

Introduction

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Research on social capital and networks of trust expanded rapidly after the late 1980s and now comprises a broad and heterogeneous field of scholarship that spans most social science disciplines, from anthropology to political science, from sociology to human geography (see Coleman 1988; Fukuyama 1995; Nahapiet and Ghoshal 1998; Portes 1998; Mohan and Mohan 2002; Holt 2008). One of the most influential exponents of the notions of social capital and trust has been Robert Putnam, whose research on civic traditions in Italy and the United States rapidly became the pacesetter in the field (Putnam 1993; 2000). Importantly, Putnam's influence has not been limited to the promotion of social capital as an analytical concept; social capital has also become a key policy tool. This policy interest has not been confined to Italy, the US and other Western industrialized countries since, with the support of the World Bank and other international organizations, the idea of social capital as a remedy to various social ills has also been adopted in a large number of developing countries (see Woolcock and Narayan 2000; World Bank 1997).

Arguably, the notion of social capital has become fashionable both in academic and policy-making circles, resulting in a rapid proliferation of publications engaging with the concept both theoretically and empirically – sometimes with notably normative overtones (Putnam 2000). In this extensive literature the notions of social capital and trust have been approached from very different points of view and treated with various levels of generalization, so that at times the two notions have come notoriously close to being 'chaotic concepts' (Martin and Sunley 2003). This tendency has not only produced incoherent and muddled conceptualizations but has also often rendered social capital research subject to purposeful 'misuse' in legitimating neoliberal politics and policy-making – a tendency discussed further by Mauro Cannone in the second chapter of this volume (see also Levi 1996; Tarrow 1996; Fine 2002).

Critically aware of these problems and related risks, this collection of essays seeks to assess in depth how trust and social capital influence the ways in which networks of actors are constituted and function in different urban localities. Unlike the approach popularized by Putnam and his followers, our approach is deliberately critical of assumptions concerning the role of social capital as an unproblematic collective resource, 'magically' available to all. Instead, we adopt an understanding of social capital as an unevenly distributed resource that depends on individuals' ability to enact the power potentials that reside in their membership in social networks. This conception, originally proposed

by Pierre Bourdieu (1980; 1986), sets the tone of this volume. Moreover, we contend that besides formal decision-making there are significant informal arenas through which trust is negotiated and immaterial capital is created, and that it is these arenas and practices that often shape local development processes (see also Banks et al. 2000; Lee et al. 2005).

Our purpose, then, is to advance a theoretical understanding of the historical and cultural embeddedness of these processes in several urban contexts in Italy and in Finland. The focus on these particular national and urban contexts has several theoretical and empirical foundations. Firstly, Italy is the place where Putnam famously ‘discovered’ social capital and where the functioning of social capital is normally assumed to be crucial to any political and economic endeavour. We thus thought that challenging the ways in which social capital is presented here, the site of its ‘original’ theorization, both at the institutional level and in the media, was a particularly intriguing project. Secondly, Italy and Finland represent, in many ways, two paradigmatic cases where the role and the functioning of trust and social capital are expressed in extremely different ways: often informal and almost cryptic in Italy; highly formalized and institutionalized, even planned and sometimes promoted, in Finland. Examining these two very differentiated contexts, we thought, could prove useful in the understanding of *social capital in place* and for reflecting on its theoretical and practical implications. The Italian and Finnish cases discussed in this book should thus be seen as tentative laboratories for the exploration of the place-based nature of the enactment of social capital. The third reason has to do with the fact that, in the light of the previous considerations, we decided to actually write a comparative research project on the functioning and the nature of social capital in Italy and Finland. Some of these essays and, possibly, the very idea of this book stem from that ongoing project and should be read as a contribution to a theoretical ‘work-in-progress’ on the spatializations of social capital.

