

FAMILIES AND SOCIAL CAPITAL IN SERBIA: SOME ISSUES IN RESEARCH AND POLICY¹

Porodice i socijalni kapital u Srbiji: Neka pitanja istraživanja i praktične politike

ABSTRACT *Based on several recent studies on families and households in Serbia, the paper examines the heuristic and methodological validity of the concept of social capital as applied in studying families in post-socialist transformation. After discussing conceptual issues and problems related to social capital and study of contemporary families, the findings from the studies related to social capital are summarized. It is argued that in a post-socialist society in transformation, such as Serbia, there are two sides to social capital, that consequences of strong “bonding” social capital are twofold, and that this has complex effects on different societal levels. In the concluding part, some methodological and policy issues that emerged from the evidence are pointed out.*

KEY WORDS *social capital, families, extended households, Serbian society, methodology, policy*

APSTRAKT *U radu se ispituje heuristička i metodološka vrednost koncepta socijalnog kapitala u istraživanju porodica u društvima koja prolaze kroz post-socijalističku transformaciju. Nakon diskusije o konceptualnim problemima vezanim za socijalni kapital i proučavanje savremenih porodica, sumiraju se nalazi najnovijih istraživanja o porodicama u Srbiji koji se odnose na socijalni kapital. Dokazuje se da postoje dve strane socijalnog kapitala u društvima u post-socijalističkoj transformaciji kakvo je Srbija, kao i da su posledice primarnog («vezujućeg») socijalnog kapitala dvostruke i da sve to ima složene efekte na različite nivoe društva. U zaključnom delu se ukazuje na neka metodološka i pitanja socijalne politike koja su se otvorila u analizi.*

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KLJUČNE REČI *socijalni kapital, porodice, proširena domaćinstva, društvo Srbije, metodologija, socijalna politika*

Introduction

The aim of the paper is to investigate heuristic and methodological validity of the concept of social capital as applied to studying families in post-socialist transformation. The argumentation is based on evidence from several recent research projects on: households, families and parenthood,² young people,³ and children⁴ in Serbia. After discussing conceptual issues and problems related to social capital and study of contemporary families, findings from recent studies of families in Serbia related to social capital will be summarized. In the concluding part, I will point to some methodological and policy issues that emerged from the evidence.

Framework

Conceptualizations of social capital

Social capital is the concept that gained a wide recognition within social sciences and policy research and implementation during the last two decades. Partly stemming from neo-liberal politics and policies of some Western states, social capital presents a revival of longstanding themes of social integration and social cohesion, which produced «a growing concern to revalorize social relationships in political discourse; to reintroduce a normative dimension into sociological analysis; to develop concepts which reflect the complexity and inter-relatedness of the real world» (Schuller *et al.* 2000: 2; Edwards, 2004). Its fast proliferation has allowed a variety of approaches, so that there is still no consensus on its definition (Baron, Field, Schuller 2000: 24). The consequence is that social capital became highly controversial concept, facing many conceptual and methodological problems, such as definitional diversity – with questions of coherence and unity of the concept, its analytical productiveness, operationalization and heuristic utility, relation to issues of social conflict and social exclusion, its political and social implications (Ibid.).

² Institute for Sociological Research survey of 1635 households, November 2003 – Milić *et al.* 2005; Tomanović, 2006.

³ Centre for Policy Studies survey of 3180 young people, June 2003, CPA/CPS 2004.

⁴ Institute for Sociological Research (ISR), small scale survey and focus groups, June 2003, Tomanović, Petrović 2006.

Among two trends or traditions in conceptualizing social capital, one is focused on communities and society as a whole, and on shared norms, values, trust and participation – features that facilitate cooperation and strengthen social cohesion within them (Putnam, 1993; Coleman, 1988; Fukuyama, 1999). The other is focused on individuals and groups, and on their ties, networks and contacts that enable them to access valuable resources in pursuing their interests (Bourdieu, 1986; Portes, 1998). The first approach treats social capital as an outcome and generator of social cohesion, while the other treats it as a resource that generates and reproduces social inequality. This conceptual diversity has consequences for operationalizing and studying social capital, since scholars look at different things as its features.

