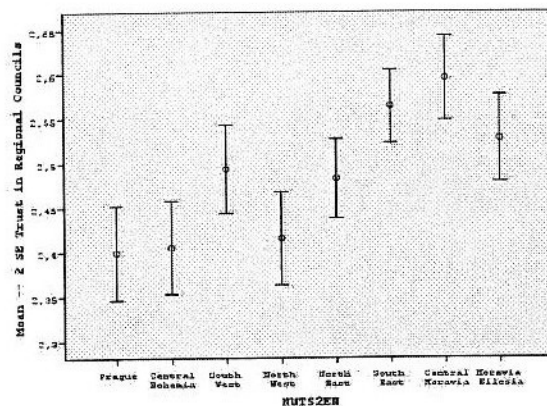
Graph 2. Trust in Parliament in NUTS2 regions (standard error of mean)



Source: CVVM, SOÚ AV ČR, v.v.i., 2004 and own calculations.

Diverse situation is observed in case of trust in regional and local self-government. In case of regional councils all Moravian regions reach high degrees of trust. We can statistically differ between Southeast, Central Moravia and Moravian-Silesian Region on the one hand and Prague, Central Bohemia and Northwest on the other (see Graph 4).

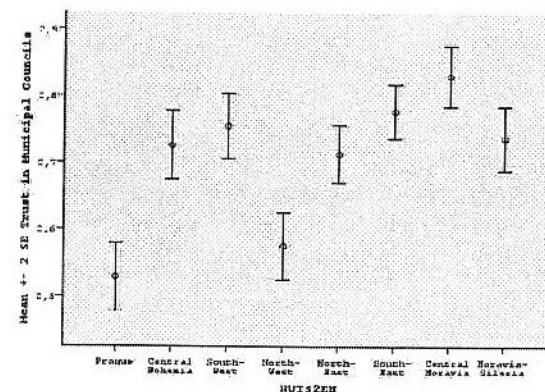
Graph 3. Trust in Regional Councils in NUTS2 regions (standard error of mean)



Source: CVVM, SOÚ AV ČR, v.v.i., 2004 and own calculations.

Trust in municipal councils divides the regions into two distinct groups. In the first group we can find Prague and Northwest and the second group consists of all other regions (see Graph 4).

Graph 4. Trust in Municipal Councils NUTS2 (standard error of mean)



Source: CVVM, SOÚ AV ČR, v.v.i., 2004 and own calculations.

We can conclude that there are regional differences in the distribution of institutional trust in dependence on the position of the institution – central or regional. Trust in central political institutions (Government and Parliament) is characterized by the difference between the Southeast on the one hand, and Prague, Northeast and Northwest on the other hand. As for the local and regional political institutions, the lowest trust we can observe again in Prague and Northwest (plus Central Bohemia for the trust in Regional Councils), and the highest in the Southwest, Central Moravia and Moravian-Silesian Region. Now we try to explain these mentioned differences in the institutional trust. Are these differences connected only with individual characteristics of respondents, are they caused by different socioeconomic and demographic structure of inhabitants in NUTS2 regions? Or do contextual factors play any role in this variation?

To find answer to these questions we used general linear model. We found that the attitudinal variables – satisfaction with political situation, satisfaction with life and subjectively perceived level of living are highly connected with the level of trust. The more satisfied people more likely trust in political institutions. Also sex and being unemployed is significant for the level of trust, men and unemployed people trust less.

Contextual factors do not play any crucial role in the explanation of regional variance of institutional trust. They explain only little variance. However, we

should mention the size of the municipality and the average wage that have some degree of importance. The higher average wage is in the district the higher level of trust we can observe. And the smaller municipality is the higher institutional trust is identified. This correlation is mostly visible in the case of trust in Parliament and local political institutions (See Table 3).

Table 3. Trust in political institutions according to municipality size

Trust	Size of the municipality			
	Less than 2.000	2.000- 14.999	15.000- 29.999	30.000 and more
President	77	76	73	76
Government	36	33	30	32
Parliament	28	25	22	22
Senate	23	24	17	21
Regional councils	58	58	49	54
Municipal councils	76	70	62	61

Source: CVVM, SOÚ AV ČR, v.v.i, and own calculations.

4 Conclusions

The differences between NUTS2 regions in the level of institutional trust were identified – depends on the position of the institution in the political system. The Southwest region reaches the highest level of institutional trust, Prague and Northwest is characterized by the lowest level of trust in political institutions. In general we could say that the more urban region is the lower level of political trust was observed. We assume the level of institutional trust as one of the components of social capital could point to the level of social capital in the regions in general. However, this presumption must be further examined.

The level of institutional trust is connected firstly with the perception of actual political situation and the satisfaction with life. The question of the direction of causality of this relationship remains unanswered. Also perceived economic situation of respondent is crucial for expressed level of trust in institutions. Further we observed the correlation of institutional trust with sex and unemployment of respondent. Although the contextual variables were not identified crucial in the model, we should mention two of them. The size of the municipality is the most important contextual factor influencing the level of trust. Other contextual significant variable is also average wage in the district. We can conclude that people dissatisfied with political situation, with their own life and economic situation, men, unemployed people and people from

larger municipalities and from regions with lower average wage, these all trust less in the political institutions of the Czech Republic.

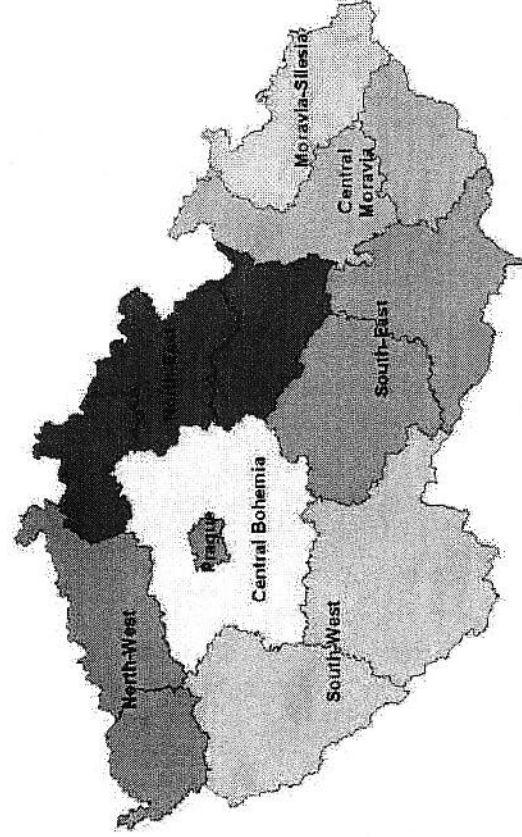
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Appendix

Image 1. NUTS 2 regions in the Czech Republic



Source: <http://www.businessinfo.cz/cz/clanek/rozvoj-regionu/regionalni-usporadani-a-regiony/1001179/9043/> (30.4.2008).