This volume seeks therefore to contribute to the body of knowledge concerning the role of urban cultures (context-specific meanings, identities, norms, values, structures of expectations, and patterns of behaviour) in local economic and political performance. More specifically, the book hopes to contribute to the understanding of why disparities in urban socio-economic development persist and are, indeed, increasing in the contemporary globalizing condition, characterized as it is by seemingly boundless flows of people, economic capital and information (Brenner and Theodore 2002; Martin and Sunley 2003). Contributions in this volume chart the intersection of three areas of interest: the (re)production and functioning of trust, the existence and uses of social capital, and the transformations that urban localities are undergoing in the context of political and economic globalization. To this end, the case studies presented here examine the role of social capital in the constitution and reproduction of urban networks of trust and, more specifically, how social capital and trust are reflected in the capacity of these networks to achieve their

goals and to deliver specific forms of urban development. The volume also puts forth theoretical work tying the key concepts of trust, urban networks and social capital explicitly into society's institutional structures (see also Maloney et al. 2000; Adam and Roncevic 2003). Each contribution argues for the importance of place and emphasizes how the functioning of urban networks necessarily reflects the particular historical, cultural and political contexts of the locality in question.

While not organized in explicitly comparative fashion, the individual case studies in this volume do, nonetheless, enable cross-cultural comparisons between cities with significant differences in terms of regional identity, cultural traditions and social capital embedded in urban networks. The chapters also reflect differences in how trust is established between actors, and in the ways in which new social actors can become members of established local networks. They also show that urban networks may be more or less place-based; that is, the principles of their formation and functioning may encourage more or less socially and spatially open membership based on the actors' sense of the locale and on their capability of interacting in a variety of socio-spatial contexts.

By addressing the questions of network membership, trust and policy performance this edited collection attempts to trace the invisible resources that influence the productivity of networks and organizations. In geographical terms, the contributions shed light on some important ways in which 'place' and 'locale' affect the negotiation of socio-economic development processes in different kinds of urban contexts. To this end the case studies trace those cultural, political and institutional aspects that influence trust in actor networks, as reflected in the economic and political successes or failures of specific urban development projects. Particular emphasis is placed on the constitution and enactment of social capital within each project.

The volume is composed of ten chapters organized into three parts. The first part, 'Re-placing Social Capital', contains three contributions that focus on the conceptual and political ramifications of trust, social capital and local economic development from a critical geographical point of view. These introductory chapters are followed by three original case studies that examine how social actors establish *grounding networks* for achieving political and economic goals that would not be attainable otherwise. The third part of the volume (made up of four chapters) explores the *mobilization of trust* in such networks, so as to illuminate the constitution and enactment of social capital in place.

Re-placing Trust and Social Capital

In the opening chapter Jouni Häkli examines the multiple ways in which geographical aspects of trust have figured, but nevertheless remained unaccounted for, in the mainstream social science literature on the topic. In what, necessarily, remains only a tentative assessment of this extensive literature,

the chapter reflects on three distinct geographies of trust, each of which may facilitate a critical re-examination of the significance of the concept for human geography and other social sciences. The first is what Häkli calls a *paradoxical* geography of trust, referring to the ubiquity of the term as both an analytical tool of political philosophy and a discursive constituent of Western modernity. He argues that all attempts at empirically 'locating' or 'finding' trust in social practices related to economic transactions, democratic government and policy formation are bound to 'succeed' because trust is considered as something 'always already there' as a generally accepted means of making sense of society and thus a generic part of Western modernity. Secondly, Häkli points out a *hidden* geography of trust by exposing spatial assumptions concerning the form and functioning of various communities in which trust is empirically or theoretically analysed. Thirdly, the chapter discusses the ways in which a *reified* geography of trust has emerged through more than five decades of empirically based research on Italian civic culture. In all, the chapter makes visible some of the spatial assumptions that form the background of most analyses of thought on trust, arguing that these are not merely floating geographical imaginations, but fundamental systems of signification that influence our perception of social processes, the shape and nature of political communities, and the constitution of trust relationships.

