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Social capital contested
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The purpose in this paper is to specify certain basic ways of conceptualising social capital (SC) in order to bring out the contested character of it. The paper starts by touching on the origins of the concept. This is followed by a critical overview of the views of P. Bourdieu, J.S. Coleman, A. Portes and R. Putnam, and an attempt is made to show the fragmentation of the different approaches, which in itself creates difficulties for the meaningful utilisation of SC in social-scientific research. The adoption of the SC concept by international organisations and national governments has fanned, it is claimed, its ideological use. If the notion of SC is to be salvaged, because there is something useful to it, it is therefore necessary to overcome the evident confusion and fragmentation.

Keywords: social capital; ideology; Bourdieu; Portes; Putnam

Introduction

A non-scientific, everyday-life type of involvement with concepts and notions may occur in certain instances in the social-scientific field in general, and in sociology in particular. In such instances, however, scientific discourse is challenged de facto, becomes downgraded, and/or annulled as it is referred to merely as an excuse for this or that ideology or used to bolster some authority. In what follows, I will claim that this is what to a significant extent has happened with the now notorious term social capital (SC), a term originating from sociology, and in particular from economic sociology.

But what is meant by SC? In a broad and still non-essentialist sense it means that the relations humans enter into do have the potential to form a source of utility and benefit for them, and thus they bear a user’s importance. However, there exists no commonly shared perception of SC, let alone a unitary definition. In fact, the views expressed about it often vary from one another significantly, and the concept of SC is characterised both by divergence in the way it is perceived and by an antecedent plurality of approaches and empirical operationalisations. The situation becomes further complicated by the absence of a substantial discussion among dissenting viewpoints.

In this paper my aim is to specify certain basic ways of conceptualising SC in relation to the equivalent, albeit different ways in which this notion has been applied. I start by touching on the origins of the concept of SC. This is followed by a critical overview of the relevant viewpoints in this specific field belonging to prominent contemporary authors: namely, P. Bourdieu, J. S. Coleman, A. Portes and R. Putnam. I will then attempt to show the fragmentation of the different approaches and bring out
the difficulties facing social-scientific research. I will link the latter with the adoption of the SC concept by international organisations and national governments, which has fanned, as I will claim, its ideological use. Lastly, I will put forward a suggestion about how to revoke the evident confusion and fragmentation about SC.

Sociological approaches to SC

Origins

The notion of SC is a relatively new concept in sociology and more broadly in the social sciences. The notion has attracted the attention of both the scientific community and policy-makers, not to mention the general public.2

Undoubtedly, in relation to the origins of the notion of SC one may find recourse in the classics of sociology. Thus, in Tocqueville a problematic is already present in relation to SC. Tocqueville will suggest the development of an ‘art’ of cooperation among citizens, which would lead to the re-founding of the social bonds dissolved by individualism and, in this sense, in the formation of collectivities of various and multiple forms (Konstandakopoulos 2005).

When considering ‘capital’, Karl Marx focuses more centrally on the economic dimension and function of it, which he systematically analyses in Capital (Marx 1976), as well as in the Grundrisse (Marx 1973). Marx, when referring to the organisation of class relations in capitalist societies at the level of the organisation of production, will explicitly designate capital as a social relation (Jordan 1971, pp. 225–228).3 On the basis of this formulation, the appellation SC may appear superfluous. Indeed, with such a formulation, Marx will, unwittingly, set the framework upon which, subsequent to his analysis, claims will be raised to the effect that the notion of SC, as it appeared in the course of the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, is a hyperbole, a metaphor or an oxymoron (Gozzi 2003). Nevertheless, it remains a fact which has not been given prominence in the voluminous relevant bibliography that Marx did actually use the term ‘SC’.4

For his part, Emile Durkheim is not explicitly concerned with SC. Yet, as it emerges from his work, particularly from his thesis on the Division of labor in society (1960), or from the more mature Suicide (1975), the concern about the meaning, impact and outcome of sociability, which develops and blossoms in all kinds of social groups, is intense and persistent. Durkheim shall declare the constitutional and sine qua non importance for society that the intermediate association intersecting between civil society and individuals has. He will stress that those groups, as they stand in proximity to individuals, attract them into their sphere of activation and thus draw them into the general current of social life (Durkheim 1975, pp. 383–392).

In relation to Max Weber’s impact in the problematic of SC, this is indirect only. It affects R.D. Putnam’s version of SC, who defines it in direct relation to trust (see below).5 Weber has shown that trust does not only develop on a voluntary basis but can also be imposed by organisations upon their members. This is effected through the variform compulsions that organisations, through hierarchy, exert upon the latter which results into their disciplining, and through their perpetuation the emergence of so-called ‘enforceable’ trust (also see Woolcock 1998, p. 161).

Still, in relation to the connection of SC with the developments of the sociological classics, it is of interest that the observation according to which G. Simmel’s notion of the ‘social circle’ may be considered as a harbinger of it (Bagnasco 2003, p. 375). In other words, there is an element of continuity in the interest shown in relation to what I have
designated as SC. Overall, the point I would like to underline is that the actors’ involvement with the potential benefit that the social relations they enter into may entail, and which forms the essence of SC, is not something unknown in sociology. On the contrary, one may identify some common elements and continuities in the SC problematic in at least some of the classics.6

However, the first explicit, of sociological interest, emergence of a notion of SC is traced 90 years ago, in a piece of writing by Lydia Hanifan. Hanifan uses the notion of (community) SC without strict demands on conceptual cohesion, in order to bring out the importance of social relations in general, and of participation and cooperation on common themes, in particular. In fact, this form of SC is used explicitly as a metaphor only, without any further claims (Hanifan 1916, p. 130).7

Since this first reference, the notion of SC has undergone a series of transformations and reformulations. More broadly, it has been used in a non-unitary way in order to describe, to interpret and to designate a multiplicity of social phenomena. Today, it is a most contested, as well as an umbrella concept, which includes different and even antithetical conceptualisations and applications. This happens to such a wide extent that SC has been characterised as a ‘Hydra concept’ (see Hunter 2006).

Four and a half decades after Hanifan’s article, the term resurfaced in 1961 in a book by Jane Jacobs, in which she was concerned with the existence of social networks that had been formed in the neighbourhoods of US cities. Jacobs considers that these networks were absolutely necessary as the trust element in them strengthened local social cohesion, and that accordingly these networks should be maintained since they formed an irreplaceable part of the SC of each city neighbourhood (Jacobs 1961, p. 138).

