

# The Community Quest<sup>1</sup>

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Ferdinand Tönnies' book *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft* (1887, translated into English as *Community and Society* 1957) is probably as despised as it is admired, if not more, and has been a constant source of dispute and inspiration for more than a century. Its conceptual construct is, to borrow Johan Asplund's (1991, p. 9) words, "probably the most long-lasting and fundamental as well as the most yielding dualism of sociology". Asplund also claims that the book "stands as a kind of turnstile between two epochs, the 'pre-modern' and the 'modern'" (p. 40). In similarly grand words, James S. Coleman (1993) ascribes a central role to Tönnies' concepts in the evolution of sociology as a science and in the analysis of modernity. There are numerous similar dichotomies and dualisms which can be associated with the *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft* dualism. Already Charles P. Loomis, who translated Tönnies' book in the 1950s, added to his introduction a section on the typological tradition, in which *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft* is compared with models of Emile Durkheim, Charles H. Cooley, Robert Redfield, Howard Becker, Pitirim A. Sorokin, Max Weber and Talcott Parson, and the list of sociological concepts which can find a place in Tönnies' overarching dualism appears endless.

So what is this contested overarching dualism about? Essentially, as Asplund asserts, it is about the modernisation of society, the 'Great Transformation' leading towards a 'rational reconstruction of society' as expressed by Coleman (1993). There was a kind of society in the past, socially constructed in a certain way, and now we have entered (or are in the process of entering) a new type of society which differs in significant regards. Particularly, debates occur around which values we win and which we lose in this process. Other debates concern how society should respond to the changes, and some question the whole idea of the linear dualistic model and the determinism it implicates. Barry Wellman (1979) captures the entire issue as *the Community Question*, he himself taking the position that it is originally based on false assumptions and an unjustified fear of the unknown. According to Wellman (1988, p. 82), "It is likely that pundits have worried about the impact of social change on communities ever since human beings ventured beyond their caves", and

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he mentions Hobbes and Machiavelli as earlier examples than the 19<sup>th</sup> century's reaction to industrialisation.

Although Wellman argues that the network society now enables liberation from the old constraining imposed communities, which would in a way provide a final answer to the Community Question, new waves of community concerns continue to roll up. In parallel to the academic disputes over the nature and legitimacy of 'community' in modern society, the fear of social fragmentation is also present in policy discourses and, particularly, in urban planning and design practices. It is tempting to think of it as a community *quest* rather than question.

In this chapter, the *Community Quest* and its implications for social processes in urban neighbourhoods are explored. The first section introduces the backgrounds of the Community Quest, presenting and discussing different views of the consequences of modernity. Special attention is then given to the concept of social capital, which represents a contemporary 'wave of community concern'. The third section deals with community issues from a local urban neighbourhood perspective, developing the notion of togetherness.

## Social consequences of modernity

What Tönnies describes as the move from *Gemeinschaft* to *Gesellschaft*, what Coleman calls the Great Transformation, and what is the origin of Wellman's Community Question – i.e. what is framing and explaining the *Community Quest* – can also simply be captured in the notion of *modernity*, at least if one adopts Anthony Giddens' broader definition of the notion. As Giddens (1991, p. 1) notes, modernity has attained renewed interest since the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. While many social theorists (notably Jean-François Lyotard) focus on the 'postmodern' condition, Giddens, together with, e.g., Ulrich Beck and Scott Lash, disagree that modernity is now a passed epoch of social evolution. Giddens therefore prefers to use the terms *late* modernity or *high* modernity for what others view as postmodernity<sup>3</sup>. Giddens' conceptualisation of modernity describes a process of social transformation, primarily in the 'Western' world, starting in the Enlightenment and accentuated by the 19<sup>th</sup> century's industrial revolution as well as more contemporary changes discussed as globalisation and the rise of the information society.

The modern world is a 'runaway world': not only is the *pace* of social change much faster than in any prior system, so also is its *scope*, and the *profoundness* with which it affects pre-existing social practices and modes of behaviour.

(Giddens, 1991, p. 16)

The most fundamental tendency of modernity, according to Giddens (1990; 1991), is the dual process of extensionality (connected to macro-structural globalisation forces) and intentionality (connected to individualisation). This tendency, in turn, is the result of three main types of mechanisms in Giddens' theoretical framework:

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<sup>3</sup> Giddens also elaborates using Ulrich Beck's terms 'radical modernity' and 'reflexive modernity' to emphasise different aspects in which later phases of modernity differ from earlier ones. Lash, on his side, has launched 'second modernity' as an alternative to postmodernity.

1. *Separation of time and space.* In pre-modern settings, time and space were connected through the 'situatedness' of place. In modern times, new means of measuring time and space – mechanical clocks, standardised time systems, geographical coordinates, etc. – 'emptied' the two dimensions of their contexts and qualitative meanings, which also led to their separation.
2. Time-spatial *disembedding* of social relations. Partly as a consequence of the separation of time and space, social relations have been 'lifted out' of place (local contexts and temporal situations). Instead of previous *facework* commitments (face-to-face relations) we now rely on *abstract systems* and *faceless* commitments. There are two types of abstract systems: (a) *symbolic tokens*, such as money, and (b) *expert systems*, i.e. trust in systems we cannot comprehend or control.
3. Personal and institutional *reflexivity*. Enhanced reflexivity, by which no convention is exempted from being subjected to repeated evaluation, is an endemic source of uncertainty as well as self-determination among both individuals and organisations. "Modernity's reflexivity refers to the susceptibility of most aspects of social activity, and material relations with nature, to chronic revision in the light of new information or knowledge."

### **Apocalypse, discontent and liberation**

Like most contemporary critical social theorists, Giddens acknowledges modernity as both a liberation and a risk project. Although essentially optimistic about the possibilities of happily overcoming the crises of modern civilisation, he also reminds us of the apocalypse lurking around the corner if we fail, paraphrasing Jonathan Schell's dystopic prospects of the consequences of a nuclear war (Giddens, 1990, p. 173):

On the other side of modernity, as virtually no one on Earth can any longer fail to be conscious, there could be nothing but a 'republic of insects and grass', or a cluster of damaged and traumatized human social communities.

Although "Life has always been a risky business, fraught with dangers" (Giddens, 1991, p. 29), the kind of risks we face today and the way they influence our lives is new to humanity. In his book *Risk Society*, Ulrich Beck (1986/1992) discusses what could be called the time-spatial disembedding of risks (borrowing Giddens' concepts). Thus, many of the dangers of modern life come to our awareness, not through direct perception or as tangible threats we can relate to through our own experiences, but rather through "a *scientized* consciousness" (p. 28) of hidden causalities (eco-system collapses, nuclear wars, pandemic disease, etc.). Moreover, what generates the worst threats is the modern society itself (Beck, 1986/1992, p. 183):

society today is *confronted by itself* through its dealings with risks. [...] Modernity has even taken over the role of its counterpart - the tradition to be overcome, the natural constrain to be mastered. It has become the threat *and* the promise of emancipation from the threat that it creates itself.

Mikael Wiehe, a Swedish progressive singer and songwriter, wrote a song which became a symbol of the risk society in connection to our nuclear power

referendum 1980. The first and last of the song's seven verses capture the striking metaphor:

It started as a shake on the lower deck  
It filled us with surprise rather than with fear  
We never really figured out how the ship began to leak  
They said it was the most modern unsinkable ship in the world

[...]

Then the orchestra played 'Nearer, My God, to Thee'  
It felt a bit silly but yet so characteristic of our time  
We have lost the last ounce of hope  
We sink to the bottom as we stand, but the flag rises to the top

(translation of Mikael Wiehe's song *Titanic (Andraklasspassagerarens sista sång)*, 1978)

The story of the Titanic is an effective simile of the civilisation sinking under the weight of its own self-content. As established by Jacques Attali, reflecting in *Le Monde* on the incredible success of the latest big Titanic movie in 1998 (here quoted in Bauman, 2006, p. 12):

*Titanic* is us, our triumphalist, self-congratulating, blind, hypocritical society, merciless towards its poor - a society in which everything is predicted except the means of predicting... (W)e all guess that there is an iceberg waiting for us, hidden somewhere in the misty future, which we will hit and then go down to the sounds of music...

Like both Giddens and Beck, Zygmunt Bauman is also highly critical of how the modernity project has developed. His book *Postmodernity and its Discontents* (1997) rephrases Sigmund Freud's *Civilization and its Discontents* from 1930, which captures some of the most fundamental ideological constructs behind modernity. According to Bauman, the same core values of beauty, purity and order remain but the attitudes to safety and freedom have changed. "Civilized man", Freud suggests, "has exchanged some part of his chances of happiness for a measure of security" (quoted in Bauman, 1997, p. 8). Bauman turns this around, claiming that "postmodern men and women exchanged a portion of their possibilities of security for a portion of happiness" (p. 3). Today, Bauman argues, "individual freedom rules supreme; it is the value by which all other values came to be evaluated, and the benchmark against which the wisdom of all supra-individual rules and resolutions are to be measured" (p. 3).

And as Bauman analyses the later phase of modernity, the striving for individual freedom has so far been counterproductive, resulting in a sacrifice of the security of a universalistic welfare state as well as, paradoxically, in *limited* individual freedom. This criticism is particularly an attack on the neoliberal policies of public 'deregulations', which he asserts are not at all about reducing society's regulations, but are rather merely a matter of transferring public expenditures "from caring to guarding, from the welfare state to lock-up state" (Bauman, 1997, p. 217, quoting Martin Woollacott). Bauman notes that a growing number of marginalised people are being excluded from the 'freedom' provided in the modern consumption society, but also that the resulting inequalities, tensions and fear deprive the 'liberated' elite from much of their

gains: “somewhere along this road, the joy of free choice fades while fear and anxiety gather force. The freedom of the free requires, as it were, the freedom of all” (p. 204).

In spite of his overall distrustful tone, Bauman (1997) ends his book by expressing a reserved hope for postmodernity in its ability for self-critical reflexivity, something that is missing in earlier stages of modernity: “this is perhaps the best available protection against the trap in which modern political attempts at community construction used to fall so often – that of promoting oppression in the guise of emancipation” (p. 208). Reflexivity also is a central notion in Giddens and Beck’s modernity theory, and holds a central role in Paul Lichterman’s theory of social spiralling, which will be presented on page 41.

Barry Wellman advocates a more optimistic view on modernity, suggesting that it allows liberation from constraining bonds and traditions and at the same time a possibility to find social support and collective identities in the form of community membership. His frequently cited article *The Community Question* (1979) outlines three community discourses which have dominated the debate one after the other:

1. *Community Lost*. The pioneering community theorists’ fear of losing the virtues of the local communities long dominated the sociologists’ modernity debate.
2. *Community Saved*. Empirical studies of urban neighbourhoods from the mid-20th century identified surprisingly vivid communities, with many typical ‘Gemeinschaft’ characteristics. The community saved argument was also partly a reaction to the former pessimistic view of urbanisation.
3. *Community Liberated*. The whole idea of searching for local, densely knit and tightly bound community networks has since been questioned. Many trends instead point to a development of new kinds of communities, liberated from the pre-modern structures of local solidarities.

Wellman (1979; 1988) opposes the community lost argument, acknowledges the community saved argument as partly true, and presents different proofs to support the community liberated argument, i.e. that most urbanites rely on social networks which are not neighbourhood-based. As phrased by William J. Mitchell (1999, p. 5): “The old social fabric – tied together by enforced commonalities of location and schedule – no longer coheres”.

### **Gemeinschaft and Gesellschaft**

The Gemeinschaft–Gesellschaft dichotomy is often conceived as a polarity, i.e. where the two concepts represent two poles of the evolutionary trajectory we refer to as ‘modernisation’. According to this model, we are somewhere along the path from the starting point defined as ‘pure’ Gemeinschaft and the end point of ‘pure’ Gesellschaft. Such a model has several weaknesses. First, the poles of the journey appear to be very hypothetical. There is no given place or moment in history representing pure Gemeinschaft, and pure Gesellschaft remains a science fiction construct of a distant future. Both can be imaged in diverse ways as abstractions, but will lose their consistency when con-

cretised. If there are no clear start and end points, the linear polarity model is far from optimal. Second, it implies a determinist view of a 'natural' and inevitable direction of societal development, which makes further discussion redundant. If it is given that *Gesellschaft* is what we are heading towards and changing direction is not an option, there is little point in discussing alternative destinations. Third, a model of this kind would suggest that the series of states along the line between 'black' and 'white' consists of different nuances of 'grey', i.e. where 'black' and 'white' are mixed in different proportions. While this is an accurate model for many other cases, such as colour experiences, it is more difficult to apply to a complex system with numerous variables.

A better model for conceptualising the *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft*, thus, is viewing it as a dualism in the way that the two concepts represent different types of features or even different perspectives which are simultaneously present in each given situation. This means that each real situation can be analysed from a perspective of *Gemeinschaft* as well as of *Gesellschaft*, and it may represent features from both. Asplund (1991, pp. 42-43) emphasises this duality with the metaphor of an optical illusion showing either an old lady or a young woman, depending on how you happen to look at the picture. He concretises his argument by commenting on two classical anthropological studies on the Mexican village Tepotzlán. While Robert Redfield describes it in '*Gemeinschaft*' terms as a warm 'folk society', Oscar Lewis pictures the community as rather unhappy and governed by an egoistic '*Gesellschaft*' culture. As Asplund (p. 44-46) tells the story, Redford's response to Lewis' accusations of biased romanticism was that it all depends on the analytical perspective. Asplund's suggestion is that the two apparently opposite *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft* narratives can coexist in the very same empirical material, and appear differently depending on the way the data is viewed.