Extending the discussion explicitly towards the concept of social capital, Mauro Cannone addresses in the second chapter the trajectory taken by the ideas by Robert Putnam and his followers, from their original conceptualization to 'the corridors of power' in contemporary Western societies. Used as an independent variable to explain not only political performance but also the economic success of a number of localities at various scales of analysis, social capital was envisaged in Putnam's research as a by-product of these localities' predisposition towards cooperation and association, stemming from specific civic attitudes rooted in some places but not in others. However, critical of ways in which the concept has been used not only in academic research but also in political and policy-making contexts, Cannone argues that ideas of social capital have, in fact, served to legitimate contemporary neoliberal policies related to the dismantling of the welfare state by downsizing public expenditure. To this end Cannone places the 'Putnamian' understanding of social capital within a broad and complex historical and political framework and shows how, in providing a mono-causal explanation for a broad range of socio-economic phenomena, such as the political and economic 'success' of countries, regions and cities, this powerful discourse has helped to conceal rather than expose the structural roots of the fundamental socio-economic changes of the last decades. Cannone concludes that in applying a neoliberal logic to their idea of social capital, Putnam and his followers end up uncritically embracing these new conditions without ever discussing the relations between negative or positive trends in social capital and their related political implications.

In his chapter, Paolo Giaccaria explores the role of social capital in the vocabulary of local and regional development. By selectively scrutinizing the Italian and the international literature on local development and regional competitiveness as a case in point, he shows that although the concept began as an enthusiastic recognition of the social dimension of economic life, it has paradoxically become a powerful tool in the ‘economization’ of social and political life. Drawing a parallel between discourses on social capital and those seeking to understand the role of the ‘locale’ in economic development, Giaccaria argues that both approaches tend to suffer from methodological ambiguity and vagueness. As a consequence, they tend to grossly oversimplify the complexity – and the place-based nature – of the social processes that lead to ‘economic development’, translating into a kind of ‘verbal magic’, which should instead be rigorously analysed. Moreover, Giaccaria suggests that this ‘magic’ – the lack of a rigorous methodological foundation – can easily become instrumental in promoting elite views as the necessary and natural consensus expressed in holistic discourses about social capital and territorial development. Such marginalization of dissident voices results in the loss of ‘the political’ and the consequent replacement of the local social and cultural dialectic with the ‘Putnamian’ ideal of a trustful local community where individual interests blur into shared stake-holding and collective agency. As a case in point, Giaccaria refers to discourses of urban and regional competition that have forcefully highlighted demands for consensus and cohesion, implying that the whole territory should be organized in a particular way for economic purposes so as to be competitive, and downplaying the conflictual dimensions of the interaction among different groups within localities. In what the author calls a ‘magic and loss *dispositif*’, conflict is then pushed outside the boundaries of the local community and, instead, located in competition against other territories, while the ‘local’ is praised as the locus of consensus and cohesion.

Grounding Networks

Moving on to discuss more concretely the ways in which social capital is enacted in urban networks, Giuseppe Porcaro and Claudio Minca address the case of Trieste’s failed bid for the Expo 2008. In the light of this failed project, the authors set out to explore the spatial dimensions of social capital and trust in terms of the capacity of the local networks related to the Expo 2008 bid to mobilize trust relationships and a long-standing tradition of local ‘working togetherness’ – elements that are often identified as the outcome of the enactment of strong, well established collective social capital. To this end, Porcaro and Minca examine the ways in which a series of historical and spatial metaphors have been used to put Trieste ‘on the map’ and how these very metaphors are associated with the city’s prestigious past in the bidding documents, the official presentations of the city’s candidature, and the geographical imaginations mobilized by the

local media. The authors argue that the failure of the bid was the consequence of an underlying conflict between the image of Trieste as promoted by the bid and the actual political and economic situation of the Adriatic city today. An equally problematic shortcoming that the authors point out was the modest and passive involvement of the local population in the initiative – a critical element of support in any competition of this sort, as highlighted also in the chapter that follows.