However, the appearance of SC in Jacobs’ work is nothing more than an insignificant episode with no follow-up. Rather, it was the economist Greg Loury’s (1977) use of SC that bears more directly upon its contemporary discussion. Indeed, Loury uses the term SC in an attempt to designate its origins and impact among the structured social inequalities of minority ethnic/racial groups. For Loury, the social context in which one finds oneself embedded strongly conditions one’s achievement. This is profoundly evident whenever social divisions that structure inequalities, such as race or class, are at play. In such a context, Loury describes social capital as the impact of one’s own social position, which acts to further or impede the acquisition of human capital (the market-valued assets of education and skills) (Loury 1977, pp. 175–176).

Pierre Bourdieu

The honour of being the first to conceptualise SC in an explicitly sociologically manner in the contemporary period is attributed to P. Bourdieu. In fact, SC in Bourdieu’s work will become one of the few notions marking economic sociology (Trigilia 2002, pp. 225–229, Swedberg 2003, p. 48, 2006, p. 7) because it has been treated in close connection to other forms of capital; that is, as a feature and concept that provides a sociological explanation for a socio-economic phenomenon. The first mention of SC in the work of Pierre Bourdieu was registered in 1980. Later, in 1985, he would delve into it in the context of a discussion on different forms of capital.

For Bourdieu, capital in general consists of accumulated human labour that assumes either a distinct material form or an integrated one. I should clarify that by ‘integrated form’ he means that capital is part of an objective or subjective structure, and the latter is none other than the ongoing predispositions of mind and body (Bourdieu 2001, p. 98). Besides, Bourdieu recognises that in order for simple capital reproduction or extended
reproduction (accumulation) to be realised, time-consuming processes are required (p. 96). Patently, Bourdieu adopts a Marxian-inspired conceptualisation of capital, but he also understands capital in the sense of power and resources (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992).

Bourdieu is concerned with three forms of capital: the economic, the cultural and the social form, each of which appears and operates in a different field. To these forms, the symbolic form of capital may be added, although it appears to be only a subclass of the cultural form. From Bourdieu’s work it clearly emerges that, on the one hand, family is a basic source of SC, whereas, on the other, SC is found exclusively among the socially powerful, namely in the upper middle class or haute bourgeoisie. This happens because social class is defined by the possession or not of capital, which assumes the above-mentioned three forms; the subservient social strata do not possess capital, including SC (1986).

Bourdieu examines differences among the particular forms of capital, and in rough outline notes the features of each one as follows: economic capital is grasped as directly convertible to money and is institutionalised through property rights. Cultural capital is under certain conditions convertible to economic capital; its institutional expression is in the various presumptions of study such as university degrees. Lastly, social capital comprises social responsibilities, ‘connections’ or ‘linkages’, as he will note, while under certain circumstances it is also convertible into economic capital. The ideal–typical institutionalised form of SC is the nobility title (Bourdieu 2001, p. 98).

If, in spite of their differences, social and cultural forms of capital may be turned into economic capital, nonetheless, the processes of generation of various capitals are not identical. SC is formed, more or less consciously, via integration into networks and, unlike economic capital, it has no specific material form nor is it transparent. Instead, it is characterised by certain indeterminacy, so that there can be, for example, a leftover sense of an unspecified obligation. SC is in a sense ‘suspended’ in mid-air, just like social structures, as it inheres in social relations. This, according to Bourdieu, is an inevitable dimension of SC; otherwise, if it were clear and specific, it would simply be a series of ordinary non-market transactions (which Simmel had already referred to).

SC, according to Bourdieu, is:

The sum of active or potential resources that are connected through the possession of a network of permanent relations of mutual acquaintance and mutual recognition, which are more or less institutionalized, or, in other words, with the inclusion into a group, as a sum of [individual action] agents that are not only, endowed with common attributes (amenable to apprehension by the observer, by others or by themselves) but also tied by bonds that are useful and permanent. (Bourdieu 1994, p. 90, my emphasis)⁸

According to Bourdieu, these bonds include those of proximity in the natural (geographical) space, and also at an economic and social level – bonds that may or may not be those of kinship. It should be added that participation in a group, ‘…provides each of its members with the backing of the collectivity-owned capital, a “credential” that entitles them to credit in the various senses of the word’ (Bourdieu 2001, p. 103). In all cases, the ties mentioned exist only in their practical dimension, within the context of material and symbolic transactions that contribute to their maintenance. Besides, such ties get established and perpetuated on the basis of the recognition of the proximity of the agents–members of the social group.

A related matter concerns the size or the volume of the SC that a given agent of action has. Here Bourdieu – and this is very important – refers to the agent of action as a separate individual–member of the group. Bourdieu perceives the volume of the SC as depending
‘... on the size of the network of connections he can effectively mobilize and on the volume of the capital (economic, cultural, or symbolic) possessed in his own right by each of those to whom one is connected’ (Bourdieu 2001, p. 103; see also 1994, pp. 92–93).

Although SC is not perceived as deriving from the economic or cultural capital that an agent (or a group of agents) has, it is not entirely independent either. This happens because the transactions between the members of a group which set up the mutual recognition have as a prerequisite the re-identification of a minimum objective homogeneity. In addition to this, it happens because of the multiplying effect that the transactions have on the SC possessed due to the coordination developed within the context of a group. As a consequence, ‘the profits that accrue from membership in a group are the basis of solidarity that makes them possible’ (Bourdieu 2001, pp. 92–93) – though Bourdieu recognises that it is not necessary that this should be pursued in a conscious manner. Yet, undoubtedly, the existence of a network of interconnections does not come about unintentionally. Instead, it is a result of deliberate, to a lesser or greater extent, individual or collective investing strategies that aim at establishing, furthering or reproducing social interconnection, directly useful and beneficial to the participants. Thus, accidental and potential relations, e.g. of neighbourhood, work or kinship, are turned into relations that are marked both by utilitarian necessity as well as by selectivity. This entails constant obligations that the group members experience in a subjective way (e.g. a sense of gratitude, respect, friendship, etc.), whereas occasionally they may be institutionalised (e.g. as rights). Besides, Bourdieu clearly holds that the reproduction of SC requires a continuous effort of ‘sociability’ and continual repeated contacts during which mutual recognition by the group members is confirmed in order to sustain the group cohesion (p. 104).9

**James S. Coleman**

Two years after P. Bourdieu’s elaborations, in 1987 and mainly in 1988, J.S. Coleman too, also introduced his notion of SC (Coleman and Hoffer 1987, Coleman 1988, 1990).10 Working intensively on education issues (e.g. his review in 1961 of school education in the USA), Coleman used Theodore Schultz and Gary Becker’s notion of human (education) capital, which very briefly can be described as the skills and knowledge that one has. Studying school failure and aiming at the reinforcement of human capital, Coleman introduces the notion of SC as a means of support. In particular, he claims that SC encourages the students’ school or university performance, thus strengthening the generation of human capital, i.e. of knowledge.