In fact, even Tönnies denies the existence of any pure forms of *Gemeinschaft* or *Gesellschaft*. In his distinction between the two concepts, he focuses on the inner driving forces behind action, distinguishing between natural will (*Wesenswill*) and rational will (*Kürwill*), and in a posthumously published article he explains that:

...on the one hand there is the simple emotional (impulsive) and, therefore, irrational volition and action [which Tönnies connects to *Gemeinschaft*], whereas on the other there is the simple rational volition and action in which the means are arranged, a condition which often stands in conflict with the feelings [connected to *Gesellschaft*]. *Between these two extremes all real volition and action takes place.*

(Tönnies 1887/1957, p. 248, my emphasis)

As Asplund's metaphor of the optical illusion describes, the multifaceted character of society does not hinder 'pure *Gemeinschaft*' or 'pure *Gesellschaft*' narratives, although any description should be understood as one of several alternative reduced interpretations of reality; not that *any* interpretation is possible in a given situation, but *many*. Even highly 'biased' and 'extreme' interpretations may be valid and important for a broad understanding of the possibilities. This is one reason why fiction could be a valuable source of inspiration also for science. Science fiction literature may be particularly interesting, as it deals relatively unconditionally with scenarios of future social

systems. Wellman (1988, referring to his own conference paper from 1987) points out that a selection of classical sci-fi novels may reveal extreme *Gesellschaft* (alienating hyper-capitalism) as well as extreme *Gemeinschaft* (post-apocalyptic neo-tribalism) scenarios.

I have the feeling that, overall, it is easier to end up in dystopias rather than utopias when trying to imagine societies characterised towards extreme forms of *Gemeinschaft* or *Gesellschaft*. In a hypothetical refined *Gemeinschaft* community, there is not even an embryo of distant governments, laws or formal procedures to ensure universal justice principles. Everything is based on relations of mutual recognition and social units are therefore small. Life is collective and roles are largely imposed on individuals. For those who are content with the traditions and comfortable with the roles they are given, there is much safety and embracement. However, for deviants opposing the collective rule, the options are few. This is also the point of departure for many documentary or fictive descriptions of the inhibitive atmosphere of close-knit, narrow-minded, traditional local communities. One illustrative example is the fictive community of Jante, well-known among Scandinavians, as described by Norwegian novelist Aksel Sandemose in *A fugitive crosses his tracks* (1933). The famous *Law of Jante* has become an effective reference when it comes to displaying how social community structures restrain tolerance and individual freedom, its quintessence expressed well enough by its sixth commandment: “Thou shalt not presume that thou art more than us” (Sandemose, 1933). For those who feel oppressed by *Gemeinschaft*, *Gesellschaft* may attract with its promise of liberation: mobility (social and spatial), plurality, and anonymity as an option.

When it comes to extreme *Gesellschaft* scenarios, the individual’s liberation from constraining communities easily gets stained by dystopic side effects. A hypothetical refined *Gesellschaft* society is typically conceived in terms of alienation and hyper-capitalism; alienation referring to the lack of reliable bonds, resulting in a underlying feeling of distrust in personal relations as well as institutions (how can an organisation be trusted if there are no personal relations), and hyper-capitalism referring to a society in which every aspect of human life is commodified and traded on a global market and the only role of public institutions is to safeguard the right to make a profit. Fictive illustrations of extreme *Gesellschaft* futures include alienated totalitarian mass societies, like in Franz Kafka’s *The Trial* or George Orwell’s *1984*. Another type of scenario is prospected in the corporate-driven, pluralistic and highly polarised chaotic high-tech futures of the so-called ‘cyberpunk’ literature. An interesting *Gesellschaft* model is framed by the philosophy called *objectivism*, founded by the Russian-American novelist Ayn Rand. In her ideal world, all social exchange follows the same logic as trade on an open market, so that “the actor must always be the beneficiary of his action and that man must act for his own rational self-interest” (Rand, 1999, p. 82 – from *The virtue of selfishness*, 1964). In other words, altruism is banned and social relations can be regarded as a form of agreement of reciprocal commitments, only valid as long as both parties can foresee any personal gain from the pact. The only moral responsibility, according to Rand’s *objectivism*, is the responsibility to strive for one’s own personal benefits; any collectively imposed ideals or obligations are a threat to the individual freedom. If responsibility is instead understood as the individual’s moral responsibility for *others’* well-being, it could

be asserted that “the notion of responsibility is unknown within Gesellschaft”, as Asplund suggests (1991, p. 132).

Now, as has been discussed, ‘pure’ Gemeinschaft or Gesellschaft societies are hypothetical abstractions. Objectivist cynics may claim that there is no community free from egoism, and that even seemingly self-sacrificing acts are instrumental means to satisfy people’s own interests – in essence that each person is his/her own universe and that Gemeinschaft is an illusion. A diametrical ontological standpoint is captured in John Donne’s famous phrase from 1623: “No man is an island, entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main.” Or, as poetically formulated by Zygmunt Bauman (1997, p. 202): “The voice of responsibility is the birth-cry of the human individual.” In a way, such standpoints render Gesellschaft an illusion, as it traces social moral and collective dependency in any seemingly individual action. The compromise, thus, is that any society or social exchange situation involves elements of both Gemeinschaft and Gesellschaft, depending on which perspective you look from. In times when policy is heavily dominated by a view of humans as essentially self-oriented consumption units striving primarily for maximisation of their own direct benefits (i.e. the idea of *homo oeconomicus*), it is worth reminding that even the father of liberal economy – Adam Smith – was highly concerned about the *social* dimensions of rationality. As pointed out by Michael Woolcock (1998, p. 160) as well as Bo Rothstein (2003, pp. 114-115), Smith’s book *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, which has been hiding in the backwaters of the classical *The Wealth of Nations*, is dedicated to exploring the important roles of morality and collective norms in human behaviour.

### **Safety and freedom**

Modernity is often characterised as a process of liberation, in the sense that individuals gain increasing freedom. It is also typically described as a dialectic process, in which the gain of freedom corresponds to a loss of safety. As Daniel Memmi (2006, p. 291) summarises the classical theoretical works of Tönnies, Weber, Durkheim and Simmel: “There is a general trade-off between security and freedom, and social evolution has gradually favored mobility over belonging”. However, both safety and freedom are ambiguous concepts. Going back to Zygmunt Bauman and his book *Postmodernity and its Discontents*, drawing on Sigmund Freud he characterises the early modernity as a safety project. This means increased safety for the exposed working class in terms of public social security systems and laws protecting human rights. As Bauman (1997) argues, this safety was won at the expense of freedom, and in the postmodern phase of modernity, safety is instead sold off for freedom again: “The postmodern world is bracing itself for life under a condition of uncertainty which is permanent and irreducible” (p. 21).

Moreover, safety and freedom can also be understood as mutually dependent of each other. Referring to William Beveridge, Bauman argues that “individual freedom needs collective protection” (p. 205); i.e. that no one will be truly free if freedom is not for everyone, and that no one will be free without feeling safe. Safety without freedom will also be impossible. Again, in Bauman’s (2001, p. 20) words:



Promoting security always calls for the sacrifice of freedom, while freedom can only be expanded at the expense of security. But security without freedom equals slavery (and in addition, without an injection of freedom, proves to be in the end a highly insecure kind of security); while freedom without security equals being abandoned and lost (and in the end, without an injection of security, proves to be a highly unfree kind of freedom). This circumstance gives philosophers a headache with no known cure. It also makes living together conflict-ridden, as security sacrificed in the name of freedom tends to be other people's security; and freedom sacrificed in the name of security tends to be other people's freedom.

Obviously, the safety–freedom dichotomy is complex and difficult to apply stringently as an analytical framework. If this is attempted, it needs to be defined whose freedom and safety is concerned. It is likely that some groups gain more freedom or safety than others in a social development process. Moreover, it is also necessary to discuss in detail which freedom and safety aspects are involved, i.e. freedom to do what, and safety from which threats. Some kinds of freedom and safety may well stand in opposition to others.

### **Community in a network society?**

The Community Question, as we recognise it in the literature, is first and foremost connected to the 'early modernity' and the social transformations connected to the industrial revolution, involving things such as urbanisation, secularisation, capitalism and the development of democratic welfare states. In later stages of modernity, the fundamental transformations of globalisation and individualisation continue as we enter the so-called network society. According to Manuel Castells (2000b, p. 500), the network society is "characterized by the pre-eminence of social morphology over social action" and that "the power of flows takes precedence over the flows of power". Although these two statements can be found to be somewhat cryptic, they still give a sense of the core ideas Castells presents in his grand trilogy on the Information Age. Backed up by the paradigmatic technological development of microelectronic-based information and genetic engineering, new production and consumption systems, new views on culture and politics as well as new ways of living and relating are emerging with 'networking' as a common theme.

In Castells' (2000a) conceptualisation of the notion, 'networks' are contrasted with 'communes'. While the communes are relatively stable and "anchored in their non-negotiable sets of beliefs", networks are transient and flexible, and have a non-hierarchical structure. "By definition, a network has no centre. It works on a binary logic: inclusion / exclusion" (p. 15). In the network society, there are very low transaction costs involved in accessing information and making new contacts. Contacts and information access are the primary factors for success, for both individuals and organisations. In analogy with Giddens' disembedding and separation of time and space, Castells writes about time becoming timeless (or annihilate) and space of places becoming space of flows (where meanings and functions depend on network processes more than locality). "Indeed", as Michael Sorkin (1992, p. xi) puts it, "recent years have seen the emergence of a wholly new kind of city, a city without a place attached to it".

The clearest materialisation of the network society is the Internet, which has grown from a few hundreds of computers at the beginning of the 1980s to hundreds of millions already by the end of the 1990s (Castells, 2000b, p. 394). There are significant geographical and demographic inequalities in the distribution of Internet usage, as well as important issues of power dominance. Nevertheless, it is a truly worldwide network and possesses a rare kind of freedom. It compresses time and space to an extent that was unimaginable some decades ago, and has opened up for completely new forms of social networking in which body, place and geographical distance are of no importance. With enthusiastic optimism, William J. Mitchell (1999) envisions an *e-topia* where the new digital communication technologies have solved the sustainability dilemmas by replacing physical material with electronic media and reducing the amount of travel and through optimised logistics, intelligent operation systems, and a soft and convenient social transition.

Among the leading scholars on Internet-based social networking we again find Barry Wellman, who coined the notion of the liberated community back in the 1970s. The connection is clear. The 'community liberated' argument is based on the insight that community building in modern times becomes increasingly decoupled from relational and spatial propinquity (see, e.g., Wellman, 1979). As Wellman (2001) suggests, the early modernity involved a transition from door-to-door communities towards more large-distance place-to-place communities, while the past decades' development of communication technologies has opened up for person-to-person communities where geographical distances no longer raise barriers. Moreover, another dimension of community liberation draws from the conclusion that urban social networks often tend to be 'ramified' and loosely bound in contrast to communities where everyone knows each other and it is clear who is inside or outside. Wellman (1979) discusses this in terms of communities no longer being built on solidarity (at least not what Durkheim calls mechanical solidarity) but on networking. Yet another dimension, or a further step in the development of liberated communities, is when networking concerns roles rather than persons. Although all social exchange can be analysed in terms of role playing, the move from face-to-face communication to disembodied interfaces such as the telephone, email, chatting and other online interfaces enables a new kind of autonomy and high 'specialising' in community relationships (see Wellman, 2001).

Maria Bakardjieva (2003) argues that the Internet may in a way be a saviour of the community lost in previous stages of modernity. She launches the notion of 'immobile socialisation' as a (reversed) paraphrasing of Raymond Williams' (*Television, technology and cultural form*, 1974) concept of 'mobile privatisation':

Unlike broadcast technology and the automobile that, according to Williams, precipitated a withdrawal of middle-class families from public spaces of association and sociability into private suburban homes, the Internet is being mobilized in a process of collective deliberation and action in which people engage from their private realm.  
(Bakardjieva, 2003, p. 291)

Tim Brindley illustrates the social transformations since the pre-industrial age by outlining three 'community conceptions' (see Table 1). His distinction be-

tween the modern and postmodern community conceptions relates to Wellman's discussion on role-to-role connections as a development of person-to-person connections. According to Brindley (2003), the postmodern community is "reflecting deeply felt needs for emotional, psychic, or 'ontological' security in a fragmented and chaotic social environment". A perhaps more optimistic translation would be that it is an exploratory play with more or less temporary and specialised identities, while preserving personal autonomy and integrity.

Table 1. Comparisons of three 'community conceptions' (Table 3 in Brindley, 2003)

<b>Type of community</b>	<b>Traditional</b>	<b>Modern</b>	<b>Postmodern</b>
<i>Archetype</i>	Rural village	Housing estate	Stylised image
<i>Properties</i>	Immanent	Selective	Illusory
	Necessary	Voluntary	Spontaneous
	Moral	Conditional	Lifestyle choice
	Close-knit	Loose-knit	Unravalled
<i>Social principle</i>	Social status	Social networks	Social identities

It is questionable whether it is relevant to discuss the postmodern 'community' conception in terms of *community* as it apparently does not involve any stable social relations or obligations, but merely a matter of elusive and exchangeable, arguably also superficial, identities. Actually, Wellman's terminology could also be questioned on the same basis: his 'liberated community' is not really a community insofar that there is no clear closure, no obvious membership, and very sparse density (i.e., a large proportion of 'possible ties' are absent) – in short, the community identity is very vague. Networks thus appears to be a more accurate term than communities. However, in parallel to these liberated networks and transient identities, 'real' communities of dense, close-knit networks exist, in urban neighbourhoods as well as sports clubs and online computer games. It is important to note that Wellman never discards the 'community saved' argument, as his own investigations show that there are examples of traditionally bonding social clusters besides the more typical 'liberated' network structures. He also concludes that "Physical place is thriving", i.e. people continue to prefer face-to-face meetings and experiencing 'real' places even in a world where virtual realities occupy more and more of our time and thought (Wellman, 2001, p. 247).