Poutiainen and Häkli examine the role of place and vision in building trust and engagement among participants in a major urban development project in Tampere. They begin by outlining how a particular narrative of Tampere as a city on the leading edge of technological progress emerged from the late nineteenth century onwards, and was then revitalized as part of the official vocabulary revolving around the eTampere programme. The authors show how this ‘progressive’ identity of Tampere was successfully inscribed into particular visions and goals that materialized in the ambitious development programme and helped shape its contents and contours. By foregrounding the idea of urban narratives as a ‘glue’ in social interaction, Poutiainen and Häkli explore the way in which these stories function as a form of cognitive social capital, which builds a sense of togetherness among heterogeneous actors and directs the processes of recruiting and engaging new members into the programme network. By means of actor-network theory, they discuss the concrete formation of the (eTampere) network in terms of a process of ‘translation’, where social capital became a critically important but scarce resource when the (eTampere) network strove to expand beyond the core members directly involved in the programme’s design. Consequently, a broader participation was only partially reached, and the fringes of the programme network became unstable and porous, suffering from a notable lack of public support. Where the programme turned out to be more successful was in its ability to mobilize a vision of Tampere as an intellectually progressive industrial centre, and with eTampere as its ‘natural’ extension. While failing in its grandiose goal of boosting the city into a world-leading position, the programme nevertheless managed to amass under its conceptual umbrella hundreds of information and communications technology projects.

The role played by narratives and discourses on local history also takes centre stage in the chapter by Stefano Soriani, who analyses the setting up and the consolidation of cooperative social networks related to attempts to address the ‘Venice problem’ and the ‘place’ of the port of Venice in the future of the city. Ever since the dramatic flooding of the 1960s and the implementation of the UNESCO initiatives of the 1970s for ‘preserving and saving’ the city, Venice has witnessed a wide-ranging debate about its future. Grounding his approach in these broader considerations, Soriani focuses in particular on the port of Venice, which has been the driving economic force in the city for many decades. The author explores some of the ways in which the port sector (both the Port Authority and a variety of private firms which operate in the port) contributes to the realization of networks of actors with significant influence

on the city's urban policies – as well as its visions for the future. By scrutinizing technical reports, previously executed studies, research projects, comments in the local and national press, and 'texts' that give voice to the principal actors involved, Soriani shows how the port itself has helped shape both the context of the 'Venice problem', and the formation of networks that seek to identify, re-interpret, and put into practice new resources for the revitalization of the port of Venice, in the broader context of urban economic and political transformation of the city. With particular emphasis on the formation and the consolidation of a new Port Business Community, Soriani focuses on the part played by narratives about the port's capacity to bring about development by sustaining the mobilization of important resources. In this regard he suggests that trust and distrust are dynamic factors that can contribute to re-contextualizing the 'local' by promoting the formation of new networks, social legitimacy and, eventually, social capital.

Mobilizing Trust

In assessing how and under what conditions trust may be established between actors in urban networks, Claudio Minca sets out to trace the historical, cultural and political coordinates that have made the use of the *triestino* – a specific dialect spoken in Trieste – the privileged space for the enactment of Triestine social capital. On the basis of a meticulous and thorough account of the historical evolution of *triestino*, Minca argues that in order to understand the functioning of social capital in Trieste it is necessary to take into account the crucial role played by the dialect in the material and, especially, immaterial exchanges based upon trust. As a spoken lingua franca this dialect is based on shared practices nurtured in personal relationships and social and economic networks that activate a shared set of understandings, ways of saying and ways of doing 'what needs to be done'. Precisely because *triestino* is the language of practice, it continues to play a key role in defining the relationships that matter, thus acting as the prime vehicle in mobilizing trust. Minca argues then that the enactment of social capital in Trieste usually passes through a series of informal practices that materialize within both real and imagined places. Triestine social capital thus not only expresses itself in a series of spatial practices but activates itself through a specific language which, in that particular moment and place, makes possible a 'connection' between the individuals, the city and its memory, determining the success (or failure) of future projects.