We would like to accept the general definition that social capital describes important social processes and networks – informal support networks, friendships, neighbourly cooperation, trust and voluntary activities, as well as aspects of local community development, partnership of the public, private and voluntary sectors and civic spirit development. A particularly important contribution to the operationalization of social capital was given by Woolcock's classification into: 1. "bonding" social capital, related to the ties between similar people in similar situations, e.g. closest family, close friends and neighbours; 2. "bridging" social capital, including more distant ties between similar persons, such as friends and colleagues; and 3. "linking" social capital which reaches dissimilar people in different situations, such as those entirely outside the community, and enables the participants to use a wider spectrum of resources than otherwise available to the community.⁵

Bonding social capital involves trust and reciprocity in closed networks, and helps the process of "getting by" in life on a daily basis. It has a compensatory role for the economically underprivileged and is an important part of "survival strategies".⁶ "Getting ahead" in contrast, is facilitated through bridging social capital involving multiplex networks which may make accessible the resources and opportunities which exist in one network to a member of another. Linking social capital involves social relations with those in authority, which might be used to gain resources or power (Stone, 2001: 16). As pointed out by Bourdieusian tradition, the two latter forms of social capital may promote inequality because access to different forms of networks is unevenly distributed, i.e. some people's links are more valuable than those of others.

⁵ Woolcock, M. (2001), "The Place of Social Capital in Understanding Social and Economic Outcomes", *Isuma: Canadian Journal of Policy Research*, 2, 1, 1-17; quoted from Field 2003.

⁶ See, e.g., R. Jarett's research into Afro-American families in Chicago, Jarett, 1986.

Social capital and families in contemporary society

The contemporary family is faced with the reconstruction of its form - structure and relations. In structural terms, it is exposed to changes in its composition – decomposition of its kinship nucleus in consequence of divorce, extramarital childbirth and forsaken parenthood. On the relational level, profound transformations are registered in the sphere of intimate relations, expanding their definition from partnership to friendship and parenthood (Gillies, 2003). Despite the theoretical agreement that families are swept by detraditionalization and individualization processes prevalent in societies of late modernity, there is no consensus as to the consequences of these processes for the contemporary family as a whole, or its individual segments (partnership relations, parenthood, childhood, etc.). The relevant literature is dominated by three specific views: one, that the above-mentioned changes adversely influence family transformation, another that this influence is predominantly positive, and another that still essentially nothing of any substance has been changed (Edwards, Franklin, Holland 2003). Related to the issue of social capital, these viewpoints could be described as: “social capital lost story” (Putnam, Coleman); positive transformation within detraditionalization (Giddens, Beck); and reproduction of power and inequalities (Bourdieu).

Concerning contemporary family changes, there are two different standpoints in “classic” traditions in conceptualizing social capital. The first approach has a vague notion of the family – as the source of positive role models (Putnam), but also a quite conservative view of contemporary family and its diversification (Coleman). For the second approach (Bourdieu), families are central points for generation and reproduction of social capital and inequalities (Edwards, 2004). Nevertheless, both approaches are concerned with what Woolcock would call “bridging” and “linking” social capital, leaving aside “bonding” social capital, which has been valuable for coping strategies of different social groups – since it helps people “get by” (Gillies, 2003).

The concept of social capital developed so far has not been sensitive enough to social (class), ethnic, gender, generation (age) differences (Morrow, 1999; Edwards, 2004). I would argue that it also is not sensitive enough to variations stemming from features of social and cultural context.

For instance, according to different surveys, SEE post-socialist societies (e.g. Croatia, Bulgaria) rank low on normative measures of social capital (Mihaylova, 2004; Stulhofer, 2004; Kovacheva, 2004). There is no study specifically measuring social capital in Serbia, but there are some findings referring to usual indicators that point to low level of social capital society. There are indices from the household survey that features of trust and participation would have low rank (Milić et al. 2005). One of the focal points of the study was the issue of social integration which

was analysed by two sets of indicators. One set of indicators is linked to a broader notion of social capital, including, beside social connections, social solidarity and trust. The survey data show inadequate foundations for integration on institutional and political level. There is apparent increase in mistrust in other people or institutions of the social system. Most respondents (63%) agree absolutely or mostly with the attitude “Most of the people are ready to take benefit at another’s expense”, while 27% support the attitude that “It is justified to use bribe to solve a problem in certain situations”. The other data also indicate: low trust – general and in institutions, low participation (only 16% of citizens in Serbia are active in civic associations and NGOs), and high corruption (SEESSP 2003).