In line with Jane Jacobs' merciless rejection of the early 20<sup>th</sup>-century community ideologies, today there is massive scepticism among many scholars regarding any ideas of searching for local social bonding. However, in practice, such as when it comes to housing management, the Community Quest is still as valid as it was hundred years ago, if not more so today. While the conflict between individual freedom and social bonding remains a key complication for emancipation-focused debaters affirming the opportunities offered by the hyper-urbanity of the network society, more sceptical debaters worry about new emerging challenges adding to the old ones. Sören Olsson (1991, p. 57) notes that, despite being retrospective, community ideologists are not necessarily conservative or reactionary. Instead, he establishes, they are often

modernists in some regards, supporting both technical development and emancipation from non-egalitarian traditions. The next section continues analysing the Community Quest through exploring the concept of social capital and its many dimensions.

## Social capital

The ongoing Community Quest entered a new phase as the notion of social capital made its broad breakthrough in several academic fields as well as in policy-making during the 1990s. A key contribution to its rapid spread was political scientist Robert D. Putnam's empirical studies of civil society in Italy (Putnam, Leonardi & Nanetti, 1993) and the US (Putnam, 1995; 2000) and its importance for economic development and democracy. Another important contribution to the spread of the social capital concept was the World Bank's interest in it when reformulating their conceptual platforms in the late 1990s (see, e.g., Serageldin, 1996; Dasgupta & Serageldin, 2000; Woolcock & Narayan, 2000; World Bank, 2001). Many, however, especially sociologists, rather associate the notion of social capital with Pierre Bourdieu's capital framework from the 1970s and 1980s (see, e.g., Bourdieu & Passeron, 1970/1990; Bourdieu, 1986), or James S. Coleman's network theories from the late 1980s (Coleman, 1988; 1990). Although representing two very different ontological approaches (Bourdieu being a culturalist and Coleman basically being a rationalist), both focused on how social capital could contribute to an individual's successful educational performance. According to Michael Woolcock (e.g., Woolcock and Narayan, 2000, p. 229), the concept has been reinvented several times in the past, e.g., independently by educational director Lyda J. Hanifan in the 1910s, by urbanist Jane Jacobs in the 1960s and by economist Glenn Loury in the 1970s.

If not representative of all who use social capital as an analytical concept, at least many of the central discussions associated with the notion are clearly connected to Wellman's Community Question and worried concerns of what the 'rational reconstruction of society' will bring for our future (notably, Coleman, 1993; Putnam, 2000). Alejandro Portes is one of those who have concluded that the same problems and processes encompassed by the concept of social capital have been being addressed since long ago under other labels. "Calling them social capital is, to a large extent, just a means of presenting them in a more appealing conceptual garb" (Portes, 1998, p. 21).

### **Brief overview: Social capital in relation to other types of capital**

For everyone who struggles to comprehend different theorists' approaches to capital, I recommend a look at the figure on page 298 in Jaan-Henrik Kain's dissertation (for convenience, presented below as Figure 1). It provides a visual synthesis of a literature review and establishes the World Bank's four-capital framework (which also has a parallel in, e.g., UNDSO's sustainable development indicator themes) as a comprehensive matrix in which other concepts can be placed. As can be assumed from a brief look at Kain's figure, social capital is a particularly contested concept which has been used to describe a wide range of complexly interrelating types of resources.

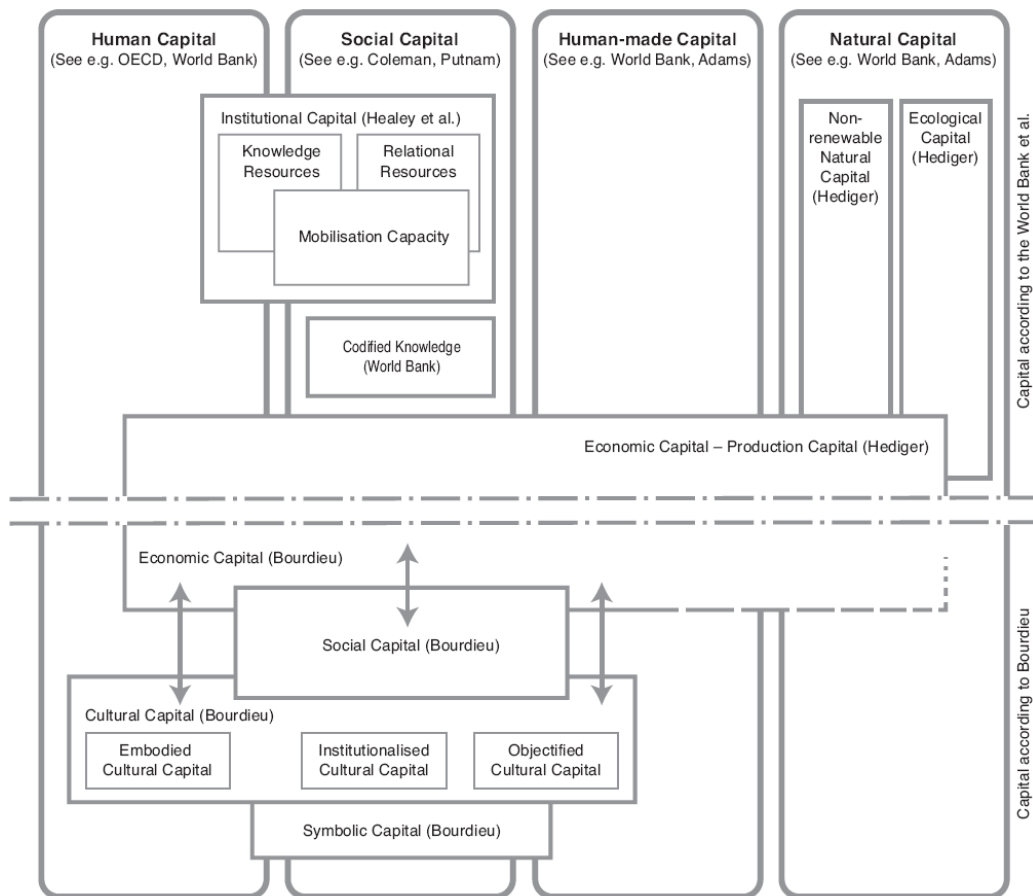


Figure 1. A tentative multi-capital framework, as presented by Kain (2003, p. 298). Based on Bourdieu (1986; 1992), Coleman (1988/2000), Putnam (1993), Serageldin (1996), the World Bank (1996; 2003), OECD (1998), Healey et al. (1999), and Hediger (1999).

Although the World Bank’s four-capital framework is useful in many regards, in the following discussions I will not distinguish between human-made and natural capital but will keep to the common three-capital framework of physical, human and social capital according to Figure 2 (see, e.g., Coleman, 1990; Putnam, 1995; Woolcock, 1998; Ostrom, 2000)<sup>4</sup>.

<sup>4</sup> Actually, Ostrom’s (2000) capital framework distinguishes between human-made and natural capital. However, she regards human, social and physical capital as three types of human-made capital and leaves natural capital out of the comparison.

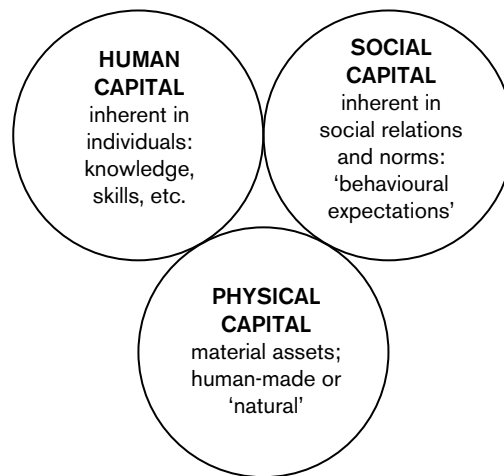


Figure 2. Three basic capital forms as they will be used in this section, provided with brief tentative descriptions.

### What is social capital

Numerous attempts have been made to define social capital in a concentrated and informative way, most of which emphasise the access of other resources or the facilitation of cooperation through 'social expectations' embedded in, e.g., relations, networks, norms or trust. As James S. Coleman (1988, p. 20) so accurately comments:

...social capital constitutes an unanalyzed concept, it signals to the analyst and to the reader that something of value has been produced for those actors who have this resource available and that the value depends on social organization. It then becomes a second stage in the analysis to unpack the concept, to discover what components of social organization contribute to the value produced.

Hence, social capital is not just one specific phenomenon but rather a comprehensive term for collecting diverse forms of causalities producing value through social interaction. A radical statement, drawing particularly on Alejandro Portes' writings (1998; 2000), would be that social capital is no primary resource in itself, but merely a mediator decreasing the transaction cost of the exchange of *other* types of capital, notably human capital. Such a statement is interesting from a theoretical point of view, even though it does not necessarily change the content of the analysis in practice. Moreover, even if much of the actions which are the outcome of social capital can essentially be based on human or other capital resources, the whole point of the social capital concept is that the actions would not occur if it were not for the social expectations. Thus, social capital actualises resources that are, if not essentially novel, at least in the situation otherwise concealed.

Social capital has similarities with physical and human capital. It is productive, i.e. through using the capital you will be able to achieve something beneficial. It can also be invested in social capital. A person can invest time or money to gain trust, new contacts and expectations of favours in return, which

is one of Bourdieu's key messages. As Putnam and many others highlight, collectives and society as a whole can also invest in social capital, e.g. by supporting organisations and infrastructures that facilitate meetings and social networking.

However, there are also several significant differences between social capital and other forms of capital. Unlike both physical and human capital, social capital cannot easily be traded; it is generally more difficult to grasp and it is very difficult, if not impossible, to claim ownership of it. As Coleman (1990, p. 304) writes:

Physical capital is wholly tangible, being embodied in observable material form; human capital is less tangible, being embodied in the skills and knowledge acquired by an individual; social capital is even less tangible, for it is embodied in the relations among persons.

Elinor Ostrom (2000, p. 179) states that "social capital does not wear out with use but rather with disuse". I would like to add that, under many circumstances, social capital not only regenerates but also *generates* through its usage. Even if it can also be argued that accumulated social capital can be consumed in some situations, such as when a favour is 'repaid' in an otherwise cold relationship, it is often probable that every transaction of social capital leads to new contacts, increased trust (strengthened ties), new expectations and/or the development of norms.

Ostrom also emphasises that social capital "is formed over time and is embedded in common understanding rather than in physically obvious structures", to which she adds two notes: first, that common understanding is hard to articulate precisely in language, and second, that it is easily eroded due to changes in the social networks (Ostrom 2000, p. 179). Or, as formulated by Bo Bengtsson et al.: "Like the democracy, collaboration and community must continuously be reclaimed and recreated" (Bengtsson, Svensson & Uggla, 2000, p. 193). I conclude from this that there are two problematic interlinked basic features of social capital. One is the temporal aspect that social capital is evolving and changing in a quite unpredictable way. The other is that social capital is intangible, not embedded in anything we can touch upon, set aside, or trade. It could also be added that its capacities and durability are unknown until being actualised.

Gunnar L. H. and Gert T. Svendsen (2003, p. 609) conclude that "It costs time and energy for actors to build up and subsequently profit from a capital". Certainly, there is some general truth in this statement for social capital also, as it needs time and social interaction to create social networks and trust in social relations. However, I would argue that the statement misses some important conditions. First, social capital is the outcome of interventions (individuals' investments of time and energy), which are often not directly intended for creating social capital. People interact with each other for many different reasons, and the social capital-related benefits this may eventually result in can often be regarded as a by-product rather than the primary motive for interacting. Of course, there may be situations in which investments in social capital are made consciously and purposely with expected repayments in mind. Ronald S. Burt's (1992) networking strategies are an example of such thinking – don't waste energy on contacts which are not optimal for drawing as much benefit as possible from your network. Another example of strategic

social capital investments is the rationale behind web communities such as LinkedIn, explicitly designed to use networking purposely to increase personal opportunities. But these are, I would say, rather exceptional examples of social interaction. My second comment to Svendsen and Svendsen's general statement is that social capital may well benefit others than those who invested in it. For example, a common theme in case studies of collective action is that a limited number of individuals invest a great deal of effort for the common good, which eventually benefits a broader group of people. This is often the case when residents become involved in the management of the open spaces in their residential area. A cornerstone of Putnamian types of theories, linking civil society to democracy and development, is that general trust and norms of reciprocity have an effect on society even outside the networks reproducing it, and that it may even be passed down to following generations.

### **Bourdieu and social capital as a bridge between rationalism and culturalism**

Among economists as well as social scientists, the understanding of social capital normally derives from a rationalistic view of human action. As Kenneth Arrow (2000, p. 4) argues, the term 'capital' itself is perhaps misleading as it brings to mind something that has an extension in time, that involves a deliberate sacrifice in the present for future benefit, and that is alienable and can be transferred to someone else's ownership. However, when it comes to social capital, none of this is fully true. Arrow maintains that "much of the reward for social interactions is intrinsic – that is, the interaction is the reward – or at least that the motives for interaction are not economic" (Arrow, 2000, p. 3). Instead of focusing on individuals' actions and trying to connect them to investments in or withdrawal of social capital by rational choice, a more hermeneutic approach would be to analyse the cultural and normative structures behind acts and social relations.

James S. Coleman (1988) presents social capital as a conceptual tool for analysing individuals' actions as a product of both internal rational will and circumstances in the external social and cultural environment. His point of departure is the clash between two diametrical theoretical approaches to social action. The first approach, generally supported by sociologists, emphasises (and in Coleman's view overemphasises) the social environment as a determinant of the individual's behaviour. The second approach, supported by most economists, believes in the rational will and self-determined independent individuals. Coleman says he is driven by a commitment to find a way to mediate between these two intellectual streams, as he believes both have their respective advantages and disadvantages. His aim is to "import the economists' principle of rational action for use in the analysis of social systems proper, including but not limited to economic systems, and to do so without discarding social organization in the progress" (Coleman, 1988, p. 15). It needs to be noted, however, that in many other authors' views, Coleman himself is a representative of the more rationalistic stream of theorists, rather than a mediator between rationalists and culturalists.

This is the view of Svendsen and Svendsen (2003), for example, who instead argue that Bourdieu should be credited for mediating between rationalists and culturalists. Svendsen and Svendsen launch the term Bourdieueconomics ("in



respectful remembrance of the great French sociologist”) for the new way of thinking of economic development as neither purely based on rational individuals’ choices nor only based on structural cultural patterns. According to them, Bourdieu’s discussion of social capital bridges the epistemological gap between rationalistic economists and culturalistic sociologists, by adding the cultural dimension to the theory of capital.

