

# 1. Introduction

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Social capital theorists have renewed the old interest in the importance of active secondary groups in supporting well run political institutions in modern democracies (see Bourdieu and Passeron 1970; Bourdieu 1980; 1986; Putnam 1993; 2000). Putnam (1993) unified quantitative and historical analyses, arguing that the lack of social capital in the South of Italy was more the product of a peculiar historical development than the consequence of a set of contemporary socio-economic conditions. This conclusion has sparked a lengthy debate and received fierce criticism (see Ferragina 2010a).

Criticism has hitherto mainly focused on the lack of awareness of the structural socio-economic conditions of society (see Skocpol 1996; Skocpol et al. 2000; Thomson 2005), as for example, the level of income inequality (Knack and Keefer 1997; Costa and Kahn 2003; O'Connell 2003), and the excessive determinism of the historical analysis (Lupo 1993; Lemann 1996; Tarrow 1996). These two criticisms are integrated by analysing 85 European regions, revisiting Putnam's hypothesis and contributing to the debate on the determinants of social capital. More specifically, the scope of the book is to: (1) test the impact of four socio-economic predictors (that is, income inequality, economic development, labour market participation and national divergence) on social capital through a causal model, and (2) integrate rather than simply juxtapose socio-economic and historic-institutional explanations of social capital variation with the analysis of two deviant cases.

Following Tocqueville, Putnam argued that nations need strong social participation in order to guarantee the functioning of democratic institutions. However, Putnam (1993) did not take into account Tocqueville's (1961: 8) main explanation about the high level of social participation in 1830s America; the widespread condition of equality. In accordance with Tocqueville's argument and following a large bulk of empirical work (Knack and Keefer 1997; Costa and Kahn 2003; O'Connell 2003; Beugelsdijk and Van Schaik 2005a; Ferragina 2010a) this book tests the effect of income inequality and economic development on social capital. It has also been argued (Gorz 1992: 182) that the ability to work provides a sense of participation and membership in societal activities among

citizens. Hence, we test the effect of labour market participation on social capital. Finally, strong regional differences within nations might also impact on social capital (see Chapter 3).

Revisiting medieval history, Putnam explains the contemporary lack of social capital in the South of Italy as the result of there being no medieval towns in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. This explanation was simply juxtaposed to the lack of present day social capital but not in fact connected to it (Lupo 1993; Tarrow 1996). Unlike Putnam, we propose to assess the impact of historic-institutional evolutions on social capital starting from the interpretation of the general socio-economic conditions and observing what the causal model leaves unexplained. The integration between these two levels of analysis helps to sharpen and refine the general findings emerging from the socio-economic model (Lijphart 1971) and at the same time, gather additional information from the in-depth comparison between regular and deviant cases.

Wallonia and the South of Italy are regions which deviate from the general pattern identified by the regression model because of extremely poor social capital scores accompanied by positive residuals.<sup>1</sup> The concomitance of low social capital scores and positive residuals indicates that according to the socio-economic model, Wallonia and the South of Italy should have even lower social capital scores than observed. Reversely, in the other regions where social capital scores are below the average, the socio-economic model predicts higher levels of social capital than observed.

These findings challenge Putnam's hypothesis because from a comparative perspective, in the South of Italy and Wallonia, the adverse socio-economic conditions seem to be more important than the negative influence of historic development in explaining the present lack of social capital. Starting from the comparison between Wallonia and the South of Italy with Flanders and the North East of Italy, two regions in which higher social capital scores are accompanied by positive residuals, the book proposes an alternative historical explanation: the *sleeping social capital theory*. This theory is complemented by an institutional comparison between Belgium and Italy.

## 1.1 THE FOUNDATIONS OF SOCIAL CAPITAL THEORY

Certain ideas emerge from the intellectual debate seeming to promise a solution to all fundamental problems and clarify all obscure issues (Langer and Knauth 1942). The strength of these new paradigms overwhelms all

other theories for a while, but after gaining familiarity with them, we realize that they cannot solve our puzzles and we see that even excessive popularity progressively ends (Geertz 1973: 3). Only at this stage is a more settled assessment of a new paradigm possible. Without doubt the social capital concept falls into this category of ideas. After two decades of intense debate, we may analyse it without overemphasis, discussing the significance of its emergence and its main determinants.