The other set of indicators was dealing with the narrower notion of social capital, i.e. with personal and interpersonal relations and participation in formal and informal social groups. Asked about who they would turn to for help in various situations (looking for a job, access to health or administrative institutions, borrowing money), a considerable number of respondents said they would not rely on anyone in any of those situations: from 36% for emotional support to 87% in enrolling children in school. The respondents are the most prone to expect financial help (mainly from relatives, 29%), help in finding a job (mainly from friends 23.5%), and in getting access to health institutions (mainly from relatives), while for emotional support and advice they would turn to relatives (34%) and friends (25%). Within the subsample of parents,⁷ respondents are the least inclined to rely on others in order to enroll their children in school, resolve their housing problems and deal with administrative affairs. They most often prefer financial assistance, advice and emotional support (of relatives and friends equally). Friends are perceived as an important source of assistance in finding jobs, access to health institutions and in financial matters. Financial borrowings are the only case where parents expect greater help from relatives (31%) than from friends (27%).

Majority of respondents (85%) socialize with relatives and friends on a regular basis, but only 6% are occasionally engaged in any civic associations, political organizations or movements. One quarter (25%) of respondents feel lonely occasionally but another 12% mostly feel that way.

These data indicate, as in the case of some other post-socialist countries (e.g. Bulgaria: Kovacheva, 2004), that there exist strong “bonding” forms of social capital within primary groups and informal networks, sometimes having the function of compensation for institutional deficiency. There is also evidence that many coping (or “survival”) strategies of households, families and individuals were based on social resources, contacts, help and support (Milić et al. 2005; Milić, 2004).

⁷ The sub sample of 510 respondents with children under age of 18.

My starting point is the thesis that everyday social life in Serbia, due to economic, social and institutional crisis lasting for over fifteen years, has shifted towards the private realm (families, households, neighbourhood) – that became the source of coping (survival) strategies. There are developed atomized but not individualised strategies,⁸ which include for example: diversified household economic strategies, including starting small business; approaching institutions; family resource based housing strategies; material and psychological support, etc. that contribute to individual and group well-being, security, etc. (Milić et al. 2005). It is my intention in this paper to discuss some of the consequences of the process for social capital on different societal levels, as well as to open some issues for research and policy.

Families and social capital in Serbia

Families as generators of social capital

Serbia belongs to the South European cultural pattern of strong family ties and networks. There are studies that point to special kinds of intergenerational connections and solidarity within and between families in Southern, but especially in Central and Eastern European countries (Wallace and Kovatcheva, 1998; Brannen *et al.* 2002). There is a strong moral obligation for parents to support their children throughout their lives in Central and Eastern Europe (Wallace and Kovatcheva, 1998: 147). The support consists of financial help during education, providing housing, help in starting an independent household and help in childcare. Interfamilial ties thus remain strong throughout the individual's life-course, extend beyond both types of families (family of origin and family of orientation) and are based on a strong sense of reciprocity. This kind of family significance was recognized by socialist system policies, which oriented most rights and privileges towards the family (e.g. housing policy) rather than towards individuals. In the post-socialist period, the security basis provided by the socialist system was ruined, and families became even more important as providers of resources (material and non-material). All recent efforts to look into the reality of families in Serbia, point to the increasing importance of primary relations and networks for the survival of individuals and groups (families), but they also reveal a concurrent conflictness of intra-family relations (Milić, 2002; Miletić-Stepanović, 2005; Tomanović, 2002). In

⁸ By 'atomized' we mean that strategies are based on individual and small group efforts (referred to as 'social atoms'), while by 'individualized' we mean strategies based on individual's personal choices for improving his or her life.

further discussion, I would point to some of the features of this twofold process within families.

Within the context of so called “blocked” or “prolonged” transformation of society in Serbia (Milić et al. 2005), we are witnessing significant (some would say retrograde) change in family structure: the share of extended family households⁹ increased to 25% (2002 Census) or 30% (Milić et al. 2005) of all households. Throughout the socialist period, characterized by the discouragement of agricultural development and industrialization, this family type survived and took the form of a hybrid or mixed household consisting of farmers-workers, which has been on a steady decline since the mid 1960s. But extended family was a family form typical of rural areas, where for economic reasons, the family often took the form of a mixed household whose members worked on their own farm, while at the same time being employed full-time in state-owned firms (Milić, 1981). The analysis of the share in the total number of households of extended family households in the former Yugoslavia and Serbia indicated a gradual and steady downward trend. The latest reliable census data obtained during the above-mentioned period showed that their percentage had been 25% of rural and 8% of non-rural households and this downward trend continued throughout the 1980s (Milić, 2005).