Coleman will use this notion of SC in connection to other forms of capital, such as economic–financial capital, natural capital (tools, machine, land and other concrete elements) and human capital (skills and knowledge of people) (Coleman 1988, pp. S98, S118). On the other hand, SC results from the changes that take place between individuals, which facilitate social action (Jackman and Miller 1998, p. 48). He will then consider SC, together with the other forms of capital, to be productive since it allows for certain pursues otherwise not plausible (Coleman 1990, p. 302).

What, then, is SC according to Coleman? He will define it on the basis of its function, so that it ends up as a range of entities with two common attributes: one, they all consist of an aspect of social structure; and two, they facilitate certain actions of actors within these structures, irrespective of these actors being individual or collective agents (Coleman 1988, p. S98). Moreover, it is also determined by the outcome, as SC is ‘making possible the achievement of certain aims’, without which, as already noted, these outcomes would not have been attainable (p. S98). According to this approach, SC may assume three forms:
'obligations and expectations, which depend on trustworthiness of the social environment, information-flow capability of the social structure, and norms accompanied by sanctions' (p. S98). Besides, Coleman, like Bourdieu, will stress the non-concrete, non-material and indefinite character of SC in comparison to other forms of capital.

Nonetheless, Coleman will note that SC’s dimension of being a public good both characterises it and differentiates it from other forms of capital. This dimension results from the fact that the subject of generation of SC enjoys only a limited part of its benefits (pp. S116–S118). But this already means that SC is not just or solely a property or benevolence of the isolated individual agent who generates it, but both of other individuals as well as of the community. This element is significant for the extension of the notion, as we shall see later in relation to R. Putnam’s views.

Because SC is embedded within the social context, either inside or outside the family, certain characteristics of social relations can facilitate its appearance; otherwise it may be impeded. Such characteristics are trust and reciprocity among the members of the inner-group, as well as effective normative regulations. When these appear in abundance, their effect is then benevolent for the satisfactory function of the social groups within which SC is developed (pp. S102–S105). Something else that plays a role in the development of SC is the type of the existing social structures – that is, whether they are closed or open (p. S106).

Two relevant examples of the effect of SC in relation to education, are the following. Coleman notes that Catholic schools in the USA, by applying school regulations strictly and being rather closed entities, are characterised by a greater than usual coherence. In the long run, they have a high score in terms of their performance with a low rate of school failure. Respectively, on a micro-level – our second example –, Coleman stresses the systematic support given by immigrant parents to their offspring in the host country. In this way, however, SC strengthens the students’ abilities to respond positively to their studies and inductively also the creation of human capital. Coleman is succinct: the more SC is used, the more it develops and the greater its beneficial impact too.

It is true that the rather unclear definition of SC has opened the way up for a reapplying the label SC in a range of various and contradictory procedures. This practice was inaugurated by Coleman himself. Thus, generating SC mechanisms, such as expectations for reciprocity and the collective application of rules, the effect of its possession, e.g. the privileged access to information, and the appropriate organisation for the implementation of SC resources and outcomes, are included in their attributive role in the generation of SC.

But, as Coleman (1988) comments, from the recipient’s point of view, resources drawn by means of SC are gifts. Consequently, it is important to distinguish the resources from the ability to acquire them, by means of participation into networks or more broadly, in social structures. This distinction is clear in Bourdieu but rather vague in Coleman. The point is that by equating SC to the resources acquired through it, one is led to a statement of tautology. In this sense, Coleman’s conceptualisation gets blurred and eventually loses much of its value.

The problems arising in Coleman will be inherited and transmitted to the conceptualisation of the political scientist Robert D. Putnam.

Alejandro Portes and his associates: sources and effect of SC

The content of the SC notion and its usage have attracted criticism. Attempts at its deconstruction as well as at a critical recomposition have been made by a number of writers. Amongst them, the intervention by Portes and his associates stands out (Portes

Evidently, to possess SC one must relate to others who constitute the source of SC and of the privileges this provides. At this point there appears to be confusion, as the source or origin of the SC is repeatedly and falsely regarded as an outcome of its action. This was observed in both Coleman and Putnam (see below), as well as in other writers relying on them. But, in this way, causality is not defined; a vicious cycle and eventually a tautology prevail.

Portes and Sensenbrenner (1993) will suggest a clear distinction between the sources of origin of the SC and the results of its action. Thus, they will recognise four sources from which SC originates: internalisation of values, transactions of a reciprocal character, forms of collective solidarity, and the trust imposed by negative or positive sanctions. Besides, it will be admitted that the sources of SC are embedded in the motives the members of a network or a group have in order to provide resources. These motives can be distinguished, on the one hand, into consummatory ones, that may derive from the initial socialisation (e.g. within the family) and lead to the consecutive internalisation of certain values or regulatory patterns, or may be cultivated, in the context of the community (bounded rationality), with solidarity strikes being a typical case. On the other hand, they may originate from instrumental motives, in which there is expectancy of reciprocity and trust (e.g. the sponsor is secured against fraud) (Portes and Sensenbrenner 1993, Portes 1998, pp. 6–8).

The various sources of origin of the SC lead to its composite formation so that SC is ‘the ability to secure benefits … [via] participation in … networks and other social structures’ (Portes 1998, p. 6). Once SC is generated, it is characterised by multiformity of its impact. Among the consequences, observance of rules, and more broadly social control, can be mentioned. Furthermore, SC allows the manifestation of the support families provide to their members, as well as the promotion of various benefits via the multiple non-familial networks, a most common application lying in the field of social stratification. In other words, SC is used in order to account for access to employment, mobility by means of professional ‘ladders’, and entrepreneurial success. Even more so, the idea that the interconnections favour individual mobility is found in writers, who, like Mark Granovetter, avoid the term SC; here I am referring to his view on the ‘power of weak ties’ (Granovetter 1973, 1983).

Although P. Bourdieu does not seem to take an interest in the endogenously positive or negative effect of the SC, in Coleman’s work it is presented as exerting a fundamentally positive social influence, especially in the case of social problems tackled or solved through the effectiveness of SC.