With emphasis on the role of the visual and the textual rather than oral or spoken communication, Häkli explores a case of trust building in the context of an ambitious development project called *På Gärnsen-Rajalla* carried out by the twin-town of Haparanda-Tornio. Located at the borderland between Sweden and Finland, this extraordinarily challenging project aims at building a transnational space by (physically) uniting the centres of two towns located in

two different countries (Sweden and Finland). Häkli approaches the problem of transnational trust with conceptual tools from actor-network theory, focusing on the manner in which trust is related to the boundary, which acts both as a force of divergence and a point of contact in international networks of cross-border cooperation. Foregrounding the Tornio River as a set of ‘boundary objects’, the chapter explores cross-border cooperation between Haparanda and Tornio, and particularly the *På Gränsen-Rajalla* project, seeking traces of the river as an element that helps build trust amongst the participants of cooperative networks as well as within the broader population. Häkli concludes that, while the work in the *På Gränsen – Rajalla* project is still ongoing, it is already clear that the Tornio River has fostered trust-building amongst the key actors of the cooperative network who have then been able to successfully mobilize resources for overcoming the social, cultural and material complexities that pertain to the production of transnational space.

In his chapter on a specific case of successful enactment of social capital in Venice, Mauro Cannone examines the dynamics of urban regeneration in a context where development strategies have had to face exceptional challenges set by the built environment. Focusing on the redevelopment of the Arsenale, a vast semi-abandoned area formerly hosting industrial and military activities and now lying as a problematic urban void at the heart of Venice, the chapter explores the process of the constitution of the Maritime Technologies Centre (*Thetis*) located in this area. The author argues that, besides contributing to the rejuvenation of the Arsenale, the project has also helped to revitalize the socio-economic life of a city struggling against the permanent loss of residents and services. Rather than framing *Thetis* as the result of a coherent strategy put forward by urban administrators and business leaders, Cannone traces its constitution by looking at how a more precarious network of actors was successfully formed around the project, capable of mobilizing resources embedded in the local milieu of Venice. Recognizing the significance of the presence ‘in place’ of specific resources, and the ability to mobilize and make use of them, Cannone’s chapter suggests that urban development is differently embedded in every local milieu, and that it is precisely by means of a series of highly differentiated ‘social’ relations that such locally embedded preconditions can be transformed into key resources, or ‘capital’, for development.

With emphasis on voluntary collective action, the chapter by Martti Siisiäinen examines the role of associational social capital embodied in the field of welfare policy practices in the city of Jyväskylä. Siisiäinen understands the establishment of voluntary associations in terms of organized social capital, a process where networks are formalized, participation is tied to membership roles, and activities occur mostly autonomously from individual members. The author approaches voluntary associations as a form of social and symbolic capital by first contextualizing their role within a typology of European polities. He then analyses the formation and characteristics of registered associations in Jyväskylä with attention to their differentiation since 1919. By discussing the changing role

of voluntary associations in the political system of welfare provision, Siisiäinen examines more generally the ongoing transformations within associational social capital in the city of Jyväskylä. As a general conclusion, he points out that the borderline between civil society and local government runs not between but *inside* associations, so that those actors who interact closely with the local government tend to function as its ‘accessories’, while ‘rank and file actors’ remain in their civil society roles. Moreover, since an active associational field is a potential source of innovation and key to the development of local democracy, it is important that both conflicting and integrative movements and associations are present and active in any local society.

We believe that the itinerary traced by this volume through different urban laboratories for the production of social capital and trust in Italy and Finland is particularly useful in shedding light on some elements that the conventional debate on social capital tends to overlook. The radically distinct understanding and workings of social capital in these two national contexts reveals, in fact, the importance of matching a more formal, so to speak, ‘institutional’ reading of social capital with the recognition of the crucial importance of its informal manifestations. This realization presents, of course, a set of methodological problems that are typical of any investigation of ‘communities of practice’, based as they are on a conceptual as well as very ‘practical’ dimension: dimensions that tend to merge and become indistinguishable when social capital is actually enacted and translated into spaces of either collaboration or resistance. This double expression of social capital reveals how important it is to reflect on the cultural and political nature of the production of networks of trust – a production that is always, necessarily, embedded in the ‘local’ and that cannot therefore be generalized. Despite this, however, what we hope to have achieved with this volume is to show how reflecting on the geographical and, at the same time, (almost) immaterial dimensions of social capital is particularly important in order to understand the ways in which networks of trust operate in and through ‘real’ places where power, in its relational forms, is enacted by and upon people, and translates this very ‘immateriality’ into concrete projects that can succeed or fail, but that inevitably help shape the social reproduction of the urban fabric.

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