The current increase in the share of extended family households is mainly due to severe housing shortage and young couples staying within parental (mainly patrilocal) households (50% of all marriages start in parental households, Petrović 2004), and to high unemployment (48% of 15 – 24 year old young people are unemployed¹⁰). Once rural, it is now increasingly becoming an urban phenomenon. In the context of economic crises and prolonged transformation, this kind of kinship and generational association within a single household presents an element of “survival strategy” in conditions of scarce resources (Milić, 2005: 193).

This phenomenon has impacts on many issues related to retraditionalization of family relations, such as gender asymmetry in the division of domestic work and distribution of power, domestic violence, as well as on young people’s transition, etc.

There is evidence that gender asymmetry in dividing household work increases within extended family households (Tomanović, Ignjatović, 2006). Division of domestic work among married young people differs significantly depending on whether the couple lives alone or with their parents (extended household). Young people living on their own share housework on an unequal basis

⁹ Extended family household is a concept referring to a specific family composition and structure regardless of social context. They could be vertically extended (multigenerational – three or four generations in the same household) or horizontally extended (siblings or other relatives with their families living together).

¹⁰ Serbia 2006 Progress Report, Commission of the European Communities, November 2006.

– most of the housework is done by the woman except for the making of the second meal, shopping and taking out the garbage, which are equally divided between the spouses. As regards extended households, the findings show that most of the housework is done by the women, which means that work is shared between mother (mother-in-law) and daughter-in-law, but the greater burden falls on the younger woman. The authors conclude that division in housework, which remains one of the basic sources of the reproduction of gender asymmetry in families, has been enforced by an increase in the number of extended (mostly patrilineal and patrilocal) households in Serbia (Ibid: 279).

Other studies also documented gender asymmetry in division of domestic work unrelated to household economic strategies (Babović, 2006). Namely, although extended family households have the most diversified work economic strategies that rely significantly also on women's engagement in both formal and informal economy sectors, domestic work is still predominantly done by women, which leaves them heavily overburdened by workload. This functional position, on the other hand, does not give women more power in decision making process as the most strategic financial decisions are made by men (Ibid.).

There is also evidence that extended family households present a risk factor for more domestic violence, which is targeted primarily towards women and then towards children (Miletić-Stepanović, 2005). When it is associated with husband's work inactivity, living within patrilocal and patriarchal extended family household provides ground for frustration related to his incapability to fulfil the traditional role of "breadwinner", which often ends up in aggression and violence.

Since young people are to a great extent dependent on their parental family resources: financial, housing, social etc., the postponement of transition to adulthood documented in the youth study could be understood as one of those atomized but not individualized strategies of young people coping in their everyday life (Tomanović, Ignjatović, 2006). It is to a greater extent oriented towards the private realm and informal networks (with strong "bonding" social capital) than it is to public life and civic participation.¹¹

There is evidence from the research that parents rely heavily on their "bonding" social ties as a support in parenting (Tomanović, 2005)¹², as well as that parents use their social capital for investing in their children (see Kovacheva, 2004 for Bulgaria; and Tomanović, 2004a for Serbia). The study on parenting based on a

¹¹ According to one study, there are only 13% of young people active in sport associations and another 6% active in cultural associations, while only from 2 to 4% are active in political parties, NGOs, civic interest groups and youth organizations (Gredelj, 2004). Another study documented that less than one third (31%) of young people took participation at least once in solving a local problem, while just 9% were initiators of those actions (Civic Initiatives, 2005).

¹² Furthermore, 42% respondents with children under 18 live in extended family households (ibid.)

national representative survey in Serbia documented an interrelation between three types of capital, as well as a differentiation of parents according to different volumes of economic, cultural and social capital they possess. It also provided evidence that distribution of social capital is unequal between respondents from different social strata: intensity of sociability, as well as the strength of social networks is lesser for poorer and less educated parents (Tomanović, 2005). This indicates a kind of (self)isolation – social exclusion as a result of material deprivation, which was previously documented in a qualitative study of children's poverty (UNICEF 2004).

The longitudinal qualitative study on growing up in different families in Belgrade reveals various types of social capital of families and within parent – child relations (Tomanović, 2002, 2004a; Tomanović-Mihajlović, 1997). First of all, there is a considerable investment of parental resources in children's education – social capital in Coleman's (1988) terms or emotional capital (Alatt, 1993). Parents, particularly mothers, spend considerable amount of time, energy and emotions in helping children with studying, as well as on organizing and maintaining their after school activities and social contacts.