Rejecting the positive account of the SC and its effect as one-dimensional, Portes and his associates are also concerned with the issue of its negative side. More specifically, Portes contends that it is characterised by a number of negative aspects: (a) precluding the ‘non members of the network’, i.e. the group non-members, by means of what M. Weber and later F. Parkin (1978) called ‘closure’ (the procedure of ‘closing up’ a social group and its entrenchment); (b) excessive demands towards the members of the network (or the group) for compliance, uncensored acceptance, etc.; (c) diminishing personal liberty that may be imposed upon the members of a network; (d) the presence of equalising regulations impeding individual distinction, which instead ‘suppress downwards’ the more active members of the inner-group, as they are not allowed to stand out; (e) the appearance in increasing numbers of ‘free riders’ among relatively large groups.
As a whole, Portes' interventions offer a more balanced understanding of SC and its potential. The notion is not rejected but specified and rationalised sociologically. The emphasis is on the need to systematically study the effect of SC and avoid attributing irrelevant, accidental or spurious effects to it (Portes 1998, 2000, Portes and Landolt 2000, Portes and Mooney 2002). This perception has led to conceptualisations of social capital more akin to the micro-level that focus on the individual's relationships to her or his network of social connections and the benefits and resources she or he may muster. Such approaches tend to restrict the agentic impact, even if they give a place to it, while underlying that of social structure (e.g. Lin 2000, 2001). In such explorations, which tend to utilise qualitative methods, one of the main concerns is to decipher causality in generating and activating social capital (Smith 2003, Mouw 2005).

The sociological interest in SC

Why has SC become such a popular notion in sociology? As already pointed out, a fundamental reason is that it focuses on the consequences of sociability. Ever since Durkheim, processes of socialisation, sociability and their significance have constantly attracted sociologists’ interest. Now, in SC there exists a notion that stresses and defines clearly the positive aspect of their functioning, putting aside at the same time, or so it appears, their negative aspects (Portes 1998). Also, the conscious rather than imposed reconstruction of primary human social ties resulting in the humanistic–rational reconstruction of contemporary society is a constant in sociology. Accordingly, SC and its strengthening have been accepted; it has been considered as a more or less concrete way of pursuing this aim. Additionally, and in relation to the above, SC seems to provide a key for comprehending and tackling social problems. These data, found to a lesser or greater extent in the relevant sociological bibliography, can also justify the positive response this notion has had in sociology. Furthermore it explains the fact that, in principle, it attracts interest and is adopted, with variations, by different sociological approaches.

Another reason for the enhanced interest in SC can be traced in developments at a macro-sociological level. It is true that the uninhibited dominance of capitalism, especially after the breakdown of the countries of ‘really existing socialism’ in 1989, has attracted a resurgent interest in how this system gets rooted, thus leading to the investigation of all forms of capital that are not strictly economic. These, while there may still be doubts as to whether they are indeed true forms of capital, are often considered to be equivalent to economic capital on the grounds that nowadays everything can be treated as ‘capital’. Although it has been pointed out that there is an inflation of non-economic capitals, the interest remains vivid. Thus, Bourdieu’s contribution to the analysis of various non-economic forms of capital and their linking to economic capital, as we have seen, is a precursor. In this context, besides links SC lays down the (positive) effects of sociability with a broader discussion on capital. At the same time it draws interest to how non-economic forms of capital can form significant sources of power, dominance and influence, similar to the possession of enterprises and wealth.

A third reason, closer connected to sociology, has to do with the hardships and dead-ends of sociological theory. Given the fall of T. Parson’s ‘grand theory’ in The social system, as well as A. Giddens’ failure to set up a new comprehensive theory for society in his work The constitution of society, there is a specific orientation and a modulated consent: that is, adopting R.K. Merton’s invitation to create medium-range theories. SC was definitely regarded as an interesting notion by certain writers and was chosen to develop such a type of theory (e.g. Woolcock 1998, Lin 2003; outside sociology, see Putnam 2000).
An additional reason is related to the pressure for originality that characterises the academic field, with all the consequences this may entail for one’s career. Here one part of the large number of publications that refer to SC has its roots. And it is this search for originality that is to blame for several texts with fragmented or even irrelevant treatments of the notion – the initial intention being to provide the notion with an ‘appropriate’ operational application, and make it serve as a useful tool.

Robert D. Putnam: SC as a feature of communities and nations

Parallel to the ongoing sociological interest in SC, this notion has been adopted by other disciplines as well. This took place basically through the work of R. Putnam. Putnam developed his ideas in relation to SC in a series of publications, especially in his books, *Making democracy work* (1993) and *Bowling alone* (2000).

In the former book, the basic issue treated is the reason for the multiform development of Northern Italy in comparison with the Southern part. The author’s answer is that in Northern Italy, thanks to a specific historic process, both multifaceted participatory institutions as well as a participatory ethos were developed. This has taken place in a decentralised way, by means of the acceptance and enactment of citizenship at a community/city/district/region level and by means of a simultaneous activation of civil society dating from the fourteenth century, much earlier than similar developments in Southern Italy that unfolded there only after the second half of the nineteenth century. Based on a developed participatory dimension and its positive effect, a rigorous cooperation between various social networks and associations made its appearance in Northern Italy. This also happened during the period of the ascendance of urban society, thanks to the common belief that through a close and intense cooperation all problems could be tackled – always according to Putnam. Mutuality within relationships and the cooperation via urban network ties, willingness to participate and solidarity among active citizens, or even cooperation based on trust and consent to the (bourgeois) democratic context, are all supported by joint, formal, and non-formal normative arrangements. These, in turn, affect positively social activities developed in a climate of cohesion where trustworthiness amongst individuals is self-evident (and hence reliance upon others). These activities are embedded in various networks, associations and organisations in general, and in identifying and accepting the role of community more specifically. The unifying element that binds all such things together and allows them to develop as described above is none other than SC.

According to Putnam, SC is formed by

... features of *social organizations*, such as trust, norms, and networks, that can improve the efficiency of society by facilitating coordinated actions. (Putnam 1993, p. 167, my emphasis)

He will add that it is easier for humans to work together in a community ‘blessed’ with a substantial amount of SC.