In short, a Bourdieueconomics certainly acknowledges that actors on the one hand have strong interests and consciously seek to plan and execute strategies to fulfil these. However, on the other hand, as products of individual and collective history, these strategies should be defined as relatively reasonable (*raisonnables*) rather than rational in the absolute meaning of the word. (Svendsen & Svendsen 2003, p. 615).

In other words, Svendsen and Svendsen feel that Bourdieu has managed to do exactly what Coleman has claimed is his mission.

Bourdieu’s capital theory is consistently described in a frequently cited article titled *The Forms of Capital* (1986)<sup>5</sup>. With individuals’ achievements and benefits of education as a structuring example, Bourdieu discusses the shortcomings of traditional economic and social theory and proposes a set of new capital concepts, which actually span over human and social as well as physical capital according to more traditional terminologies (see Figure 1). Besides his reflections on social and economical capital, which have already been mentioned, Bourdieu introduces the complementary concept of cultural capital, which he suggests exists in three distinguishable states:

- (a) *Embodied cultural capital*, which is inherently bound to an individual, such as what we call cultivation, and closely reminiscent of the more widely used notion of human capital.
- (b) *Objectified cultural capital*, which instead can be described as a type of human-made physical capital, loaded with cultural meaning. Bourdieu mentions pieces of art and instruments as examples of things that give the owner a certain status. However, if cultural capital is not regarded as an asset only for a traditional ‘cultural elite’, any artefacts such as accessories, clothes and other everyday attributes must also be thought of as objectified cultural capital insofar as they give the carrier a special cultural or social status.
- (c) *Institutionalised cultural capital*, which is described as a special form of objectified cultural capital, confers on the owner “imposed recognition” due to formal qualifications, such as academic degrees.

Overall, Bourdieu’s cultural capital seems to be mainly related to human capital, in the meaning that it connects to the individual’s identity and abilities. One important point, however, is that these abilities and identities exist within a social (cultural) context, and lose their meaning if removed from this context. In other words, status is a social phenomenon; much of what we may see

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<sup>5</sup> As far as I know, this was the first English translation of Bourdieu’s model of economic, social and cultural forms of capital. His theories of different capital forms were previously presented in French, e.g. in the book *La distinction: critique sociale du jugement* (1979) and in the introduction to *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales*, vol. 31, nr. 1 (1980), titled “Le Capital Social”.

as human capital is valid only in a social and cultural environment, where others will decode and understand it to appreciate the attributes in question. As a consequence, these attributes can also be discussed in terms of *symbolic capital*, which is another notion commonly tied to Bourdieu. In the article mentioned, Bourdieu does not regard symbolic capital as a form alongside the other forms (i.e. cultural, social and economic capital). Instead, he defines it as any form of capital that is “apprehended symbolically, in a relationship of knowledge or, more precisely, of misrecognition and recognition” (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 255).

One of Bourdieu’s main points in the article is that *capital is transmissible*, i.e. that it may be ‘transmitted’ from one form to another, such as when a family uses its economic capital, social networks and cultivation to help its children get a good education, which in turn repays them in social and cultural status as well as in economic wealth. Thus, capital reproduces itself over time and, theoretically, can always be analysed in terms of economic capital. It can also be analysed in terms of power. As suggested by Kain (2003, p. 294, 300), one of Bourdieu’s most valuable contributions to capital theory is his emphasis on how power is exercised in all capital transactions, which means that it is a much more intricate and complicated game than a mere matter of investing labour time.

#### **Putnam and social capital in the Community Quest**

With the publications *Making Democracy Work* (1993) and *Bowling Alone* (2000), Robert D. Putnam has made an impact vouchsafed to few social scientists. This impact consists not only of the remarkable breakthrough of social capital as a popular notion, but also of a wave of general interest in civic society and the role it may play in economic growth and democracy. It can also be asserted that Putnam’s re-launching of the social capital concept is an important representation of the latest phase in the ongoing Community Quest. However, earlier uses of the social capital concept are also reminiscent of the classical Community Question. As expressed by Alejandro Portes and Julia Sensenbrenner already before Putnam entered the stage:

Coleman’s analysis of social capital sounds a note of consistent praise for the various mechanisms that lead to behave in ways different from naked self-interest. His writing adopts at times a tone of undisguised nostalgia, reminiscent of Tönnies’ longing for the times when there was more social closure and when *gemeinschaft* had the upper hand.  
(Portes & Sensenbrenner, 1993, p. 1338)

The core message in Putnam’s writings is that civic culture is good for society, which is basically neither a new nor a controversial idea. What is both innovative and subject to heavy criticism, though, is the way the conceptual and methodological frameworks are constructed to prove this causality.

Most reviewers are impressed by the rigorous collection of empirical data, essentially quantitative census statistics, underpinning both of Putnam’s seminal studies, which give weight to the arguments presented. In the first study, Putnam, together with Leonardi and Nanetti, advances the hypothesis that horizontal networks (which “bring together agents of equivalent status and power”) are positive for a society’s development, while vertical networks (“linking unequal agents in asymmetric relations of hierarchy and depend-

ence”) lead to stagnation (Putnam, Leonardi & Nanetti, 1993, p. 173). Their empirical analyses, based on a range of social, institutional and economic statistics from Italy, show that the northern parts of the country, with long traditions of civic engagement (e.g. guilds, mutual aid societies, cooperatives and political movements), have developed in much more beneficial ways (higher economic growth, better health, more satisfied population, etc.) than the regions of the south, which are more associated with vertical types of networks such as the Catholic church and the mafia. Comparisons are also made to other places in the world, for example drawing on Douglas North’s analysis of the differences in institutional and economic performance between North America (“benefited from their decentralized, parliamentary English patrimony”) and Latin America (“cursed with centralized authoritarianism, familism, and clientelism that they inherited from late medieval Spain”) (p. 179). According to the authors, the horizontal networks are essential parts of social capital, while the vertical ones are instead destroying it (pp. 174-175):

A vertical network, no matter how dense and no matter how important for its participants, cannot sustain social trust and cooperation. [...]

In the vertical patron-client relationship, characterized by dependence instead of mutuality, opportunism is more likely on the part of both patron (exploitation) and client (shirking). [...]

...the fact that vertical networks are less helpful than horizontal networks in solving dilemmas of collective action may be one reason why capitalism turned out to be more efficient than feudalism in the eighteenth century, and why democracy has proven more effective than autocracy in the twentieth century.

Several mechanisms are suggested to explain the positive contributions of civil society (i.e. the horizontal networks) to overall progress (pp. 173-174):

- it can provide social control, i.e. superintendence and punishment for defection from the common norms
- it can foster norms of reciprocity
- it can provide an infrastructure for information
- it can provide examples of successful cooperation for the future

*Bowling Alone* (Putnam, 2000; see also Putnam, 1995) is based on studies of values, socialisation and involvement in different types of non-governmental associations in the US during the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Putnam’s general conclusion is that social capital has eroded and that this poses a serious threat to American society. The conceptual framework from the Italian study is partly advanced as a response to critical debates. For example, the earlier emphasis on the theoretical distinction between horizontal and vertical networks is toned down, and Putnam introduces a discussion on the “dark side of social capital” together with the fuzzy but intuitively very effective dichotomy of *bridging* and *bonding* social capital.

However widely popular and influential, *Bowling Alone* as well as *Making Democracy Work* have also triggered many critics to respond, in regard to both the conceptualisation of social capital *per se* and the way statistical data is handled. When Putnam and associated researchers (1993, p. 176) suggest

that “Good government in Italy is a by-product of singing groups and soccer clubs”, it is as much a highly provocative statement as it catches the underlying message of both volumes. And there is seemingly no irony in the assertion. Carl Boggs is one of the harshest critics of such conclusions, and is particularly concerned about Putnam’s narrow interpretation of the political development in the US as presented in *Bowling Alone*:

The author’s iconic status does not prevent his book from being so conceptually flawed and historically misleading that it would seem to require yet another large tome just to give adequate space to the needed systemic critique. Despite its ambitious scope and careful empirical investigation into a whole catalogue of attitudinal and behavioral trends, *Bowling Alone* ultimately distorts or ignores so many vital issues that any thorough analysis of the American political morass is inconceivable within its framework. (Boggs, 2001, p. 282)

Boggs emphasises that Putnam does not distinguish between different forms of civic engagement and misses many important movements in his analyses. It is very unclear, Boggs argues, exactly *how* the type of social capital associations in Putnam’s framework contribute to social capital and democracy: “why anyone concerned about the health of American politics should focus on bowling or golf – or Rotary clubs, choirs, dinner gatherings, and poker games, for that matter - remains a mystery” (p. 293). One peculiar paradox, pointed out by Boggs, is that Putnam suggests that democratic values have been on the decline since the awakening of the Civil Rights movement and the large number of social and community grassroots movements appearing beginning in the 1960s. Boggs is puzzled about why Putnam upholds the American 1950s as a golden age, “when McCarthyism filled the air, when social movements and third parties were nowhere to be seen, when racism, sexism, and homophobia were part of the taken-for-granted ideological discourse” (p. 284). Another critic, James DeFilippis (2001, p. 800) asks rhetorically why the asserted fifty years of social capital erosion in the US have not led to economic decline, which would be expected from Putnam’s previous hypotheses. And Paul Lichterman (2005, p. 4) refers to Putnam’s social capital urge, stating that “people who exhort Americans to join more voluntary organizations only deflect attention from the cold, hard necessity of political work.”

Finnish social scientist Martti Siisiäinen (2000) criticises Putnam for his neglect of conflict perspectives. He describes three types of conflicting interests regarding people’s engagement in voluntary associations: (1) conflicting interests between different parts of civil society, e.g. between supporters and critics of the dominating political system; (2) conflicts between civil society and the political powers; and (3) internal democracy and power conflicts within civil society, i.e. within the hierarchy of an association or between an association and citizens outside the association. Swedish political scientists Bo Rothstein and Staffan Kumlin (2001) also miss the conflict perspective in Putnam’s writings. They maintain that the nature of organisations is to create *mistrust* rather than trust of other organisations, i.e. with a logic of separation which establishes a distance between members and non-members. To integrate an analysis of conflicts and powers, Siisiäinen (2000) as well as Svendsen and Svendsen (2003) argue that Bourdieu’s conceptualisation of social capital is more accurate than Putnam’s. However, Siisiäinen adds that it may be relevant to also

study “opportunity structures improving the creation of consensus”, as Bourdieu’s critical power perspective is not sufficient.

Other important criticism of Putnam’s conceptualisation of social capital concerns whether or not it can be seen as a collective possession (Portes, 1998; 2000; DeFilippis, 2001) and the confusion between source and outcome (Portes, 1998; Woolcock, 1998; Portes, 2000; Lichterman, 2005). Both these issues will be discussed later. First, however, a more fundamental dichotomy of social capital needs to be explored, namely its dual composition of structural and cognitive components.

### The structural and cognitive components of social capital

Many authors maintain that social capital consists of the three components networks, trust and norms, often with reference to Putnam. Other models include roles, rules, procedures, attitudes, codes, language, values, beliefs, obligations, solidarity, etc., in different combinations. Instead of describing a great number of these models, I will propose one simple and useful explanatory framework, which borrows the terms structural and cognitive from Norman Uphoff (2000) and Janine Nahapiet and Sumantra Ghoshal (1998); see Table 2.

Table 2. Structural and cognitive components of social capital

Structural components	Cognitive components
Network configuration (including tie strength): who I know and how well I know them	Social expectations of different kinds, including informal social norms: what I expect that I will do for others and others will do for me, on the basis of my social relations

Uphoff (2000, p. 218) states that the distinction between structural and cognitive components is as fundamental for social capital as the distinction between renewable and non-renewable is for natural capital. He suggests that structural components may *facilitate* people’s actions, while cognitive components may *predispose* people towards action. He also explains it as a difference between *social organisation* and *mental processes*. I find neither of these definitions very stringent. It is perhaps easier to make sense of Nahapiet and Ghoshal’s (1998) explanation of *quantitative* versus *qualitative* aspects to understand the difference between structural and cognitive components, although this is also questionable. As I will use the distinction, the term structural components refers to how the social networks are configured, while cognitive components refers to the mechanisms causing expectations of certain behaviours, such as informal social norms. To put it simply: the former answers the question of to whom an action is directed, while the latter answers the question of what motivates the action. Social capital typically needs both types of components; there is often a structural and a cognitive dimension in each situation in which social capital is realised into action. However, as will be discussed, some definitions of social capital include expectations which are not based on social relations, i.e. social capital ‘decoupled’ from structural components.

The structural components of social capital are social network configurations, which can be described as a group of people and the social ties connecting them. The sociological notion of *ties* refers to any social relationships between two persons. A tie may be asymmetric, i.e. the first person feels more connected to the second than the other way around; and it may be negative, i.e. consisting of elements such as hate, fear, envy or distrust rather than trust or love. However, to constitute the basis of a social network, ties must be at least positive in the regard that they bind together more than they repel, i.e. there must be reciprocal expectations of mutual gains of some kind. The ties elaborated in Mark Granovetter's (1973) weak tie hypothesis are also assumed to be 'symmetric' and 'positive'. He defines the strength of a tie to be "a (probably linear) combination of the amount of time, the emotional intensity, the intimacy (mutual confiding), and the reciprocal services which characterize the tie" (p. 1361). By this we can understand that the strength of a tie between two persons will increase the more time they spend with each other, the more emotionally they become involved in their relationship, the more they uncover their deep personalities, and the more they exchange services. The strength must then be understood as a continuum, reaching from (very) weak to (very) strong. The only clue given in Granovetter's article as to where the crucial line lies between weak and strong is that "acquaintance" is weak while "close friendship" is strong (Granovetter, 1973, p. 1368; 1983, p. 201)<sup>6</sup>. It is reasonable to believe that there is no sharp line between the two types of ties.

