

The Role of Social Capital in Rural Community Development in Georgia

Centre for Social Studies

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The proposed research focuses on social capital, understood as the internal capacity of community to sustain cooperative activities of its members. Social capital will be studied in Georgian rural communities in several regions. The research will cover the following forms of cooperative behavior: cooperative behavior related to agricultural cooperatives; cooperative behavior in process of maintenance and management of community resources; collective safety networks; other types of cooperation, directed towards collective goods. Special attention will be paid to the interrelation between cooperation and the institutionalization of collective/common pool resources, especially natural ones.

The descriptive part of the research will address the following questions: 1. What kinds of cooperative activities can be observed in Georgia? 2. What are the patterns of cooperation? How intensive, rigorous and persistent are these patterns? The analytical part of research will deal with the following questions: 1. What are the economic, political and cultural factors that support or hamper cooperative activities? What is their comparative importance? 2. Which of these factors can be considered under the notion of social capital? 3. What can be done to foster cooperation?

Results of this research will have both theoretical and practical relevance. The research will explore how social capital is embedded in the transformation of social institutions. Policy recommendations concerning desirable input of the governmental agencies and the international organizations will be delivered.