Two years later, in 1995, Putnam will provide a similar but not identical definition of SC as the

features of *social life* – networks, norms and trust – that enable participants to act together more effectively to pursue shared objectives. (1995b, pp. 664–665, my emphasis)

Substantially, in relation to the above, there appears to be an extension and a broadening of the range of the content of SC: from the level of organisations (or mezzo-level) to that of
social life as a whole (or macro-level). Through Putnam’s views we have already had a broadening of the radius of the notion from, initially, the individual level of the actors (personal or collective) to the level of organisations and communities (Portes 2000, Wolleback and Selle 2002, p. 34). However, the latter came to include cities, regions and even whole countries, as the referent is to social life in general. Such transference of meaning is to an extent due to the fact that Coleman had already attempted it in his work, as we have seen, and had received no criticism for this at the time. However, something that had already been a problem in the sociological discussion of Coleman’s definition for SC, that is, the silence of the supposedly neutral character of horizontal ties, cannot be tolerated in Putnam’s conceptual transference: in the neo-pluralistic participatory context he has adopted, any differences in the economic, social or other forms of power do not raise a significant issue; hence what prevails is participation as such and the extent to which it appears.

The participatory attitude within the context of community networks seems to generate additional forms of SC. This is the case with certain classifications of SC, which have been produced by others, but have had Putnam’s full consent (2000, pp. 22–24). Thus, SC can do the ‘bonding’, ‘bridging’ or even ‘linking’ of social groups. Respectively, the first form, ‘bonding’, is related to the ties between people who are in similar situations, has an exclusive character and is oriented towards the inner part of a social group. The second, ‘bridging’, links people in different situations, who belong to different social groups (Svendsen 2006), and has a comprehensive character. Finally, the third form, ‘linking’, brings heterogeneous social groups together (Woolcock 2001), allowing for synergies at the level of a limited group but not at the level of a broader community or country. However, in this way networks appear to be vehicles of SC.

Later on, in his book *Bowling alone* (2000), the main points of which had already been published since 1995 (Putnam 1995a; 2000, p. 506), Putnam addresses a question not dissimilar to that posed in his previous work: why, and in what way, in the USA where participatory practices and traditions of civic society were so powerful, have such practices been restricted, and why are they in a process of further contraction? Putnam notes that participation in types of social activation with a clear aim of collective action, such as participating in the local Red Cross, in religious organisations, in choirs, in workers’ trade union associations, or political participation, e.g. participation in the elections and in political events, has decreased significantly during the last 40–50 years in the USA. Adversely, the more private ways of spending free time, e.g. watching TV, have vertically increased (pp. 222–234). Putnam is concerned with what should be done in order to reverse this situation. In a nutshell, his answer is: to reinforce SC.

In fact, in Putnam’s approach the SC stock is equal to the level of participation in associations and corporations, clubs, etc., and more broadly equal to the participatory attitude in a community. Specifically, in quantitative operational applications research on SC, it is calculated by indices such as the degree of participation in volunteering organisations, trust towards authorities or others, reading newspapers – that reflects interest in the public affairs – and by other similar indices (Putnam 2000). So, the key is the keenness of participation, more broadly the civic values, or else the ethos of ‘civickness’, from which willingness to participate originates. The more civickness there is and the more often it succeeds in being manifested (as this is reflected in surveys), the bigger the SC is, and the better a district thrives!
Critiquing Putnam

These, necessarily abridged, views of Putnam's have provoked wide interest, both in a series of scientific disciplines and in the political field, to which I will return later. At the same time, however, and in rough proportion to the interest shown, multi-level and multiple critiques have been launched against his work. The critiques may be distinguished into ‘basic’ and ‘internal’.

The ‘basic’ critique may be seen to have three aspects: it touches on capital in SC, it deals with the transition of the meaning of SC from the individual level to that of communities, and with the appropriate level of analysis. It is also concerned with the cyclical character of Putnam’s claims, as well as with the indeterminacy of causal direction.

Marx’s conception of capital is certainly not the only one available, but the stress he has laid on the association of capital with accumulation (M-C-M') enjoys a broader acceptance; this dimension does not emerge in the case of Putnam’s SC. Besides this, one of the major reasons many scholars reject SC tout court, but even more so in the Putnamian version of it, is that it is seen to obscure the historical connotation of capital and capitalism. They also reject the assumed naturalness of SC, as well as the exploitation associated with it (Smith and Kulynych 2002). This is especially true when capital in its social variant is promoted as something that is fundamentally ‘good’, which of course has an explicit ideological function.15

The extension of a concept is in principle an acceptable development, provided that it is accompanied by an analogous theoretical treatment. But in the case of Putnam this does not occur. While in Coleman the bonds of community are of interest because they provide individuals with benefits, in Putnam the general direction adopted is that SC is a property of organisations and thereafter of communities, rather than of networks of individuals or collective agents of action. Conceptually SC has been extended, but also shifted. In relation to the benefits accrued from it, these are now primarily collective – at the level of the community (Portes 2000, Portes and Landholt 2000). Thus, for example, the existence of sufficient SC in a community, city, region or country means the smooth operation of public-sector bureaucracies with a parallel constraint of corruption.

However, this view suffers from a progressive confusion in relation to a number of issues. One of these is that SC now appears to be everywhere, or at least it could appear everywhere. Needless to say that in this way as SC loses its specificity, it cannot help losing any heuristic power it has too. Another related matter concerns the confusion as to the level at which SC operates. Thus, is it the micro-, mezzo-, or macro-level that is appropriate for studying it? Despite Putnam orienting himself towards the mezzo- and macro-levels, this is not explicitly set. In addition, the confusion in relation to the level of research and analysis creates unsettled questions as to whether SC should be studied by ethnographic type of methods at the micro-level or more approximately, by larger-scale quantitative (representative) samples.

Besides, in Putnam’s conceptual transition the direction of causality is vague. The SC measured in resources is considered to have a positive effect on community, while its existence is certified by the results of its function. That is, those regions that from an economic point of view do well and are governed competently are considered to have managed well precisely because these achievements are proof that they possess a large amount of SC. On the other hand, when a region is poor, non-developed, and is maladministered and mismanaged, then by definition, SC is limited or completely absent (Harriss and De Renzio 1997, pp. 923–924, Putzel 1997, Portes 1998, Portes and Landolt 2000, Harriss 2002, Quibria 2003, pp. 8–10). It is here that probably the most basic
problem with Putnam’s conceptualisation of SC fully emerges. This is the logical circularity of his claims (Harriss 2002, pp. 21–23), which interestingly enough he acknowledges himself (Putnam 1993, p. 181). The issue at hand, therefore, is to pursue the matter further, recognising that the various correlations that Putnam and his followers employ for measuring SC do not tell us much about the direction of causality, and that these are mere spurious correlations (Portes and Landolt 2000, pp. 535–537).

As far as the ‘internal’ critique is concerned, it concentrates more on the relevance, precision and sufficiency of the indices used to ascertain SC. Here, I intend to refer to only few points of this critique that I consider the most interesting.