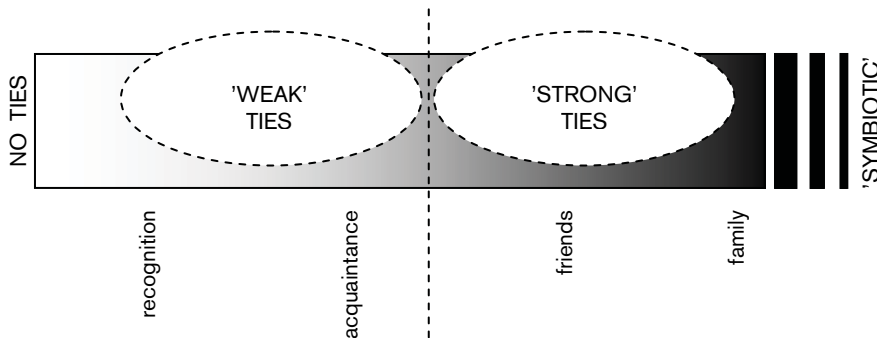


Figure 3. Attempt to place Granovetter's weak and strong tie concepts within a tie-strength continuum.

Figure 3 illustrates how weak and strong ties conceptualise different ranges of a theoretical tie-strength continuum. Numerous phrases could be placed in the figure to illustrate different levels of tie strength, such as 'nod to', 'know by name and address', 'talk to regularly', 'invite to your home', 'club fellows', 'love partners', etc. These are also examples of the kind of criteria used for

<sup>6</sup> As Granovetter uses logic argumentation more than empirical proof for his hypothesis, the need for a strict definition is perhaps not absolute. After concluding that an "intuitive" understanding would encompass interlinked parameters of time spent together, emotional intensity, intimacy and reciprocal services, Granovetter (1973, p. 1361) suggests that the "[d]iscussion of operational measures of and weights attaching to each of the four elements is postponed to future empirical studies". Anecdotally, when Granovetter follows up his successful theory ten years later, the original vague definition remains (see Granovetter, 1983, p. 201).

identifying weak and strong ties in different case studies (see, e.g., Wellman & Wortley, 1990; Henning & Lieberg, 1996; Middleton, Murie & Groves, 2005; Hipp & Perrin, 2009). However, this would risk distorting the model rather than making it more instructive, as the reality is too complex to let these different types of relationships be sorted on a one-dimensional scale. The point raised by Granovetter, and adopted by those who acknowledge his argument, is that classical social network researchers mainly dealt with strong ties, mapping out networks of friendship and kinship, while the importance of weaker ties was totally neglected (i.e., until the mid-1970s).

Granovetter's main argumentation is that weak ties often have a *bridging* function, while strong ties have a more *bonding* character<sup>7</sup>. Theoretically, he tries to prove this through the hypothetical assumption that it is likely that there is at least a weak tie between any two of your friends (see Figure 4). Assuming that two persons who have strong ties to the same person must be connected by either a strong or weak tie, it is impossible to draw a network map on which a strong tie makes the bridge between two network clusters. While this theoretical-logic reasoning may appear abstract, Granovetter's (1973) article also presents a number of empiric findings pointing towards the same conclusion: that weak ties are central in bridging and broadening social networks.

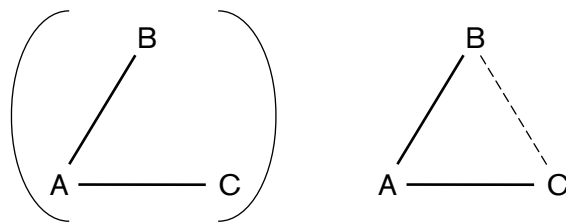


Figure 4. Granovetter's forbidden triad. According to Granovetter's hypothesis, it is unlikely that there is no tie at all between two persons (B and C) who are both strongly tied to the same third person (A). He argues that there is probably at least a weak tie between B and C (Granovetter, 1973).

Ronald S. Burt (1992), following the same rationalistic theoretical tradition as Granovetter, has suggested that it is the 'nonredundancy' of the ties and not the weakness *per se* that makes them bridging. Burt is one of those who like to view life and society as a game, and his perspective is how an individual can improve her competitiveness as player in that game. A key strategy is to cultivate social capital through investing in the most optimal network relations. According to Burt, the potential of a wide network lies in its ability to access and address the right information at the right time and create opportunities through connections and referrals. The broader and more far-reaching a network, the better it is. Therefore, it would be a waste of time and effort to maintain several relations within the same network cluster; such relations are 'redundant' ties. What is optimal is to have only one contact in each cluster, just enough to access the information within that group. Thus, as many 'structural holes' as possible will be bridged. Burt stresses that it is not of primary

<sup>7</sup> The bridging and bonding features were revived in the social capital debates of the 1990s, which will be discussed later.

concern how weak or strong these ties are. He righteously questions the validity of Granovetter's 'forbidden triad', claiming that such a configuration is certainly possible in a network structure.

The simplest form of social capital realisation involves only two persons – its structural component thus consists of only one social tie and the cognitive components (which are normally more difficult to measure and define, especially as they may be unconscious) are the culturally and socially constructed expectations of what this tie implies in terms of behaviour. For example, having talked to one of your neighbours establishes a contact (structural component) and some new expectations of behaviour, which to a large extent depend on local traditions and previous experiences (cognitive components). The new expectations may range from, e.g., greeting each other upon meeting to helping carry a piano up the stairs. In larger and more complex networks, general behavioural norms and informal bipersonal expectations will be supplemented with collectively developed informal group norms and nested layers of loyalties.

The cognitive components of social capital can be described as the expectations of social action, bound in social relations and collective identities. In most cases, these expectations can be expressed in terms of *informal social norms*, if defined broadly as, e.g., the “unwritten rules of the game” (Svendsen & Svendsen, 2003, p. 615). Informal social norms will be produced and reproduced through social interaction, on smaller and larger scales; they can be challenged and negotiated. Moreover, informal social norms will commonly be in a process of either institutionalisation or deinstitutionalisation. Institutionalisation means that norms are becoming more strongly and/or more widely accepted, i.e. gaining more followers or being followed more devotedly. Deinstitutionalisation of a norm is the opposite development – fewer followers and/or less devoted followers. Another form of institutionalisation is when informal norms are formalised, i.e. unwritten rules become written, which may imply more long-term establishment and harder sanctions for deviant behaviour. Formal procedures, formally sanctioned rules and laws, however, are normally not regarded as social capital, although the line between informal and formal expectations is hard to define.

Portes (1998) makes a useful distinction between *consummatory* and *instrumental* motivations to social action. According to Portes, consummatory motivations derive from ‘internalised norms’ or ‘bounded solidarity’, i.e. different kinds of culturally inherited behavioural ethics which make us feel obliged to act in certain ways. Instrumentally motivated actions, on the other hand, are not ethically conveyed but rather connected to an expectation of some kind of return in the future. Portes distinguishes between two types of instrumental motivations: ‘reciprocity exchange’, which implies a personal relationship, and ‘enforceable trust’, which refers to when investments are made not to a trusted person but to a trusted group, which collectively warrants some kind of repayment. Eric M. Uslaner's book *The Moral Foundations of Trust* (2002) makes a distinction between *moralistic* and *strategic* trust, which is very reminiscent of Portes' consummatory and instrumental motives for social action. The key difference between the two concerns whether or not something specific is expected in return. Yet another associated dichotomy suggested by Uslaner (2002) and used by, e.g., Roger Patulny (Patulny, 2004;



Patulny & Svendsen, 2007) is *particularised* versus *generalised* trust, which denotes the difference between trusting someone you know and trusting a stranger.

In my understanding of Portes' model, a third dimension in the distinction between consummatory and instrumental motivations is that the latter involves a kind of conscious calculation of the long-term personal return, while the former is more of an instinctive, intuitive or unconscious driving force. Ostrom (2000, pp. 177-178) has also elaborated with the consciousness parameter of social capital, whereby the level of consciousness appears to reflect the level of institutionalisation and formalisation. Ostrom defines *norms* as systems of expectations which have evolved *without* self-conscious thought, while *rule systems* have been agreed upon between members of the collective in a self-conscious manner. Between these two forms of social capital she places *conventions*, which are a less self-conscious construct than rule systems but still more self-conscious than norms. In a comparison to Nahapiet and Ghoshal (1998), Ostrom's idea of consciousness touches on their distinction between *cognitive* and *relational* dimensions of social capital, even though Ostrom does not focus much on the cognitive part. It could also be compared to Krishna's (2000) distinction between *institutional* and *relational* social capital, whereby the former is clearly developed in a self-conscious manner while the latter could be more or less non-self-conscious.

Independent of levels of formality and consciousness, expectations are not always bound to social networks. In other words, some definitions of social capital include structurally unbound cognitive components in the concept. This is particularly common in aggregated analyses of macro-level outcomes in terms of, e.g., economic growth and institutional performance. For example, Francis Fukuyama (1995) emphasises the significance of what he calls *social trust* (equivalent to generalised or general trust) as a condition for a society to develop, as it dramatically reduces the transaction costs if people on a general basis trust other people and organisations. Fukuyama points out that such general trust does not constitute social capital, although it is typically an outcome of social capital (see, e.g., Fukuyama, 2001, p. 7). However, many other authors seem to consider general trust a key component of social capital. General trust, concerning strangers or organisations, is not relational in terms of personal relations. It derives from 'anonymous' recognition and group identities. It is thus a source of 'no-tie' socio-cultural expectations. General world-views, values and attitudes are also sources of 'no-tie' socio-cultural expectations, closely connected to social norms and often included in social capital analyses. Even if these expectations are not tied in personal relationships they can still be understood as social in the sense that they are connected to some kind of 'membership' or collective identities, even if the identification is as all-embracing as experiencing solidarity with other humans as a fellow representative of humankind.

### **Individual or aggregate perspectives; source or outcome**

The two issues of individual/collective and source/outcome dimensions of the social capital concept are partly interlinked, which motivates discussing them together. It is striking that only few of the vast number of academic publications on social capital attempt to elucidate the fundamental difference be-

tween analysing social capital from an individual's perspective and from the perspective of a collective unit such as a group, community or nation. Someone who has been highly concerned about this issue is Alejandro Portes (1998; 2000). The title of his article, *The Two Meanings of Social Capital* (2000) refers to the essential disparity between individual and collective social capital analyses. According to Portes, and in consonance with what DeFillippis (2000, p. 785, 800) has stated, a significant focus shift happened when Putnam's *Making Democracy Work* was published. For previous social capital theorists (primarily Bourdieu and Coleman) the individual was the subject realising social capital, while Putnam introduced aggregated analyses in which social capital is discussed as an asset of whole regions. Portes has indicated problems with Putnam's approach, caused not least by the diffusion between what the stock of social capital is and what its outcomes are.

As Janine Nahapiet and Sumantra Ghoshal (1998) also notice, some authors think of social capital as the network of social relationships, while others think of it as the assets that can be mobilised through this network. Nahapiet and Ghoshal make a point of including both the source and the outcomes in their definition of social capital, which they formulate as "the sum of the actual and potential resources embedded within, available through, and derived from the network of relationships possessed by an individual or social unit" (Nahapiet and Ghoshal, 1998, p. 243). Anirudh Krishna (2000) also sees a point in discussing both source and outcome, but makes a clear distinction in his framework between what he calls the *stock* (i.e. the 'source') and the *flow* (i.e. the 'outcome') of social capital. Portes instead emphasises that social capital should refer to the *ability* to benefit from social networks, trust and norms (i.e. the source), and not to the actual benefits (i.e. the outcome). Portes argues for this standpoint by highlighting a risk for "circular reasoning" (2000, p. 4) and "tautological statements" (1998, p. 5) as measurements of the social capital stock are often very similar to measurements of its expected results. Michael Woolcock has also criticised this confusion of what social capital *is* and what it *does*, i.e. whether the concept refers to "the infrastructure or the content of social relations" (Woolcock, 1998, p. 156).

In principle, it is easy to agree with Portes' and Woolcock's arguments. Capital is a source and not an outcome. A problem, however, is that many of the cognitive components of social capital can be seen simultaneously as source and outcome, especially if a collective perspective is adopted. For example, safety is a typical benefit (i.e. an outcome) of increased networking, and at the same time can itself be seen as capital, facilitating more networking and the exchange of other services. Portes' general solution to the source/outcome confusion problem is to adopt an individual perspective.

At this level [the individual level following Bourdieu], the sources of social capital were clearly associated with a person's networks, including those that she or he explicitly constructed for that purpose, while effects were linked to an array of material and informational benefits (McLanahan and Sandefur, 1994; Hagan et al., 1996). These were clearly separate and distinct from the social structures that produced them.  
(Portes, 2000, p. 4)

However, also with an individual perspective, confusion may arise between what social capital is and what its outcome is, if adopting a less materialistic

view on outcomes than merely counting “material and informational benefits”. When studying things such as neighbourhood togetherness, emotional gains are among the most important, and may sometimes be harder to separate from the relations than the exchange of other capitals may be. For example, simply the fact that you have a friend may invoke a sense of security or well-being, and thus the trust constituting the relationship may simultaneously be a part of the capital itself and its outcome. On the other hand, for analytical reasons, capital and outcomes should be treated as different entities even though they may partly interlace.

What is also confusing is that “sources of social capital” are sometimes discussed, especially as these sources may also be regarded as social capital. Actually, Portes himself, otherwise so careful with consistency, discusses things such as solidarity and trust as sources of social capital, while it is clear that they are examples of the structures that in fact constitute the social capital (see Portes 1998, p. 7ff). On the other hand, this confusion may also be connected to the difference between individual and collective perspectives. Portes, applying an individual perspective, sees social capital as the *ability* to gain from a social structure, i.e. the *ability* to use a source and not the source itself.

Moreover, Portes identifies a problem in that individual and collective social capital may obstruct each other. For example, social capital may consist of the ability of an individual to use network contacts to bypass public regulations, thus undermining the communal social capital (Portes 2000, p. 3). What Portes does not mention, though, is that similar contradictions can be found between, for example, different individuals’ social capital as well as between different groups’ social capital, something which is emphasised by, e.g., Siisiäinen (see above).