Social capital with its ambiguous nature, an elixir to revitalize democracy for many (see Cusack 1999; Freitag 2006; Knack 2002; Ostrom and Ahn 2003; Paxton 1999; Rothstein 2001) and a poison that brings back dangerous concepts for others (see Fine 1999; 2008; Lemann 1996; Ferragina 2010a; Smith and Kulynich 2002; Thomson 2005), enabled Putnam to rediscover traditional elements of sociological theory (see Portes 1998) and propose a call for the renewal of democracy. Putnam (1993) transformed social capital from an academic concept (see Hanifan 1916; Jacobs 1961; Bourdieu and Passeron 1970; Loury 1977; Coleman 1988; 1990) to a practical tool to (re)*Make Democracy Work*, generating a tremendous interest among politicians and the general public.

This tremendous interest is grounded in the extraordinary ability to connect policy making and traditional sociological theory (Table 1.1):

- (1) discussing the possibility of reconciling the dichotomy individualism versus communitarianism;
- (2) merging Tocqueville's enthusiasm for participative democracy and the concern of the founding fathers of sociology about the effects of modernization on social cohesion;
- (3) reflecting upon the importance of accumulating social capital for community building;
- (4) integrating micro and macro foundations of social science in proposing a general theory;
- (5) shifting from socio-economic to cultural explanations in investigating the lack of social capital and its impact on the quality of democracy;
- (6) internalizing social science into economic discourse and by the same token broadening the scope of economics beyond its boundaries.

First, the social capital concept is linked to an old debate and proposes a synthesis between the values contained in the communitarian approaches and the individualism professed by rational choice theory. Historically, the power of community governance has been stressed by many philosophers from antiquity to the eighteenth century, from Aristotle through Thomas Aquinas to Edmund Burke. Putnam bridged the polarity between individualism and communitarianism, highlighting the importance of

*Table 1.1 Social capital from Tocqueville to Making Democracy Work*

Social capital theory (1) is an attempt to bridge the polarity between communitarianism and individualism		
The 19th and 20th Century Origins (2)		
Comparative Politics	Sociological Theory	
Tocqueville Equality, decentralization and participation in civil society foster the continuous improvement of democratic institutions	Tönnies, Durkheim, Simmel, Weber Industrialization and urbanization transformed social relationships irreversibly  Modernization Theorists Contradiction between modernity and traditional communities	
The Predecessors		
Community Building (3)	Micro/Macro Foundations (4)	Culture (5)
Hanifan & Jacobs Importance of the layout of rural communities and cities to accumulate social capital	Manchester School and Social Network Theorists Focus on networks at individual and aggregate levels	Banfield, Almond and Verba, Inghlehart Social capital and culture to explain the lack of institutional development
Integration of Sociology and Economic Theory (6)		
Bourdieu	Loury	Coleman
Social capital is one of the three forms in which capital appears: economic, cultural and social	Social capital to explain the acquisition of the standard human characteristics	Discussion of the forms of social capital; integration of social capital in the utility functions of the individuals
Social capital and Democracy		
Putnam		
From social capital as an academic concept, to social capital as a practical tool to (re)make democracy work		

*Source:* Author's elaboration.

social engagement to face the crisis of liberal democracy (Bowles and Gintis 2002). This sociological line of enquiry strikes a balance between individualism, the engine of economic growth, and the function of secondary groups, the glue that prevents social disintegration (see Tocqueville 1961).

Second, closely following the founding fathers of sociology, Putnam investigated the idea that industrialization and urbanization transformed the social relationship. He observed the breakdown of traditional bonds and the exponential development of anomie and alienation in society. In this sense he re-kindled the debate of the founding fathers of sociology focusing on: (1) the distinction between formal and informal social networks, (2) the necessity of secondary groups for the functioning of society, and (3) the importance of exclusivity to generate a competitive advantage for restricted clubs.