To start with, it is worth mentioning that there are certain very interesting but little-known Italian critiques that pertain to Putnam’s *Making democracy work*. Some of these were originally published in the journal *Stato e mercato*. In these it becomes clear that, contrary to Putnam’s claims, the grand developmental success of contemporary Italy, the so-called ‘third Italy’ (as well as its problems), do not relate at all with the conceptualisation and the operationalisation that he applies to SC. These critiques, as well as others of a narrower Italian interest (as mentioned in Harriss 2002, pp. 33–34), have a wider importance as they seriously weaken what has been considered as the most successful demonstration of the validity of his approach to SC. Thus, an important point of critique concerns Putnam’s view on the path-dependency of Italy’s regions. It does not consider the quasi-colonial situation of Southern Italy during the nineteenth century, which was effected by the elites of Northern Italy through the central state that they controlled, a point that demonstrates the influence of the political element in the shaping of local societies (see Tarrow 1996).

In his other major book, *Bowling alone*, Putnam offers an interpretation of what he characterises as the reduction of SC in the US, attributing it to the trend towards a greater individualisation that dominates contemporary societies. He considers this reduction as a consequence of the fact that humans appear not to be interested in solutions of a collective character of problems but, instead focus on the ‘quest for their ideal self’. This in turn, if it really is the case given some serious objections (see below), would have to be explained – something that Putnam does not attempt. Of course, the objection consists in that, as E. Goffman had already noted, the self is the result of an interaction ‘performance’; rather than the cause giving rise to it. In other words, the tension or/and confusion between cause and effect is not restricted to the conceptualisation of SC but is a more general feature of Putnam’s work.

It is an accepted fact that the density of the relations between the members of a network is a good indicator of the general level of the bonds amongst them (Scott 2000). In the Putnamian approach, however, the density of the relations between the members of a network is considered an important criterion, which verifies the existence of SC. Specifically, Putnam considers that the denser the relations are, the greater the SC is, so that a high degree of social contact and mutual support among the members of an in-group is identified with the possession of a high degree of SC.

An interesting critique of the density dimension has been put forward by the social anthropologist Peter Loizos (2002), who examined three empirical sample cases of refugees. Loizos observes that the latter are clearly marked by the tendency to restrict the radius of their social relations to persons of origins and social circumstances very similar to their own. They also tend to keep company and interact intensely and unceasingly with those like them because they are almost completely isolated and excluded from the society in which they have found refuge. Despite the fact that their dense relations help them survive, or ‘get by’ in the new environment of the host country, at the same time
they facilitate the perpetuation of their social isolation and do not contribute to changing their circumstances, or help them ‘get ahead’ (Briggs as mentioned in Warren et al. 2001, p. 9). Loizos, therefore, asks, no doubt rhetorically, whether these refugees, precisely because of the dense relations established among themselves, are ‘social capitalists’ (2002). The answer cannot but be negative if the term ‘capitalist’ is to retain some of its usual meaning. This specific example, then, shows that the identification Putnam has attempted between density of relations and SC cannot be upheld without further elaboration.

Another element which one should scrutinise concerns the cultural dimension in pieces of research about SC, particularly of each specific field under research. Typical in this sense is the article by Martin Lindström (2003) about the relation between SC and smoking in southern Sweden. The measurements of that author show the existence of a high rate of SC among non-smokers and, reversely, low rates among smokers. One cannot but wonder whether measurements of this kind in other social contexts, such as for example in contemporary Greece, would have given similar results. I gather that they would not, because unlike Swedes, smoking in Greece, as current practice demonstrates, is largely considered a socially acceptable activity. Another example of cultural specificity is the specific weight formal and informal relations have, in terms of country and region (Sotiropoulos 2004), and correspondingly the existence of formal and informal SC (Haerpfer et al. 2005). Therefore, are culturally-defined categories that are developed for the purpose of measuring SC and the resulting categorisations universally valid or not? Hence the voices about ‘Western-centric’ bias in the referents of Putnamian SC score a point.

Furthermore, there are problems of designation when measuring SC, particularly in some of its forms. This issue concerns participation in voluntary organizations. This has value in itself, for Putnam, while there is no substantial distinction between the various kinds of participation. This, by contrast, is something necessary, given the inherent lack of clarity that marks the notion of participation. That is why this notion is rejected outright by some sociologists, for example C. Trigilia (2001). Participation is often reckoned on the basis of collated empirical pieces of research that are collected as operational applications of Putnam’s conceptualization of SC. Such is the case with related sections of ‘European Social Survey’ (round one) (see Panagiotopoulou and Papliakou 2007). However, this cannot be accepted. The reason is that there are qualitatively different features in relation to the kind of formal network in which one participates, as well as differences in the form and intensity of the participation, which inherently has a qualitative dimension that is not accounted for. Thus, participation in a choir is qualitatively different from participation in a political organization, in a Masonic lodge, or a scientific association. Still, such differences are not recorded and thus are not considered.

Also, the formal dimension of participation may or may not have relevance to the substantial participation, while the scale of intensity of activation in a network largely remains uncommented upon. However, beyond formal participation there is also the informal social activation, which, as it is not recorded, cannot be appreciated by recourse to the usual quantitative measurements. As far as the latter is concerned, one may presumably accept that it exists and that it must have some significance on SC, although this is something that does not really appear to inconvenience Putnam.

Thus, there appears to be no substantial discussion or research about the discrepancy between the older forms of participation, such as participation in labour unions or other civil society organisations, which admittedly has decreased, or newer forms that are of increasing importance. The latter are, for example, networks linked through the Internet that pertain to social support as well as to consuming patterns. Accordingly, B. Wellman
has supplied proof that the Internet nowadays plays an increasingly important role in the unfolding of networked activities that fall under the SC rubric (see for instance Wellman et al. 2001, Boase et al. 2006). In fact, it may be maintained, as Nan Lin has attempted, that contrary to Putnam’s position there is an increase of participation, which is realised through the activation of networks in cyberspace. These clearly have social repercussions since participants are not restricted to it but move further to express themselves in the more material social life (2003, pp. 211–217, 226–239). Most characteristic in this respect is the case of the ‘Falun Gong’ movement in contemporary China (pp. 217–226).