Parents' contacts and ties are also a resource that is invested in children's future in both types of families – through gaining valuable information, making contacts that facilitate employment and provide high quality extra curricular activities, etc. Working class families are oriented towards investing their economic capital (savings, inheritance) as well their social capital (social networks) into providing their children with material security (a secure job or a small business). On the other hand, parents from the middle-strata families place substantial resources (material as well as human) into continual investment in their children's cultural capital through various activities. Apart from being considered capital in their own right, these activities play an important part in compensating for the devaluation of the educational system. They also provide the children with social contacts valued by their parents as social capital (Tomanović, 2004a: 356).

Mutually interconnected social networks of children and parents are formed through children's everyday activities.¹³ Sometimes the adults initiated the networks, while sometimes the children did so, thereby having an active role in initiating and maintaining of family social capital (Tomanović, 2004b). Some of those contacts and groups last many years after children's activities ended.

¹³ Winter quotes Baum et al. (2000) who “identify the paradoxical role of the presence of children as both a conduit and a barrier to social and civic participation. On the one hand playgrounds, schools and children's sporting and leisure activities brought parents into contact with one another and widened social and civic networks. On the other hand, the responsibilities of child care could leave parents, particularly mothers, housebound and relatively isolated from broader community networks” (Winter 2000: 11).

Advantages and disadvantages of family bonding social capital

As evident from the findings, the strong “bonding” social capital within primary groups and informal networks (families and neighbourhoods) has the function of compensating for institutional deficits. It reduces risks: of labour market – by enabling diversified household economic strategies (Babović, 2006); the deficit of child care institutions and other institutions (Tomanović, 2005), the risks in public spaces¹⁴ (Tomanović, Petrović 2006), etc. Nevertheless, the consequences of strong “bonding” social capital are twofold: it helps people “get by”, but it also carries many risks – risks for emancipation and individualisation of nuclear family as an entity, of partnership, parenthood, women, young people etc. (Tomanović, 2006). The “strategic orientation” to private realm (e.g. structurally by increase in extended family households) is related to trends of retraditionalization or maintaining of traditional value and behavioural patterns.

On one hand, ample reliance of actors on resources (material and social) from the private sphere presumes a reinforcement of its foundations – the statuses and relations within domestic domain remain unquestioned and resilient to change. It is particularly apparent related to families and households where partner relations, division of domestic work and power distribution sustain and even strengthen patriarchal patterns. Therefore, the private realm as a sphere of social reproduction becomes the core of reproducing the status quo.

On the other hand, risks of withdrawal of social life into the private realm and strong bonding social capital include societal atomization - diminishing social cohesion. The issue is related to viewpoints from the social capital literature arguing that relatively “weak” ties of community may be more supportive of a vibrant civil society than strong family ties (Winter, 2000: 6; quoting Granovetter, 1973). That horizontal relationships of association are more effective in generating social capital than strong ties of friendship and family is the thesis supported also by Putnam (1993). This is similar to the view that family life may limit world views and sociability, which is among others supported by Fukuyama (1999). Drawing from the findings from studies on families in Serbia, we can put the issue as: is strong bonding social capital limiting trust to the private realm and thus diminishing social cohesion (solidarity on micro or primary level vs. solidarity with Others¹⁵)? Some indirect evidence for the thesis could be found in growing ethnocentrism and social

¹⁴ The families are embedded in local communities – neighbourhoods that have traditional features, which increases children’s spatial autonomy and familiarity with the neighbourhood thereby reducing their and their parents risk anxiety.

¹⁵ By Others we mean people who do not belong to our primary groups, people who are not similar to Us.

distance to different social groups (UNDP, 2005), but the issue should be explored more thoroughly before any conclusions are made.

Also, the making and use of informal social capital channels (e.g. in employment, securing preferential access to public services, information, etc.) as parallel to institutional mechanisms, together with “amoral familism” (Woolcock, 1998: 171) diminish institutional structure and make obstacles to social and system integration.