Actually, there may be reason to even distinguish between two different kinds of collective social capital. One would be the social capital inherent in network relations and norms shared between members within these networks and the other would be norms of a more general kind, i.e. not bound to relational networks. This distinction would express, for example, the difference between trusting your friends and trusting politicians, or between expecting support from club fellows and expecting support from a stranger on the street. Although the principal difference between these two types of norms may seem clear enough they can be inflated in practice; the border between a network relationship and an anonymous shared identity is not always distinct, and neither is the border between a ‘particular’ collective (such as a club or network) and a ‘general’ collective (such as a community or society).

Jonathan H. Turner (2000, p. 95) has described three levels of analysis of social capital, which more or less correspond to this proposal: (a) the *macrolevel* of institutional settings to organise society; (b) the *mesolevel* of corporate and categoric units; and (c) the *microlevel* of face-to-face interactions within these units. He stresses that the distinction is valid for theoretical analyses of social capital, while empirically the three levels are intertwined. Turner’s understanding of social capital, like that of many other authors, derives from a societal economic performance perspective. Social capital as provider of social services to individuals and communities in small neighbourhoods is partly a different concept, whereby the macrolevel is rather distant

and everything is based on facework commitments within local networks. Turner's microlevel is equivalent to what is referred to above as individual social capital, while the meso- and the macrolevels represent the two different kinds of collective capital described above. However, Turner has a broader definition of social capital that also includes "institutional organisation" on the macrolevel, which diverts the focus from the generality/anonymity aspect.

Both structural and cognitive components can be analysed on different levels (i.e. the level of an individual, an organisation, society, etc.). However, as has been discussed, the structural components can be very vague in certain kinds of social capital in collective analyses (e.g., when it comes to general trust). Arguably, from an individual perspective, the essence of a person's social capital is her relations to others, most concretely conceived as a structural entity (social ties), but also carrying a cognitive dimension (e.g., loyalties). Social relations are, by definition, *personal* in the sense that they occur between two persons. From a collective perspective, on the contrary, social relations play a subordinate role. The social assets of a collective are not primarily the social relations of its members but rather the norms nurtured, including those of trust and reciprocity. Norms may partly be a result of network relations but are also parts of more general collective identities. Thus, a perhaps radical but stringent assertion would be that individual social capital is precisely the individual's interpersonal relations, and collective social capital is precisely the collective's informal social norms. This assertion deserves more explanation.

*An individual's social capital is the sum of all relations to other persons.* The value of the capital can be defined as all assets (e.g. self-respect, information, helping hands, gifts, loans, etc.) that can be attained through these relations in a specific situation. The aggregated value of a relationship is not necessarily positive, as relationships also may imply (costly) obligations. Moreover, social capital is not a zero-sum game whose only function is the redistribution of existing resources. Social capital results in action which would not occur if not for the social relations and the expectations connected to them. A relationship is most typically a win-win situation, in which both parties gain more than they invest, even if the opposite is also plausible.

*A collective's social capital is the sum of all informal social norms.* Norms function by affecting our actions in one way or another. Networks matter in the sense that they enhance development and the enforcement of norms. Collective social capital may have positive as well as negative effects on individuals within and outside the collective. The value of social capital for the collective lies in things such as social capability (i.e. how many resources the collective can mobilise through the facilitation of informal social norms) and social control (i.e. internal and external surveillance of behaviour and sanctioning of norms). The value can also be described in terms of reduced transaction costs for different types of exchanges and actions.

### **Relational versus institutional/linking social capital**

As mentioned above, Putnam, Leonardi and Nanetti (1993) initiated a discussion on the difference between horizontal and vertical networks, claiming that the former are supportive to the institutional performance of a democratic society while the latter are obstructive. If the difficulties involved in making a

consistent and functional distinction between horizontal and vertical networks were used as an excuse, it would be problematic to ignore the necessity of ‘vertical’ relations in any institution. Rothstein and Kumlin (2001) question such one-sided focus on the ‘civil society’ of local community associations, which they assert is a typical approach in new ‘deliberate democracy’ discourses. Much more important than supporting these structures (i.e. what Putnam, Leonardi and Nanetti term horizontal networks), they argue, is to build, protect and strengthen general and non-discriminating welfare institutions, whereby no groups should feel systematically mistreated by the state.

Rather than polarising or carrying on a controversy between civil society and governmental institutions, many authors have suggested that one important role of social capital is that it may support linkages between the two spheres, sometimes using the term *linking social capital*. As defined by the World Bank (2001, p. 128), linking social capital “consists of the vertical ties between poor people and people in positions of influence in formal organizations (banks, agricultural extension offices, the police)”. In Patsy Healey’s planning theory, such linkages are an important dimension of *institutional capital*. Other dimensions of Healey’s institutional capital are (horizontal) links between different actors in formal and informal power positions (‘social capital’, together with the vertical links mentioned above), organisational knowledge resources developed among these actors (‘intellectual capital’), and the capacity to collaborate and mobilise different resources in a local development project (‘political capital’) (Healey, 1998; Healey et al., 2003).

Krishna (2000) instead uses the concept *institutional capital* in juxtaposition to *relational capital* as a fundamental subdivide of social capital. Even though the distinction is partly reminiscent of Nahapiet and Ghoshal’s (1998) structural and relational dimensions, it has another function as it refers to different situations in practice rather than different analytical perspectives. Krishna’s institutional capital refers to a situation in which community support is organised through associations and leadership structures, while relational capital refers to people acting more spontaneously on a cognitive basis, as can be seen in Table 3.

Table 3. Institutional and relational capital (from Krishna, 2000, p. 79, with reference to Sheri Berman, 1997: “Civil Society and the Collapse of the Weimar Republic”, *World Politics* 49:401-29)

<b>SOCIAL CAPITAL</b>		
	<b>Institutional capital</b>	<b>Relational capital</b>
<i>Basis of collective action</i>	Transactions	Relations
<i>Source of motivation</i>	Roles; Rules & procedures; Sanctions	Beliefs; Values; Ideology
<i>Nature of motivation</i>	Maximizing behaviour	Appropriate behaviour
<i>Examples</i>	Markets, legal framework	Family, ethnicity, religion

Krishna also emphasises that the two forms of social capital are not mutually exclusive. Instead, it is probable that a mixture of both can be found in each situation. Rather than discussing institutional and relational capital in absolute

terms, Krishna thus chooses to think in terms of strong and weak components of them; see Figure 5.

		<b>Relational capital</b>	
		<i>Strong</i>	<i>Weak</i>
<b>Institutional capital</b>	<i>Strong</i>	(1) <b>High social capital</b> Task: extend scope of activities	(2) <b>'Strong' organisations</b> Task: legitimation, intensification
	<i>Weak</i>	(3) <b>'Traditional' associations</b> Task: introduce rules, procedures and skills	(4) <b>Anomic, atomistic, or 'amoral'</b> Task: assist development of structures and norms

Figure 5. Outcomes of strong and weak institutional and relation capital in a society or organisation (from Krishna, 2000, p. 79).

Krishna connects the distinction between institutional and relational capital with the polarisation between the rationalistic and culturalistic understanding of human action (compare with Coleman, 1988; Svendsen & Svendsen, 2003). Acknowledging that the instrumental or rational will (connected to institutional capital) is seldom the only motive for collective action, Krishna notes two different types of motives (more connected to relational capital): (a) affective bonding, which concerns emotional attachments to other persons and groups; and (b) normative conformity, which concerns adherence to standards of conduct grounded in socially instilled values about principled behaviour (Krishna 2000, p. 83, referring to Knoke 1988). Krishna suggests that the process of building social capital should be based on investments in both institutional and relational social capital, in both formal structures and cultural cognition. The two dimensions will then act in a mutually reinforcing manner for an incremental social capital (p. 84).

Krishna's conceptualisation of relational and institutional capital mirrors the classical *Gemeinschaft*–*Gesellschaft* dualism. The second box in Figure 5 – 'strong' organisations, characterised by strong institutional but weak relational capital – represents a typical *Gesellschaft* society, while the third box – 'traditional' associations, characterised by strong relational but weak institutional capital – represents a classical *Gemeinschaft* community. In contrast to how the *Gemeinschaft*–*Gesellschaft* dualism has been used, though, there is no conflict between institutional and relational capital in Krishna's model. The dystopia is a generally weak social capital society, which lacks *Gemeinschaft* as well as *Gesellschaft* attributes, and it is desirable to strengthen *both* types of social capital.

### **Bonds and bridges**

A cornerstone in the post-Putnamian discussions on social capital is the recognition of its potentially negative outcomes. This does not mean that back-sides of social networking and norms have been unknown or unanalysed, but rather that they were not discussed as social capital outcomes until the mid-1990s, probably because of the inclination to think of capital as an asset. The discussion of outcomes will be saved for the next subsection. Here, the issue will be the popular dichotomy of bonding and bridging social capital, which is unfortunately still often conceived of as a distinction between ‘bad’ and ‘good’ social capital. The problem is connected not only to the dubious endeavour of distinguishing good from bad, but more fundamentally to the way bonding and bridging are constructed.

The bonding–bridging dichotomy appears suddenly in social capital literature in the late 1990s, often with reference to Putnam (see, e.g., Gittell & Vidal, 1998, p. 15). Putnam, however, is rather vague in his definitions of bonding and bridging. In *Bowling Alone*, he states that “Bonding social capital (as distinct from bridging social capital) is particularly likely to have illiberal effects” (Putnam, 2000, p. 358), and suggests that the difference is based on the composition of the network: bonding social capital derives from “inward looking” and “homogeneous” network composition, while “outward looking” groups that “encompass people across diverse social cleavages” form bridging social capital (p. 22). Others commonly connect the bonding–bridging dichotomy to Granovetter’s theory of strong and weak ties, which indeed deals with the issue of bridging between network clusters. A common assumption is thus that strong ties equal bonding while weak ties are bridging. As the bonding–bridging concepts have been used in empirical studies, there have been attempts to formulate more exact criteria for distinguishing between them. For example, Middleton et al. (2005) use selected demographic data to determine the level of homogeneity/heterogeneity in a network, while e.g. Svendsen (2006) tries to determine whether his interviewees are more inward or outward looking in terms of general attitudes towards other groups.

The bonding–bridging conceptualisation often lacks theoretical stringency. In a context of social segregation – i.e. where divisions between social groups of any kind (e.g., families, fellowships, gangs, associations, age groups, ethnic communities, or social classes) are acknowledged – it makes sense to talk about bonds and bridges: a bond referring to a relationship within a certain group and a bridge to a cross-cutting relationship between groups (see, e.g., Narayan, 1999; Crawford, 2006; Lichterman, 2006; Daly & Silver, 2008). The nouns bonding and bridging could thereby be used more vaguely to denote ‘social network cultures’ which are ‘inward’ or ‘outward’ looking, respectively – i.e. they concentrate on social exchange either within the network or with individuals/groups outside the network. Consequently, bonding and bridging could also be used as adjectives to qualify something, e.g., a network or a norm. However, I would hesitate to specify bonding and bridging as distinct forms of social capital, partly because bonds and bridges are relative concepts, which will be explained in the next paragraph.

To make stringent use of the terms bonds and bridges, they first need to be detached from the strong–weak dimension: bridges can be strong, and weak ties can occur within inward looking and excluding networks. Second, the

common connection between the level of heterogeneity and the bonding–bridging dichotomy is also theoretically problematic. As Putnam and others maintain, it is likely that an empirical correlation can be found between bonding and homogeneous network compositions. However, this does not imply that bonds and bridges can be defined by how similar or dissimilar people are. Third, in connection to what is said above, it must be specified exactly what kind of segregation is being analysed. It could be asserted that every bridge is a bond if the level of analysis is scaled up. Imagine, for example, that there are two dominant youth sport clubs in a residential area. Contacts between them may be described as typical bridges. However, if instead other types of social segregation are being studied, on a larger scale, the local youth sport community may be seen as one group in potential conflict with other groups, e.g., youth gangs, age groups, or local institutions and associations. On an even larger scale, the segregation between this and other residential areas, perhaps in connection to class or ethnic conflicts, may be in focus, and every tie within the first residential area may be seen as a bond.

The general conception in the social capital discussion is that bridging social capital is normatively good while bonding social capital is problematic and stands for “the dark side of social capital” (Putnam, 2000). This conception is actually possible to trace back at least to Durkheim’s (1893/2000) discussion about the bonding type of mechanical solidarity and the deliberated modern organic solidarity. As long as social segregation is acknowledged as a problem, bridges will by definition be something good. Bonds are sometimes described in an ambivalent way, though. It has been suggested that bonding social capital may have important functions to fill. For example, Tracey Reynolds (2006) describes how bonding social capital within families and local communities helps young British Caribbeans form an ethnic-cultural identity, from which they can also access resources and networks across ethnic groups, although it also contributes to racial segregation and reduced social mobility. Gunnar L. H. Svendsen (2006) argues, based on his study of social networks in a marginalised Danish small-town, that there are both negative and positive outcomes of bonding social capital but that it is important to realise that bridging social capital and integration are more important in the long run than the possible gains of bonding. What Svendsen’s study also shows, but what he does not draw any specific conclusions from, is that bonding also occurs in the more outward looking networks, i.e. that there seems to be a connection between bonding and bridging. Such connections will be discussed further in the next section, on page 42.

### **Outcomes of social capital**

Already in the different definitions of social capital, highly different perspectives on its outcomes appear. Many definitions stick to notions such as *the potential to gain benefits* (e.g., Portes, 1998), or the slightly more neutral *the potential to attain assets/resources* (e.g., Bourdieu, 1986; Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998; Woolcock & Narayan, 2000). Among those focusing on collective social capital, a common formulation of its outcome is *facilitation of cooperation* (e.g., Fukuyama, 2001), sometimes with the addition *for mutual benefit* (e.g., Putnam, 1995). All these definitions contain what many critics would call a bias for positive outcomes. Actually, one of the few fully neutral definitions of



social capital is Coleman's classical formulation of *facilitation of action* (Coleman, 1988, p. 16). Woolcock's (2001) preference for describing the outcomes as *consequences* of social capital is also a marquee of taking a more neutral perspective. However, 'consequences' may sound a bit deterministic, and in this sense 'outcome' perhaps better mirrors that there are conscious (instrumental) as well as unconscious (non-instrumental) motivations.