Another point that demands attention is that often trust is considered identical to SC although such identification has been repeatedly criticised. In other instances, trust is taken as a proxy for SC. Still, the fact of the matter is that despite the attempt to plan large-scale pieces of research to study SC, it remains the case that the information about the latter is drawn from research, primarily or exclusively investigations of attitudes, inappropriate for providing information about SC. Examples of such attitude studies are the ‘Eurobarometer’ pieces of research, and the ‘European Social Survey’ (second round). This last, despite including some questions according to Putnam’s suggestions, does not overcome the inherent restrictions of attitude measurements.

In conclusion, the study of SC places on the agenda the importance of setting anew the framework within which research and analysis must be carried out.

SC on the political agenda

It must be acknowledged that the wider promotion of the contentious notion of SC, the strengthening of its visibility and the broadening of its usage took place through the work of Putnam, who came to influence the US President B. Clinton during the mid-1990s. Clinton incorporated SC in his political agenda and thus, by reflection, the notion’s visibility radically increased as it became a media event in the USA (Harriss 2002, pp. 14–15) and elsewhere; it literally became globalised.

Besides, the newly acquired perceptibility of SC has attracted the attention of those who aspire to find inexpensive, non-economic ways to resolve (so they claim) various social problems related to socio-economic development: in particular, problems linked to mobilisation of resources and economic competition, as well as to quality of life (see Woolcock 1998, p. 172). Here various national and transnational organisations, politicians and political parties, national governments, the World Bank, the OECD, the European Commission, etc., are involved. This is the reason these institutions adduce, thus giving additional visibility to the concept. It is the cause for rendering the SC notion topical and is precisely what the aforementioned institutions usually invoke (Krishna and Shrader 1999).

In addition to his more global impact, Putnam in the last chapter of his Bowling alone, which bears the rather provocative title ‘Towards an agenda for social capitalists’, explicitly puts forward a programme of specific pursuits in relation to the augmentation of SC in the USA until the year-mark of 2010 (2000, pp. 402–414). He therefore attempts a definitely political and ideological intervention.

However, the inclusion of SC within the political arena, either because of the elective affinity that it arguably has with neo-liberalism, as well as its impact as a mediating force, or of its ‘empowerment’ potential in the context of the ‘third way’ political line (see Law and Mooney 2006b), has highlighted the loss of what initially attracted interest in it. Lack of clarity, no less than credible truisms in Putnam’s version of SC, have rendered the concept attractive to politicians and other ‘experts’ in vagueness and ideological discourse
that have been instrumental, in turn, in reducing it to little more than a buzzword. Besides, it is not accidental that prominent exponents of different political currents are all attracted to it. Thus, the ultra-conservative Francis Fukuyama, a champion of Iraq-type interventions, the ‘third way’ social democrat David Halpern, ‘higher advisor’ to the strategic planning unit of the former British Prime Minister Blair, and of course, the centre-liberal R. Putnam himself, ill-assorted group as they are, are all, nevertheless, joining forces in the pursuit of extending SC as a cure for all social problems and evils.19

Concluding remarks

In this paper, I have drawn on the relevant sociological tradition in order to outline certain approaches to SC, some of them precursors, others more contemporaneous such as those of Bourdieu, Coleman and Portes, so as to show how this concept has been altered. The tremendous increase of interest in SC is largely due to Putnam’s intervention, as I have made clear, while certain aspects of the multifarious critiques that have been voiced against his conceptualisation have been presented above. In addition, the subject of adopting the SC notion by agents of ideological and political intervention was brought to bear upon the discussion. I have formulated the claim that the situation in relation to the SC concept, as it is today, has led to the generalisation of its use on the one hand and, relatedly, to conceptual vagueness and confusion over what it can explain, on the other.

Besides, given the fact that the bulk of economists concerning themselves with SC, too, do not recognise common characteristics between SC and economic capital, and therefore they do not conceive of it as a form of capital (e.g. Fine 2001, Robinson et al. 2002; see also endnote 15), the following issue remains topical: is SC to be considered a systematic concept? That is, can the logic of transparency and cohesion be postulated (noun: capital; adjective: social) or should it be considered as a simple, purely descriptive, metaphor?

The answer to the last question depends, in turn, on the answers to the following questions: does SC behave like the more clearly delineated notion of economic capital? In other words, does what SC stands for accrue interest, is it spent, is it replenished, and in what time-frames do all these actions occur? More specifically, how is it transformed into other forms of capital? And is it possible to talk seriously about ‘social capitalists’? What does such an appellation mean for social stratification, or for the way that social life may be perceived scientifically, or for social conflicts, and the like?

Possibly, the most crucial problem from a social-scientific point of view is related to SC’s ideological dimension and use: the various critiques of it, particularly those that address the Putnamian-inspired version, are not answered. Therefore, there is no substantive answer to the critique, not because here we are facing something that looks similar to the institutionalisation of a Kuhnian type of paradigm. Rather, a substantial answer to sociological critiques is not available because something clear occurs: the discourse about SC now forms part of the ideological–political agenda. I argue that we are envisaging attempts, either to annul critique by not responding to it, or to neutralise it by incorporating it as simply something ‘different’ or merely an ‘exchange of critical views’. In both instances, however, the critiques also refer to SC. This fact is used to attach these, different discourses as they are, without any further elaboration into SC–Putnam’s version and those of his followers, whose exaltation appears to have no end.

The contestation around the use of the term ‘SC’ has to do, I put forward, with the over-extension of its meaning and the consequent slackening of its application. I think that this notion is certainly of sociological interest if its use is suitably restricted in what it may meaningfully, and not rhetorically, substantively explain. In this direction a series
of scholars from the field of sociology converge, such as Swain (2003), Portes (2000), Portes and Mooney (2002), Harriss (2002), Wallace et al. (2005), Piselli (1999), Trigilia (2001), and others. This convergence takes place despite the multi-paradigm character of sociology, which certainly cannot be expected to facilitate it.

Therefore, putting aside attempts to ostracise critiques of SC, as well as of its ideological uses, by deploying the sweeping negative claim that anyone who is concerned with a singular discipline (namely sociology) and does not uncritically accept the alleged interdisciplinarity of ex hypothesi statements inspired by Putnam and the World Bank slides towards scientific provincialism (Woolcock 1998, p. 188, 2001, p. 70), it is worth attempting to substantively reconstruct the notion in a systematic way so that it may yield whatever it can. This can be the task of economic sociologists since, after all, the SC notion has its roots in economic sociology. Hence they have a vested interest in unravelling and clarifying the matter.20

Such a reconstruction could, perhaps, acquire vivre if in the conceptualisation of SC a sociological notion of interest is brought in. Interest, a recent and promising conceptual addition to economic sociology (Swedberg 2005), if seen as a social construction, and as a social mechanism, may help concretise SC in a non-circular fashion, and at the same time situate it in a context where social inequalities have not magically disappeared in favour of some community. Of course, that is the subject of another paper.