The distinction between *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft* (see Tönnies 1955) illustrates the difference between the type of solidarity generated by old communities and those existent in modern societies; the attributes of the first term<sup>2</sup> differ from the less bonding attributes associated with the second term. Putnam called this distinction to mind in his discussion of bonding (which is similar to Tönnies' *Gemeinschaft*) and bridging (which is similar to Tönnies' *Gesellschaft*) relations.<sup>3</sup> The fear of social disintegration in the transition from a *mechanic society* to a *modern society* was already current at the end of the nineteenth century (Durkheim 1893). In this vein, at the turn of the twenty-first century, social capital theorists emphasized the importance of social networks in preserving the fragile equilibrium between individual and social needs.

A nation can work properly only through the mediation of secondary groups, which are necessary bodies in grafting atomistic individuals to the life of a nation; the denial of this model would transform society into a 'veritable sociological monstrosity' (Durkheim 1893: 29). Closeness and exclusivity are important characteristics that allow groups to create club goods like social capital (see Bourdieu 1980). Weber (1946), observing the structure of religious sects, emphasized this aspect illustrating the importance of robust informal networks to enforce rules and create relationships among members.

In the 1950s and 1960s modernization theorists (Bell 1962; Nisbet 1969; Stein 1960; Whyte 1956) placed a pessimistic emphasis on this debate, arguing similarly to Putnam and Fukuyama that modernization leads to the destruction of communitarian values and institutions. Nisbet (1969: 10) emphasized the need to defend the forgotten traditional values of community from the powerful emphasis of modern societal concepts like progress, reason and freedom. According to him, the lack of certitude connected

with freedom generates disenchantment and alienation.<sup>4</sup> However, modernization scholars have not been able to support their propositions on the decline of participation and trust with empirical evidence (see Thomson 2005). For this reason the debate slowly died down, only to re-appear in a new guise within Putnam's social capital theory.<sup>5</sup>

Third, Putnam borrowed from Hanifan (1916) and Jacobs (1961) the idea that social capital can be accumulated or destroyed according to the appropriateness of the social investment made by communities. Communities are like corporations; before starting large-scale activities, they need to accumulate capital from all their components to reach a critical mass of resources before expanding activities. In the same way, the constant contact between neighbours increases social capital that in turn improves collective social productivity (Hanifan 1916: 130).

Fourth, Putnam took from social network theorists (Berkowitz 1982; Burt 1992; Laumann 1973; Wellman and Leighton 1979) and in particular from Mark Granovetter (1973; 1985) the idea that social capital theory can be helpful to bridge individual and macro level analyses to explain the evolution of democracy (Barnes 1954a and b; Bott 1957) and the necessity to overcome the simplistic claim that only present social structure matters for the analysis (Piselli 1997; Knox et al. 2006).

Fifth, Putnam affirmed that the decrease of social engagement needs to be explained mainly at the cultural level (Jackman and Miller 1996: 634). This consideration builds on contributions from Banfield (1958), Almond and Verba (1963) and Inglehart (1988), suggesting that countries with a high level of civic culture are more likely to sustain democracy over time than countries with low levels, independently of their socio-economic development (for a critique see Muller and Seligson 1994).

Sixth, Putnam's contribution transformed the debate launched by Bourdieu (1980), Loury (1977) and Coleman (1988; 1990) into one of the hottest topics in social science.<sup>6</sup> Over the last two decades, Putnam's theory has gained a large consensus upon the notion that social engagement is the only way to revive democracy. Bourdieu (1980) considered social capital theory a valid tool to complement the analysis of class stratification based on human and economic capital. Loury and Coleman reversed Bourdieu's perspective arguing that social capital was useful to broaden the scope of economic theory rather than a way to introduce economic theory into sociology. Loury applied social capital theory to explain the income gap between white and black people and Coleman argued that social capital was part of the utility function of individuals.

From a neo-classical perspective, Coleman inaugurated a broad discussion on the importance of social capital to create public goods. Putnam expanded Coleman's work, and affirmed that the creation of public goods

via social engagement was the most productive investment for society. This was because in secondary groups people institutionalize the spirit of community by going beyond the current interests of their members. The dropping membership rate in this type of association is the starting point of *Bowling Alone*. Putnam turned this negative phenomenon into a general theory that looks at the role of civil society as strengthening democracy and he proposed a political strategy to reverse the negative trend. Similarly to Marx in *Das Kapital* (Aron 1967), Putnam merged scientific and moral elements together, providing quantitative evidence to rationalists and a Tocquevillian call to social engagement to idealists.