Even Putnam, who is commonly accused of viewing social capital as normatively good, acknowledges the potential for negative outcomes. However, defining outcomes as 'positive' or 'negative' is a problematic task. Although it is obvious that social capital can have positive as well as negative outcomes for both individuals and collectives, it is not always obvious exactly what positive or negative is, under what circumstances, and for whom. Indeed, the very same social capital outcome may be perceived as both positive and negative even for the very same actor. Consider, e.g., a young girl joining a gang. The motivation for becoming a gang member is typically the return in the form of social capital outcomes – gaining the respect of other gang members, having a role in the group, feeling protected, having fun together, accessing diverse material resources through membership, etc. Definitely, there may be many direct positive outcomes for our fictive youngster, especially if she has low confidence within the family, at school and in other institutions. From a longer time perspective, however, the gang membership may imply a more severe exclusion from the rest of society and drastically delimit her opportunities to develop her own identity. If she later wants to leave the group, she may face problems as she has built up much of her identity through the membership, and the group does not allow defectors. These gains and problems could partly be described as different types of outcomes. However, they may originate through the very same mechanisms. In this case, the feeling of protection from the outer world is possibly exactly the same thing as the feeling of exclusion from the outer world – the same actor, the same mechanisms, and the same outcome, only viewed from slightly different perspectives and loaded with different values. Similarly, as shown in the case study in Angered, social control may simultaneously create a sense of safety and a sense of oppression, and the borderline between the two may be difficult to detect. Even the same person may feel happy one day about friendly and talkative neighbours, and claustrophobic the next day because they seem to watch everything you do and ask what you will do during your vacation.

Outcomes of social capital must also be related to the level of analysis. The individual outcomes of social capital do not necessarily correspond to the outcomes for an organisation or for society at large. Individual-based analyses of social capital (e.g., Bourdieu, Portes and Coleman) often emphasise the access to other persons' or networks' resources through relations and memberships. When organisations or society are analysed (e.g. Putnam, Ostrom, Fukuyama and the World Bank), the typical focus is instead on the reduction of transaction costs, which supposedly enhances cooperation and growth. Also on these levels, it is not obvious which outcomes are positive or negative. Strongly institutionalised norm systems (or conventions and rules, using Ostrom's terms) may solve collective action dilemmas and contribute to efficiency and stability. However, they may also conserve old worldviews and hamper development, which can pose problems in a changing society.

While the potential benefits (from individual and collective perspectives) of social capital are widely acknowledged and often obvious already in the definitions of the concept, the more problematic sides of it are less thoroughly elucidated. The next section will look deeper into some of the mechanisms related to social capital in the context of ‘neighbourhood togetherness’.

## Neighbourhoods and togetherness

### The concept of togetherness

As discussed briefly on page 11, the notion of ‘community’ is often used in a (too) broad sense, when referring to social networking as well. Looking for an alternative notion to more accurately describe social networks of neighbours in which everyone knows each other and that are characterised by frequent, if not necessarily particularly intimate, encounters, ‘togetherness’ seemed appropriate.

In Swedish, the word ‘*gemenskap*’ is central to almost all discussions about social functioning in urban neighbourhoods. The word is closely related etymologically to the German ‘*Gemeinschaft*’, although I believe *Gemeinschaft* is used in a much wider sense. The Swedish *gemenskap* often refers to a reciprocal sense of belonging or coherence. Thus, it is possible to say that there is *gemenskap* between two persons (or two items) who share key interests or characteristics. It is also possible to say that there is *gemenskap* within a group of people or that there exists *gemenskap* in a certain neighbourhood. The word sometimes also refers to a more or less institutionalised network. For example, the European Economic Community translates as *Europeiska ekonomiska gemenskapen* in Swedish. However, many of the English uses of *community* cannot be translated with the Swedish *gemenskap*. A more precise translation of *gemenskap*, at least in the context of social networking in neighbourhoods, would be *togetherness*.

The notion of togetherness is used surprisingly little in international scholarly literature, and when used, it is seldom defined in a clear and consistent way. A review reveals that it is used in several different ways and in diverse contexts, which will be described below.

*Family togetherness.* The most common academic use of the term togetherness seems to be in the context of families and family relations. According to Laura J. Miller (1995), the term was coined in 1954 by the publishers of McCall’s magazine, to describe the social cohesion in the ideal family. Family togetherness, according to Miller, means “that husband, wife and children choose to spend the time not claimed by wage labor or school with one another, preferring each other’s company to the competing attractions of the outside world” (p. 394). For Miller, as well as for Margaret Marsh (1989), the ideal of family togetherness is connected to North American suburbanisation and isolation from the outer world of inequalities and differences. Public life and family togetherness can thus be viewed as competitive spheres. However, Miller also acknowledges that family isolation in safe, private villas and suburbs not only contributes to exaggerated class divides and tensions in society at large, but eventually also impoverishes and undermines the family relations. Melanie

Wallendorf and Eric J. Arnould (1991) also apply a critical view on the family togetherness ideal. In their study of Thanksgiving Day (which is generally conceived of as “a universal feast of togetherness” in the US), they point at highly unequal gender expectations: the woman is usually obliged to work hard in the kitchen the whole day while her husband rests. They also conclude that children and adults actually have very different agendas for the day, not particularly involving being together. Family togetherness, according to Wallendorf and Arnould, is normatively constructed (e.g. through viewing photographs or telling stories together to recall shared memories) rather than a ‘natural’ value.

Most studies, however, view togetherness from a more positive perspective. Pirjo Tiikkainen et al. (2008) use the notion of ‘perceived togetherness’ to describe “how individuals feel their existing social relations meet their needs and expectations” (p. 388). Thereby, togetherness “represents a positive angle on social relations”, in contrast to loneliness, which represents social deprivation. They furthermore differentiate between *emotional togetherness* (which stills the need for proximity, safety and access to help), and *social togetherness* (which implies taking an active role, as well as interaction with friends and peers). Solveig Wikström (2004) lists “closeness/togetherness” as one of four main conditions for why informants rank a certain leisure activity as memorable and stimulating. Togetherness thus refers to sharing an experience with a family member or close friend. In other words, it connects to the Swedish proverb “Shared joy is double joy, shared sorrow is half sorrow”.

Ulla Björnberg and Anna-Karin Kollind (2005) describe the fundamental dualism of individual autonomy and togetherness, “between the ‘I’ and its aspirations towards a ‘we’ and its needs” (p. 17). They use social psychologist Allan P. Fiske’s (1991, 1992) theories to outline a model of four types of togetherness: (1) communal sharing, (2) calculating, (3) equality matching, and (4) authority ranking. Mainly, they discuss relations within romantic couples and families. More pragmatically, Chris van Klaveren and Henriette M. van den Brink (2007) simply use togetherness as a notion for family members spending time together. They conclude that there is a general preference for togetherness, which results in the partners striving to synchronize their work schedules to create more leisure time together. Even more specifically, Eirini Flouri (2001) conducted a survey in which family togetherness was assessed in terms of how often an adolescent watched TV or videos with the rest of the family, and Atsuko Kusano-Tsunoh et al. (2001) measure family togetherness in how often all family members gather to eat. Finally, as an example of a slightly different angle on family togetherness, Xiao Hu (2007) uses the concept to discuss how the opportunities for movements in a dwelling layout either support togetherness (maximising meetings) or intend to keep individuals or groups separated.

*Togetherness among neighbours.* The neighbourhood and the relations among its residents also form a relatively common context for studies that use the term togetherness. One of the most prominent authors giving neighbourhood togetherness a face is Jane Jacobs. Her conceptualisation is closely connected to the critical perspectives on the North American suburban family togetherness ideal of Wallendorf and Arnould as well as Marsh and Miller (see previ-

ous paragraph). In sharp formulations, she disqualifies the idea of bonding social networking between neighbours:

This ideal is that if anything is shared among people, much should be shared. 'Togetherness,' apparently a spiritual resource of the new suburbs, works destructively in cities. The requirement that much shall be shared drives city people apart. [...]

'Togetherness' may lead to exclusion, when a group of residents take over a public place and make it theirs. [...]

The 'togetherness' works for homogenous groups of "self-selected upper-middle-class people", easy problem-solving, but it doesn't work for other groups.

(Jacobs, 1961, pp. 62, 63, 65)

Although Jacobs' view on neighbourhood togetherness as thick and restraining recurs in the literature (see, e.g., Crawford, 2006 and critical literature on bonding social capital), rather optimistic perspectives are seemingly more common. For example, Lina Martinsson et al. (2002) use the notion of togetherness to describe a positive spirit of cooperation and interaction between neighbours, i.e., something housing managers and urban designers should strive to support. Similarly, Deepa Narayan and Michael F. Cassidy (2001) see togetherness as one of seven dimensions of social capital. They measure neighbourhood togetherness with subjective-assessment questions in a questionnaire based on how well people get along with each other, and how closely they feel related to each other. Besides the 'general' sense of togetherness in a neighbourhood, there is also what Sophie Body-Gendrot (2002) refers to in her article *Living apart or together with our differences?*, i.e. the issue of togetherness or separateness between groups in culturally diverse societies. Peer Smets (2005) has studied the interaction between neighbours in culturally diverse urban Dutch neighbourhoods, concluding that it is a challenge to make people from different social, class, or ethnic groups come together and develop social cohesion (which Smets also terms soft infrastructure). His conclusion is somewhat disillusionary: "At present, it looks like if the pattern of living together will be 'living apart together'; frictions caused by different views on the use of the public space will contribute to this process" (p. 304).

*'Virtual' togetherness.* Maria Bakardjieva (2003) studies virtual togetherness, which she defines as "different forms of engagement with other people online", thus broader than the term 'virtual community'. Her main reason for choosing the term is that she regards togetherness as a more neutral term than community, which she feels has normative overtones. As Bakardjieva argues, virtual togetherness (and what others refer to as virtual community) is "the strongest alternative to the narrow consumption-oriented model of Internet development" (p. 295). Thus, togetherness and the added values of sharing things are juxtaposed to (individual) consumption. Katerina Nicolopoulou et al. (2006) use the concept of 'electronic togetherness' as equal to virtual togetherness. They define togetherness as "a function of the relationship between the whole and the parts", connecting it to Deleuze's and Guattari's (1972) idea of a rhizome epistemology (p. 352). On a more practical level, they define electronic togetherness as "co-presence", based on "(a) presence [of

several individuals] in a common virtual environment and (b) communication between people or their avatars in this environment” (p. 353).

*Togetherness in other kinds of groups* (e.g. civic associations, gangs, firms, etc.). The notion of togetherness is also sporadically used in similar ways for other kinds of social groups than families, neighbour networks or Internet communities. For example, Paula B. Castro and Eva Lindblad (2004) mention “the feeling of togetherness” as a reward for youth who become members of violent gangs. As it is used by Paul Lichterman (2005), togetherness mainly refers to the social coherence keeping a civic engagement group together, i.e. a sense of sharing ideals and a will to work together.

*Cultural togetherness.* From a more macro-level perspective, Hilary Barnes’ (1998) version of togetherness applies to national and international solidarity based on cultural identities. She writes about togetherness among the Nordic countries in the sense that they share certain cultural similarities (languages to a certain degree, historical development, political systems, etc.) and that they sometimes try to collaborate in international political discussions.

*Border-crossing togetherness.* While most previously mentioned uses of the concept of togetherness deal with togetherness *within* a certain social group or network, there are also cases in which togetherness refers to a sense of commonality or belonging which manages to *transgress* cultural or social borders. For example, Görel Hansebo and Mona Kihlgren (2002), who study relationships between carers and patients in nursing situations, assert that the development of togetherness in these meetings is desirable. They offer no clear definition of the concept, but it involves a kind of mutual confirmation of the *persons*, i.e. not only of the roles as patient and carer. In a completely different context, the notion has been used to celebrate a friendly feeling of identity being shared across nations and cultural borders at international sports events (Majid, Chandra & Joy, 2007). In neighbourhood contexts as well, as discussed above, togetherness sometimes refers to social exchange over cultural borders.

*‘Universal’ togetherness.* There are also examples of using togetherness as a universal humanistic value, or even as a kind of ontological principle. Dalene M. Swanson (2007) illustrates the South-African *Ubuntu* philosophy as “a search for a ‘humble togetherness’”, i.e. mutual respect between human beings. In a similar spirit, but perhaps a bit more abstract and less radical, Samuel Y. Pang (2008) envisions a Christian humanity of togetherness, focusing on the need of a dialogue between the I and the Other. Kuang-ming Wu (1998) captures his whole ontology in the notion of togetherness. His 400-page homage to togetherness is far from easily comprehensible, and ironically abstract in its poetic dedications to the concrete. According to Wu’s conceptualisation, everything on earth derives from togetherness: “Togetherness is thus the eight expressive parts of speech, the four Aristotelian Causes, the twelve Kantian Categories, the two primal Yin and Yang, the five performative Elements, the sixty-four situational Hexagrams – in short, the ‘logic’ of togetherness of things and of the world” (p. 389). Perhaps a bit more specific, he states that “Togetherness typifies our interactive, inter-constitutive mode of being,

enabling us to express ourselves in a dynamic cross-cultural, cross-communal, and so cross-personal manner” (p. 389). As a diametrical contrast, Cajetan P. Salemi and Mary Service (2003) describe togetherness as a prevailing norm of communalism, which they argue has a devastating influence on society. Their article is a dedication to those (our “potential leaders”, our “hope and promise”) who dare to try the challenging pathway of individuality instead of the easy and ordinary togetherness pathway.