Discussion

As in many other studies, the case of social capital of families in Serbia points at the fact that standard indicators and measures are not sufficient and sensitive enough. The general problem is that standard indicators are measuring the outcomes of social capital rather than its content (Stone, 2001). While the measures of social cohesion and social integration would point to a low level social capital society, the research studies that we explored above give evidence of strong “bonding” social capital generated by families. This kind of social capital provides actors with coping strategies that reduce risks stemming from institutional deficit in a society undergoing transformation. At the same time, there is also empirical evidence that it brings risks into different societal levels: from preventing emancipation and individualization on individual and group level, through social atomization as a risk to social cohesion, to “amoral familism” as a risk to system integration. These relations between different levels of social capital: group level of family (neighbourhood and community as well) and global level of social cohesion and integration call for a more detailed exploration. It would increase the heuristic value of the concept by bridging the gap between its different conceptual levels: normative and individual/group, and its three different forms.

The multiplicity of social capital in societies in transformation such as Serbia – its double side (high at primary, but low at the global level), as well as the twofold consequences of strong “bonding” social capital, and its complex effects on different societal levels, should be taken into consideration when developing methods for its assessment, explanation and understanding.

As an illustration of possible multi-level approach, I would like to point to some issues related to research of family social capital. It is common to distinguish social capital within families and the one that goes from family beyond it. The first approach is sometimes narrowed to parent – child relations (Coleman, 1988), while the study aiming to understand family social capital should include the culture that parents construct, into which their children are inculcated, which includes values, habits, practices, rituals and norms (Furstenberg and Hughes, 1995).

Considering social capital within families it is significant to distinguish group and individual level – whether the family as a group holds social capital or its members as individuals. It is particularly relevant related to gender and generational diversifications: sometimes family with its social relations, contacts and networks makes an asset by itself (Milić, 2004; Kovacheva, 2004), while sometimes social capital is unevenly distributed by gender and age. The focus of the analysis should be upon the extent to which the norms of trust and reciprocity are shared across the family unit to enable them to undertake particular forms of collective action (Winter, 2000).

The analysis should also take into account the diversification of family types: single parent, nuclear, extended families, reconstituted, bi-nuclear etc. and different types of social capital associated with these. Generally speaking, one of the key questions is whether we can imply standard definitions, indicators and measurements of social capital as we have in mind complex identities of individuals and groups today, as well as different social contexts.

When dealing with family social capital that goes beyond the household, the study should include analysis of networks of family members (as individuals) and family as a group. Besides the size, proximity and density – as its formal side, the analysis of networks should include their “content”. On one hand, it should measure and understand the flow within the ties: exchange of goods, information, help, services, support etc. On the other hand, the “content” refers also to norms of trust and reciprocity that operate within those structures, which is a much less developed aspect of network analysis. Measuring norms involves the study of cultures within particular networks, rather than the properties of individuals within those networks (Stone, 2001).

Further analysis should include connection between “bonding” and “bridging” social capital of families and their relation to structural features of family and its members. It is noteworthy to explore their relation to economic and cultural capital as well as strategies that are employed for their reproduction and reconversion. On a more general level, it is significant to investigate whether interrelations between three types of capital produce and reproduce social inequality and social exclusion.

The next question would be how to explore link between family and community and authorities (“linking” social capital) – in study and in policy. In order to understand the link between family and community social capital, we need to explore informal and formal participation of family members in individual and group activities and organizations and whether those are related to family ties and networks. It should take into account also relevant features that may mediate the

relationship between family life and social capital beyond the family, which include the urban, suburban or rural nature of the locality, ethnic homogeneity, income polarisation, crime rates, and the nature of local service provision (Stone, 2001). Thereby it would provide foundations to “bottom-up” policy, which could elicit civic initiatives at the local level that are based on the existing contacts and ties.

Relating policy to existing social capital has many aspects. The relevant issue that should be explored and implemented in policy is relation between poverty, social exclusion and social capital. Another general issue is whether there are the longer term implications of relying on “bonding” social capital - does it delay reforms to local authorities and public services? More specifically, there are, for instance, policy measures that draw on existing family type (and thereby on bonding social capital) and deny benefits and services to individuals who live in extended family households: e.g. unemployed single parent can not claim child support, or unemployed young person can not claim health insurance and unemployment cash benefits if they live within parental household.

Taking into account various aspects, phenomena and levels of reality that are related to and affected by social capital of families, in order to accomplish a comprehensive and in-depth study - a multi-method approach proves to have a considerable heuristic value¹⁶. Based on combination of different quantitative and qualitative techniques and data the approach would provide us with foundations for exploration and understanding of social capital, as well as for grounded social policy.

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¹⁶ On multi-method approach see for instance Bourdieu, 1984; Brannen, 1992; Layder, 1998; Silva, Edwards 2004.

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