Summing up, Putnam's social capital theory concords with the conclusions of the founding fathers of sociology, emphasizing the importance of community building and renews the interest in the impact of cultural factors and modernization over communitarian spirit and democracy. It also reconciles micro- and macro-institutional analyses by suggesting that participation in secondary groups is the only antidote to the crisis of liberal democracy.

These foundations together with much empirical support conferred a strong authority to Putnam's work. However, its discussion about the determinants of social capital has raised many criticisms, notably the disregard of socio-economic factors and the role of public powers (Skocpol 1996; Costa and Kahn 2003) and the excessive determinism of the historical analysis (Lupo 1993; Tarrow 1996; Lemann 1996). For this reason the aim of this book is to re-ignite the debate on the determinants of social capital, integrating the socio-economic and historic-institutional perspectives more closely. This integration is approached by bridging the gap between quantitative comparative and comparative historical analyses.

## 1.2 RESEARCH DESIGN AND THE COMPARATIVE METHOD

The research design unifies synchronic and diachronic approaches, linking deductive and inductive reasoning; thereby revisiting the debate on the determinants of social capital. The main features of the research design are illustrated in the light of the development of the comparative method in social science (Table 1.2). We argue that different socio-economic and historic institutional configurations contribute to explain why a healthy civil society blossoms in certain regions and not in others (following in this respect a long-standing line of enquiry from Aristotle [1997], Montesquieu [1914], and Tocqueville [1904; 1961] to Putnam [1993]). This investigation causes us to face the perpetual tension between deductive and inductive

reasoning (Mill 1882) by fully exploiting the potential of comparative analysis, integrating quantitative and historical approaches.

Many researchers have studied civic engagement and trust in different countries relying on survey data (Almond and Verba [1963] being the first); however they often failed to develop clear deductive frameworks to guide their statistical modelling (Sartori 1970; Przeworski and Teune 1970). For this reason we explore the potential impact of income inequality, economic development, labour market participation and national divergence on social capital from a theoretical point of view before embarking on the empirical model (Chapter 5). Furthermore, in order to sharpen the results of the quantitative model (Lipset 1960; Lijphart 1971), this synchronic analysis is complemented by an historic-instructional analysis of Wallonia and the South of Italy in relation to another two Belgian and Italian regions, Flanders and the North East of Italy.

We follow the logic of the comparative historical method by (Mahoney and Rueschemeyer 2003): (1) discussing why historical evolutions do not explain the low level of social capital in Wallonia and the South of Italy; (2) discussing historical sequences that overcome the staticity of the quantitative model; and (3) systematically comparing Wallonia and the South of Italy to Flanders and the North East of Italy; two cases that share a similar institutional configuration and high residuals in the regression model but present a much higher level of social capital.

The use of comparative method has a long history (Table 1.2) that can be traced back to Aristotle's discussion on the nature of political regimes (1997). Montesquieu (1914), Tocqueville (1904; 1961) and Mill (1882) extended the use of comparative method and contributed to the development of innovative analyses. Montesquieu asserted that political and legal institutions mirror the social character of each national community, Tocqueville isolated the factors that were fostering the success of American over European institutions and Mill systematized the use of quantitative methods bridging the tension between deductive and inductive reasoning.<sup>7</sup>

Social scientists continued to emphasize the potential of comparative methods from different angles. On the one hand, from an historical perspective Barrington Moore<sup>8</sup> (1966: XIII–XV) highlighted that the understanding of a specific country helps to bring to the fore obscure details of other countries. He argued that comparisons serve as a rudimentary control model for new theoretical explanations. On the other hand, from a quantitative perspective Almond and Verba showed the potential of large scale comparative analyses, measuring civic participation across five countries.<sup>9</sup> Despite the shortcomings of their methodology (for a critique see Benjamin 1965), the application of large scale