*‘Non-social’ togetherness.* The term togetherness is also sometimes used in non-social contexts, e.g. to describe *physical contact* between items or, as in an article by Michael Tye (2007), to describe the combination of several different sensory impressions occurring *simultaneously and thus being connected* as one cross-modal experience.

The brief review above shows that togetherness has been used as a descriptive or analytical concept in several different contexts. It also shows that the concept can carry quite different meanings. While togetherness seems to be a neutral term for some, it is clearly loaded with either positive or negative values for others. This ambiguity can be connected to the schism between Gemeinschaft-promoting communitarianism and individualistic liberalism, discussed in the first section above. As described in (Castell, *submitted*), three distinct ‘levels of meaning’ can be traced in the concept:

- (a) Togetherness practice: togetherness as an *action or habit* whereby individuals are together or do things together.
- (b) Togetherness sense: togetherness as a *feeling* of belonging to another person, group, community, or cultural identity.
- (c) Togetherness principle: togetherness as an *ideology* or philosophical principle.

A matrix can be constructed on the basis of these two observations, giving an overview of how the notion of togetherness is conceptualised by different authors; see Table 4.

It is important to be aware of the three different levels of meaning in the concept of togetherness. All are highly relevant, but for different purposes. In the context of neighbourhoods, togetherness practice may refer to directly observable patterns of social interaction, i.e. that a group of neighbours talk to each other, support each other and do things together on a regular basis. Togetherness sense may refer to a group of neighbours feeling connected to each other, something which cannot be directly observed but exists in the mind of individuals. Presumably, togetherness practice among a group of neighbours contributes to togetherness sense, which in turns leads to more togetherness practice. Togetherness principle is not necessarily connected to any specific network or place. It is a discursive entity, which in the case of neighbourhood togetherness applies primarily to the philosophy and practice of urban designers and housing managers in how they try to support or oppose meetings, networking and togetherness among neighbours.

Table 4. How different authors have used the notion of togetherness, in terms of positive/negative biases on the one hand and 'level of meaning' on the other.

	Positive	Neutral	Negative
<b>Action/habit</b> (togetherness practice)		Nicolopoulou et al., 2006 Hu, 2007 ←--Smets, 2005 ←--Bakardjieva, 2003 ←--van Klaveren & van den Brink, 2007 ←--Kusano-Tsunoh et al., 2001 ←--Flouri, 2001	Miller, 1995-->
<b>Feeling</b> (togetherness sense)	Tiikkainen et al., 2008 Martinson et al., 2002 Wikström, 2004 Barnes, 1998 Hansebo & Kihlgren, 2002	Castro & Lindbladh, 2004 Narayan & Cassidy, 2001 Björnberg & Kollind, 2005 ←--Lichterman, 2005	
<b>Ideology</b> (togetherness principle)	Wu, 1998 Pang, 2008 Swanson, 2007 Majid et al., 2007	Wallendorf & Arnould, 1991--> Marsh, 1989-->	Jacobs, 1961 Salemi & Service, 2003

### Togetherness and exclusion

On pages 31-32 above, the notions of bonding and bridging in social capital theory were discussed. Clear and consistent definitions are largely lacking, but it could be suggested that bonding involves focussing on commonalities while bridging instead celebrates the value of differences in a relationship. In that case, togetherness by definition belongs to the field of bonding; it is possibly even synonymous with bonding. Consequently, Smets (2005) shows that togetherness never occurs between the different cultural groups of neighbours he recognises but only within the groups, and Jacobs (1961) asserts that togetherness only leads to further division and polarisation. On the other hand, Wu (1998), Swanson (2007) and Majid et al. (2007) see togetherness as something that can unite the whole of humanity and tolerate cultural differences. Pang (2008) even focuses on the need to recognise and respect mutual differences, hoping that togetherness will develop through a dialogue between the I and the Other. Hansebo and Kihlgren (2002) also search for this kind of respectful, bridging togetherness between carers and patient, which goes beyond the divide inherent in the formally hierarchical roles. In these examples, togetherness is actually more close to bridging than bonding. However, I regard these five examples as exceptions and find that the concept becomes clearer when it refers strictly to togetherness based on shared identities and bonding. According to this stricter definition, togetherness can still contribute to bring-

ing together disparate individuals, groups or cultures, but it *creates the bridges by means of bonding*, i.e. by identifying, creating or strengthening common identities. Thus, Barnes' Nordic togetherness, bringing together the Scandinavian countries, appears to be a kind of nationalism, based on the cultural commonalities and support of the sense that 'we' are different from 'the other'. Similarly, in most descriptions of togetherness, its essence is the strengthening of a 'we' group, which arguably implies some kind of distantiation from either the self or some 'other'.

One critic of Putnam's social capital analyses, James DeFilippis, states that exclusion is a fundamental dimension of social networking. "If social capital as sets of networks means anything, it means that some people will be connected and others will not" (DeFilippis, 2001, p. 793). It is obvious, he argues, that a network where all citizens are equal members would not benefit each individual more than the free open market. Thus, "it would clearly be in the interest of those realizing and appropriating the social capital [...] to keep the network as closed as possible" (p. 793). However, it should be acknowledged that this argumentation is exemplified with the benefit of getting a job through network contacts, and might not be fully valid for all kinds of social capital. Actually, one of the main points of the whole discussion on social capital is exactly that it does create something more than if people were not connected through social relations. In the context of a smaller community, like a residential area, it is theoretically possible that a network exists that includes and benefits all residents, e.g. through collective action, spreading of information, sanctioning common norms, etc. In that case, it could also be in the interest of the community members to include as many as possible in the network, as this would strengthen its power and capability. Nevertheless, if not necessarily an essential component of all kinds of networking, exclusion is still a commonly described problem associated with networking. Plausibly, there are certain situations when a social network may benefit from expanding and other situations when it rather benefits from keeping closed.

In the context of neighbourhood togetherness, the natural 'limit' for the network and the togetherness identity is the neighbourhood and its inhabitants. Togetherness may thus hypothetically develop as a sense of belonging and social networking for everyone living in the neighbourhood. More likely, however, is that togetherness develops within a certain group of neighbours while other neighbours are not a part of it. One reason for this may be that the interest in developing social relations with neighbours is not equal between groups and individuals. Many prefer to stay outside any neighbourhood togetherness, in line with Jacobs' argumentation that it threatens integrity and requires too much investment. However, even if people are interested in togetherness, there may be different kinds of excluding barriers. There are often underlying divisions based on cultural differences and/or prejudices between groups of neighbours (see, e.g., Glover, 2004; Smets, 2005; Svendsen, 2006). Reasons for exclusion may be partly beyond the reach of the togetherness groups, as indicated by observers of groups that truly want to broaden, but fail to include 'the others' (see, e.g., Glover, 2004; Smets, 2005). It may also be an active choice of the togetherness group to keep others outside, or this may be caused by unintentional or unconscious exclusion mechanisms connected to what Lichterman (2005; 2006) calls group style (see next sub-section).



Although the notion of exclusion carries negative connotations, it could be suggested that divisions are natural in a multicultural society and that social exclusion may have positive values in certain respects. Being excluded from togetherness *per se* does not necessarily imply being oppressed or deprived of opportunities. On the other hand, it is also important to highlight that togetherness in a neighbourhood does not necessarily mean togetherness for all. The typical scenario may be the development of a togetherness group providing a set of opportunities for those who are included and leading to potentially positive as well as negative outcomes for the neighbourhood as a whole and its inhabitants.

### **Social spiralling and group style**

I first became interested in Paul Lichterman's writings because of the inspiring title of his book *Elusive Togetherness* (2005). The book is empirically based on an in-depth case study in which Lichterman follows nine social project groups connected to Protestant Christian communities for three and a half years. As the subtitle reveals, his main interest lies in how these faith-based groups are "trying to bridge America's divisions". Critically evaluating the social capital concept, which is often applied in similar studies, Lichterman chooses to construct a new conceptual framework to search for the mechanisms which enable participation in civic associations to strengthen civil society and democracy at large. He goes back to Alexis de Tocqueville's original descriptions of how civic society formed the basis for successful American democracy in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, and finds an argument which is not clearly formulated or analysed in Putnam's reading of Tocqueville<sup>8</sup>. Lichterman calls it the *social spiral* argument:

When individuals join a civic group, the *meanings they develop by talking to one another* encourages them to spiral outward, so that they create enduring relationships not only with other group members but with individuals and groups outside the group.  
(Lichterman, 2005, p. 10)

A second claim of the social spiral argument is that the ties created through social outward spiralling create conditions for social self-organization and thus empower civil society in a broader perspective. Thereby – which is an important addition to the social capital tradition initiated by Putnam – it is not just a matter of creating ties, but rather what meanings are connected to the ties, whereby 'civic-mindedness' is an important factor. Lichterman sees the social capital framework as a far too blunt analytical tool for his own studies of social spiralling on a community level: "Social capital is a conceptual telescope. The social spiral argument requires a microscope" (p. 28).

What Lichterman discovers through his case study is that, in spite of high ambitions and genuine commitment, the outward reaching of the groups studied was not as successful as expected, and when spiralling took place it often stayed within certain cultural and social groups. Lichterman also refers to other studies indicating that social spiralling does not always take place where

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<sup>8</sup> Lichterman deals more concentratedly with Putnam's reformulations of the Tocquevillian legacy in the article "Social capital or group style? Rescuing Tocqueville's insights on civic engagement" in *Theory and Society*, 2006.

there are civic society organisations, and that it often seems to be more limited than the social spiral argument would suggest. Lichterman asserts that “there is a relationship between the character of interaction inside a civic group and the kind of relationships the group can cultivate with the world outside of the group” (p. 14). He further proposes that “a community group’s own togetherness shapes the kind of togetherness it can try to create with the world beyond the group” (p. 15), and that it is very much a matter of “group-building customs”, i.e. “routine, shared, often implicit ways of defining membership in a group” (p. 15). In the end, Lichterman (p. 43) asserts, the opportunities for social spiralling are determined by the way a group views itself in relation to the outer world, i.e. how it defines the ‘we’ and the ‘they’.

One important part of group-building customs, which may support social spiralling, is the allowance and practice of *social reflexivity*, i.e. “when they talk reflectively, self-critically, about their relations with their wider social context – the people, groups, or institutions they see on their horizon” (p. 15); or “when members engage in reflective talk about the group’s concrete relationships in the wider social world” (p. 45). One crucial problem, though, which Lichterman points out, is that social reflexivity threatens the customs of the group. As a matter of fact, even social spiralling *per se* may weaken the internal cohesion in a network: “Reaching outwards threatened the solidarity of the groups” (p. 15). This leads Lichterman to talk of a “paradox of civic engagement” namely that the bridge-building and social spiralling effects it may cause might simultaneously threaten its own fundamentals. Lichterman does not provide any definite solution to this paradox, but maintains that the key to successful and lasting outreach is connected to the group-building customs, also discussed in terms of *group style* (see Lichterman, 2006). And he strongly emphasises the importance of communication, claiming that “relationships do not exist outside communication” and that “communications about social ties matters a lot for creating social ties” (Lichterman, 2005, p. 16).

To spiral outwards, groups need more than civic-minded ideas, then. They need to know how to create settings that allow people to think and talk about spiraling outward without threatening the group’s own togetherness. (Lichterman, 2005, p. 18)

### **Reflexive togetherness: an ideal neighbourhood model?**

One of the most important conclusions from a case study on neighbourhood togetherness (see Castell, *submitted*) is that bonding is needed for bridging to occur, i.e. that outward social spiralling cannot take place without networking with partly inward looking features. This is partly a question of how bonding and bridging are defined – if bonding is defined as networking without the ability to achieve outward social spiralling, the point will be missed. Presented in another way, the point is that social networking is, by its nature, both bonding and bridging (see, e.g., DeFilippis’ argument and following discussion on page 40).

It is sometimes suggested that supporting weak ties will contribute to overcoming the problem involved with bonding, drawing theoretical connections to Granovetter’s ‘strength of weak ties’ hypothesis (see, e.g., Henning & Lieberg, 1996; Crawford, 2006). This is a well-grounded suggestion and an impor-

tant response to the common over-emphasis in policy interventions on (strong-tie) bonding in community-building. And in a situation with conflictual tensions between bonding networks and exclusion, any strategy to solve the problems in a good way would have to build a more inclusive, open-minded, bridging network culture.

The question is whether strong ties and bonding are always problematic from an inclusion point of view. As mentioned on page 32, Reynolds (2006) as well as Svendsen (2006), who explicitly point at positive outcomes of bonding, also argue that it has negative consequences for integration between culturally divided groups, i.e. that bonding is contradictive to bridging. However, a closer look at Svendsen's study shows that bonding occurs even in the bridging networks. Svendsen emphasises that what definitely works against bridging is when there is no social interaction at all and no 'platforms for social capital'.

The hypothesis, thus, is that togetherness may contribute to further division as well as to bridging (or spiralling, to use Lichterman's terminology). Moreover, bridging cannot take place in a social vacuum, and it is suggested that togetherness provides a good platform for bridging. As concluded in Castell (*submitted*), a strategy for bridging divides must be related to the current situation. Where there are bonding social networks and problems of exclusion and conflicts, effective bridging strategies may involve arranging activities for residents outside the dominant groups and initiation of what Lichterman calls social reflexivity to make dominant groups reflect on their roles and hopefully become more open-minded. Where there are no social networks, on the other hand, it may actually be a good start to support the establishment of a small network of residents who want to develop togetherness among themselves, even if it is primarily based on bonding rather than bridging.

## Conclusions

This section began by discussing the social transformations of society as both a liberation and a risk project. One of the key motivations for tenant organisations and landlords, as well as researchers, to engage in the issue of tenant involvement in open space management is that it has the potential to address social robustness through the creation of togetherness. Thereby, it is a representation of the Community Quest, i.e. a response to fears of increasing alienation, time-spatial disembedding and loss of social capital. Although there is reason to critically question these fears, they do constitute a valid connection between the Community Quest at large, as well as its representations in local involvement initiatives, and the search for pathways to a sustainable development.

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