Social Capital, Civic Society & Democracy

Making Democracies Work
Key issues

I. What is Putnam’s theory of social capital?

II. What is the evidence
   - In Italy?
   - In the US?
   - Worldwide?

III. What are the implications for civic engagement and development in new democracies?
Putnam's work

- *Making Democracy Work* (1993) - Italy
- “Bowling Alone” 1995 *Jnl of Democracy*
- The strange disappearance of civic America (online)
- “Tuning In & Tuning Out” 1996 *PS*
- *Democracies in Flux* (2002)
- www.worldbank.org/poverty/scapital
Concepts

- What is social capital?
- What is social trust?
- What is civic engagement?
Social Capital

“Features of social life - networks, norms, and trust - that enable participants to act together more effectively to pursue shared objectives.”

Capacity building
Theoretical claims

1) Social capital has significant consequences for societal cooperation, coordination and collaboration.
2) Social capital has significant consequences for democratic governance.
3) Social capital explains variations in performance if Italian regional government.
4) Social capital has declined in postwar America (and elsewhere?)
Theoretical framework

Why might social networks and social trust relate to good governance?

- Social trust
- Social networks
  - Civic engagement
  - Accountable representative democracy
    - Political trust?
  - Better policy outputs?
Problems of measurement

- Formal association membership
  - Poor records
  - Levels of membership or activism?
  - Systematic bias towards bureaucratic organizations

- Structural not cultural dimensions
  - Networks not informal bonds - trade-off?
  - Function of groups matters: bonding or bridging

- Individual or diffuse level effects
  - Contextually-specific social relations - diffuse level effects
Civic Engagement

“People’s connections with the life of their communities, not merely with politics”

Measures e.g. long-term trends in

- Referendum turnout
- Newspaper readership
- Cultural/sports club membership
- Trade union membership
Italian Regional Government
Italian regional government
1. Evidence? What makes government work?

- Italian regional government
- Economic modernization?
- The civic community?
  - Civic engagement
  - Horizontal social/cultural associations
  - Honesty, social trust, law-abidingness
  - Public interest not patron-client
Measures of effective governance

- Making democracy work: Italian regional government
  - Cabinet stability
  - Budget promptness
  - Information services
  - Reform legislation
  - Legislative innovation
  - Day care
  - Family clinics
  - Industrial policy
  - Agricultural spending
  - Local health spending
  - Housing development
  - Bureaucratic responsiveness
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Performance Indicator</th>
<th>Factor Loading</th>
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<tr>
<td>Reform legislation, 1978–1984</td>
<td>0.874</td>
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<tr>
<td>Day care centers, 1983</td>
<td>0.851</td>
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<tr>
<td>Housing and urban development, 1979–1987</td>
<td>0.807</td>
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<td>Statistical and information services, 1981</td>
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<td>Legislative innovation, 1978–1984</td>
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<td>Cabinet stability, 1975–1985</td>
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<td>Family clinics, 1978</td>
<td>0.640</td>
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<td>Bureaucratic responsiveness, 1983</td>
<td>0.625</td>
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<td>Industrial policy instruments, 1984</td>
<td>0.580</td>
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<td>Budget promptness, 1979–1985</td>
<td>0.577</td>
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<td>Local health unit spending, 1983</td>
<td>0.545</td>
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<tr>
<td>Agricultural spending capacity, 1978–1980</td>
<td>0.468</td>
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</table>

* Scoring for cabinet stability and budget promptness has been reversed from that described in the text, so that a high absolute score corresponds to high performance.
FIGURE 4.1

Emilia-Romagna
Calabria
FIGURE 4.2
Economic Modernity and Institutional Performance

Performance

Economic Modernity
Correlation: $r = .77$
FIGURE 4.5
The Civic Community and Institutional Performance

Correlation: $r = .92$
What are the implications?

- For good governance?
- Can social capital be created/strengthened?
- Can democracy be sustained in low trust societies?
End

Next class: Bowling Alone