



Social capital and rural territories: the impact on local cooperation Case study of Albania

Elda MUÇO^{*1}

¹ University of Montpellier 3

* Speaker and corresponding author: elda-muco@outlook.com

1. Introduction

This study analyzes the social capital and examines its impact on the territorial capital of a rural territory.

Territorial capital is a concept borrowed from the territorial economy which combines the tangible and intangible resources of the territory (Lacquement et Chevalier., 2016). These resources can constitute either assets or constraints on the territory. Territorial development policies must above all help the territories to develop their territorial capital (Camagni, 2006). The coordination capacity of actors, to mobilize the resources of the territory, generates development and marks this territory.

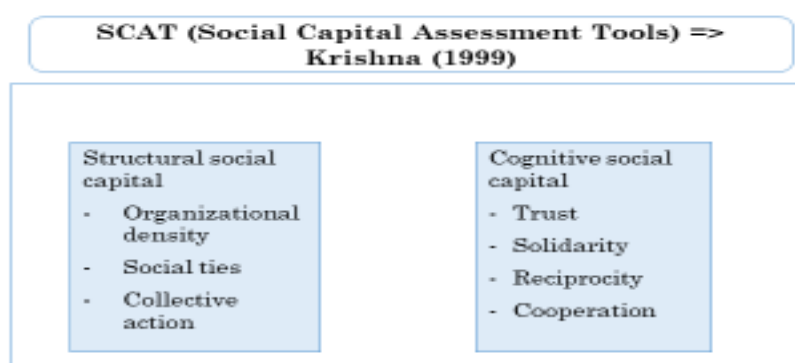
The success of a territorial system does not depend only on material resources, but also on the wealth of cognitive elements (Camagni, 2006). The active participation of local communities is considered today as one of the main factors at the origin of economic development, while contributing to the creation of links and trust between members of social groups. All these links developed between local agents are defined as social capital. Social capital is defined as a collective asset in the form of norms, values, beliefs, relationships of trust, networks, social relationships and shared institutions that facilitate cooperation and collective action for mutual benefit (Lin, 1995).

In our study, we present natural capital and social capital, one tangible and the other intangible, as two main capitals of our territory.

2. Materials and Methods

In this research we study structural and cognitive social capital and the interactions between these types of social capital at the community, household and institutional level. We have taken into consideration the tools used by the World Bank on the measurement of Social Capital. SCAT (Social Capital Analyzes Tools) is a method that measures the opportunities and constraints of individuals and groups by focusing on the assets and social networks that determine their access to resources. The goal of this case study is to shows the type of relationship (bonding, bridging and linking) developed between local actors which lead to determine the social capital.

Figure 1: Social capital measurement indicators



Source: Adapted to Krishna, 1999

3. Results and discussion

Our territory is characterized by an abundance of natural resources and a natural capital composed of quality pastures and suitable for livestock activity. The exploitation of this natural capital poses a problem because there is no clear legislation for the use of pastures. The actors cannot invest because the access contracts are reduced to 6 months or one year. It is difficult to use this natural capital properly because of the inefficiency of local institutions: the municipality in charge of these issues since the implementation of decentralization in 2015 is not yet operational on these issues of rules of access to pastures.

In relation to social capital, two types of social capital and three types of social relationships are distinguished. Structural social capital represents the social networks and people that an individual knows and can rely on to obtain benefits such as information and assistance. This type of capital is measured by variables such as: organizational density, social ties and collective action. This type of capital in the study area is almost non-existent because the variables that constitute this capital are very weak. Cognitive social capital represents the shared language and codes that form the basis of communication. It consists mainly of a set of shared norms, values, attitudes and beliefs. This type of capital is measured by variables such as: trust, solidarity, reciprocity and cooperation. The results show the presence of cognitive social capital but in a narrow level, which means, it is in the level of the same community.

In the "linking" relationship, we considered the relationship between the community and the local state institutions. The results show little exchange between the institutions and the community. The community is not represented in the institutions and lacks trust in the institutions. The lack of linking means little communication between the community and the local government, which increases transaction costs, attempts at corruption and hinders the activity of local authorities. The lack of linking also hinders the implementation of development projects in the study area.

Bridging is the exchange of information and sharing between heterogeneous actors and different communities. A low level of bridging means a closed society in a narrow group. The lack of this type of social capital has a negative impact on the level of cooperation. Therefore, societies that do not develop bridging relationships are less willing to cooperate with each other.

Bonding represents the close relationships that exist between individuals, such as relationships between family members, between friends belonging to the same group or community. The strong presence of bonding leads to a lack of innovation in the region. Also, bonding can stimulate corruption and/or criminal activity. A society influenced by a strong bonding relationship is less willing to cooperate with outside family or friendship group members.

4. Conclusion

The results reflect a lack of trust between local communities. This mistrust among rural actors is primarily related to the lack of credible institutions in Albanian communities. However, where trust is low, as in the case of Albania, people save little, invest little in skills development, and do not realize the productivity gains from effective cooperation. The lack of confidence in the functioning of institutions, hinders the breeders and rather the producers to cooperate with each other. Moreover, there is a poor exploitation of natural capital, even though it offers a great potential for development in the study area. In this stage we ask if we can develop the regions that are endowed with natural capital but lack the will of cooperation and collective action (social capital) between local actors (bottom-up approach).

References

- Lacquement, G., & Chevalier, P. (2016). capital territorial et développement des territoires locaux, enjeux théoriques et méthodologiques de la transposition d'un concept de l'économie territoriale à l'analyse géographique. *Annales de géographie*, 5(711), 490 - 518.
- Camagni, R. (2006). Compétitivité territoriale : la recherche d'avantages absolus. *Reflets et perspectives de la vie économique*, 95-115.
- Lin, N. (1995). Revue française de sociologie Les ressources sociales : une théorie du capital social. *Revue française de sociologie*, 36(4), 685-704
- Krishna, A. et Shrader, E.(1999) « Social capital assessment tool », 21. Washington, D.C.: *The World Bank*.