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Notes
1. Essentialism: to consider that terms or social phenomena are what they are because underlying them there is some true or real ‘essence’ (Fuchs 2001, pp. 3, 98).
2. Reference to SC was quite limited until 1995–1996 (about 40 articles until that date, in all, and no books), but thereafter, over the last 10 years, there has been an explosion of books and articles that mention SC in their title. I estimate that presently there are over 40 volumes, and more than 2,000 social-scientific articles in English that bear the phrase ‘social capital’ in their title. This has come about from searching just through electronic search engines in providers of full-text electronic versions of journals. Also, an e-search of the ‘Proquest Digital Dissertation’ database (accessed on the 25th of June 2007) showed that 411 dissertations (almost all PhD theses, and in English) had the phrase ‘social capital’ inscribed in their title. The first of these theses was dated back in 1971. All the remaining 410 were from 1989 and after. Of these 410, 129 were completed during the last two years; 288 during the last five years; 389 during the last 10 years.
3. The dimension of (exploitative) social relations is sine qua non for Marx for the emergence of capital. Thus, we know that the means of production and subsistence, while they remain the property of the immediate producer, are not capital. They become capital only under circumstances in which they serve at the same time as means of exploitation and subjection of the labourer (Marx in Capital, Vol. 2, as quoted in Fisher 1896, p. 512).
4. By SC Marx means the total capital available in any given industrial or modern society, which consists of the aggregate of the various distinct and diverse individual capitals. The sum of capitals is characterised as SC since the total of the society’s members is directly or indirectly involved in its creation through the division of labour (see Marx 1976, pp. 776–782). See also the related presentation in Law and Mooney (2006a), pp. 38–40).
5. Trust is reliance, as Jones notes (2001, p. 15917).
6. It has been reported that the formulation ‘SC’ first emerged in the work of economists, such as Alfred Marshall (referred by Grootaert and Bastelaer 2001, p. 18) and John Hicks, in order to describe the distinction between temporary and permanent stocks of physical capital (Woolcock 1998, pp. 159, 198).
7. Farr (2004) in his investigation of SC’s conceptual history has shown that Hanifan’s ideas were intellectually related to the critical pragmatism of John Dewey. Dewey himself firstly explicitly referred to SC in 1900 (Farr 2004, p. 17).

8. According to a similar formulation SC is ‘the aggregate of actual or potential resources that are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition’ (Bourdieu 2001, pp. 102–103).

9. Bourdieu’s conceptualisation of SC which, as Fine (2007), p. 49) puts it, attempts to bind the relational and the contextual dimension entails a notion of capital in its fluid moment. However, it is object that such fluidity cannot be carried over into market-like exchange; ‘non-market relations cannot be reduced to comparable quantification’ (p. 49).

10. Coleman obviously ignored that Bourdieu had previously reflected on SC as the former fails to give relevant bibliographical references to the latter’s work. Still, it is interesting that Bourdieu and Coleman are interconnected by the fact that they both have worked on aspects of sociology of education (Tondi 2005), while both have been elaborating on the notion SC in relation to their theories from within this field.

11. The finding that there is a negative aspect in, or ‘dark side’ of, SC has also been stated by other social scientists, e.g. by James Putzel (1997), Carlo Trigilia (2001), and John Harries (2002).

12. In the 16 already recorded forms of non-economic capital (Svendsen and Svendsen 2003, p. 627), an additional two may be added: ‘spiritual’ capital (Malloch 2003, Berger and Hefner n.d.), and ‘fraternal’ capital (Sharad 2004).


14. The well-known Granovetter distinction between weak and strong ties, which correspond, respectively, to relations that one may have with one’s ‘friends of friends’, or the bonds between the members of a family and close friends, has been utilised to formulate the distinction between ‘bridging’ and ‘bonding’, as forms of SC. Analogously to the weak and strong ties distinction, the first form operates as a ‘bridge’ between loosely-connected different social groups, while the second one operates by strengthening the cohesion of the members of a primary or close group and thus to ‘bind’ it; see in Granovetter (1973, 1983) and in Svendsen (2006).

15. Often, modern economists are inclined to see in SC, mostly in its Putnamian variant as it is more available, a metaphor. However, they reject it as a form of capital as well as the usefulness of the analogy by pointing out that it is inherently unable to increase economic value or productivity (as K. Arrow maintains, mentioned in Streeten 2002, p. 7), or that capital stands for a stock of produced or natural factors of production that are expected to yield productive services for some time’ (as Solow argues, mentioned in Streeten 2002, p. 7); SC cannot compare with this. On the other hand, other economists have come to recognise SC as a form of capital, but do so, and this is telling, by unquestionably accepting Putnam’s version of it as their premise, e.g. Glaser et al. (2002) or Stiglitz (mentioned in Law and Mooney 2006b, pp. 253–254). Despite attempts to bridge the gap between them, e.g. by Partha Dasgupta (2005), differences remain irreconcilable.

16. Journal Stato e Mercato, 57 (December), 1999 – the articles are by Arnaldo Bagnasco, Allesandro Pizzorno, Forunata Piselli and Carlo Trigilia (correspondingly pages 351–372, 373–394, 395–3418 and 419–440). Later on, most of these articles became available in English, but they have not been known widely.

17. According to a recent Eurostat study, Greece’s population ranks highest in smoking among the EU-25 countries (2006).

18. Haerpfer et al. (2005) are of the opinion that only formal SC can be measured. The adoption of such a distinction, namely, between formal and informal SC in relation to appropriateness of research methods, helps to highlight that informal SC can be studied by non-measurable and, in particular, ethnographic methods. In this direction certain mobility has surfaced; see in Svendsen (2006) and in Koniordos (2005).

19. Specifically, SC in Halpern (2005) is definitely a recipe calling for non-economic solutions to social problems. A recipe, that is, which also incorporates the agenda and the discourse of the so-called ‘third way’: i.e. notions such as social participation, social cohesion, social inclusion, community, all that which supposedly lead to the strengthening of civicness and in this sense of SC, too.

20. In fact, economic sociologists have already taken up the challenge. For example, in his book on SC, on which I have not expounded, due to lack of space, Nan Lin (2003) has formulated an interesting attempt to analyse SC as a form of capital analogous to other forms, particularly to...
economic capital. In subsequent work (Lin 2005, 2006), he proceeds to further explore SC’s bases in networks.

References