Table 1.2 *The logic of the Comparative Method*

The research design bridges synchronic and diachronic approaches, linking deductive and inductive reasoning to re-ignite the debate on the determinants of social capital			
The Founding Fathers			
Aristotle	Montesquieu	Tocqueville	Mills
He compared political regimes starting with the social context	He asserted that political and legal institutions mirror the social character of each community	He isolated the factors that were fostering the success of American institutions	He defined the method of agreement and difference and discussed the tension between deductive and inductive processes
The Potential of the Comparative Method		The Importance of Theory-Driven Approaches	
Barrington Moore	Almond, Verba	Sartori	Przeworski, Teune
Comparative analysis brings to the fore obscure details of countries and serves as rudimentary control model	They collected and codified quantitative items to measure civic participation in five countries	He warned against the reduction of critical thinking fostered by the dominance of quantitative analyses	They argued the importance of theoretical frameworks before the formulation of empirical analysis
The Necessity to Introduce a Diachronic Perspective to Quantitative Studies			
Lipset		Lijphart	
He lamented the absence of historical depth in the prevailing sociological work of his time		He emphasized how the selection of deviant cases was the best way to generalize conclusions and produce theory	
The Revival of Comparative Historical Analysis			
Adorno, Horkheimer, Bloch and Polanyi They helped the discipline to survive during totalitarianism			
Development during the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s Anderson, Bendix, Eisenstadt, Giddens, Marshall, Tilly, Thompson			
Profound dissatisfaction with the overwhelming presence of sociologists and political scientists who looked at reality only from a synchronic perspective			

Table 1.2 (continued)

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 The Main Characteristics of the Comparative Historical Analysis

- (1) Concern for the 'identification and explanation' of casual configuration that produces certain outcomes;
  - (2) The analysis of historical sequences to avoid static explanations of reality;
  - (3) Systematic and contextualized comparison of similar and contrasting cases
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## Main Strength of the Comparative Historical Analysis

It helps to overcome the absence of diachronic perspective in quantitative studies

## The Main Shortfalls of Comparative Historical Analysis

- (1) The problem of case selection;
  - (2) The potential theoretical weakness;
  - (3) The overemphasis on narrative and path dependency approaches
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Source: Author's elaboration.

empirical models to cross-national studies became standard practice in political science.

However, the excessive reliance on quantitative studies without sufficient theoretical background was criticized by some scholars. Sartori (1970) and Przeworski and Teune (1971) underlined the importance of the elaboration of deductive frameworks to guide and discipline empirical research. Sartori (1970) warned against the reduction of critical thinking fostered by quantitative research, and highlighted the importance of maintaining the theoretical and deductive keystone of comparative research:

Most of the literature introduced by the title 'methods' (in the social, behavioural or political sciences) actually deals with survey techniques and social statistics, and has little if anything to share with the crucial concern of 'methodology', which is a concern with the logical structure and procedure of scientific enquiry. In a very crucial sense there is no methodology without *logos*, without thinking about thinking. (Sartori 1970: 1033.)

In the last 40 years the lack of logical structure jeopardized the ability to design and analyse issues in social science, often turning quantitative work into pure statistical modelling, without any awareness of the underlying philosophical logic necessary to undertake comparative studies. 'We seem to embark more and more on comparative endeavours without comparative method' (Sartori 1970: 1052). Przeworski and Teune (1970) complemented Sartori's discussion, showing the importance of establishing theoretical logical frameworks before embarking on any sophisticated statistical analysis.<sup>10</sup>

Lipset (1960; 1996) and Lijphart (1971; 1975) discussed the necessity to introduce a diachronic perspective in comparative studies to complement the lack of historical depth of quantitative studies. With his all-embracing mindset, Lipset was not yoked to any set of theoretical and methodological assumptions (Jesus Velasco 2004: 599) and for this reason regretted the absence of historical depth in the prevailing sociological work of his time: 'I have felt that one of the major weaknesses in contemporary sociology has been its tendency to ignore historical factors in attempting to analyse relationships' (Lipset 1958: 13). Lijphart (1971; 1975) defined the domain and the characteristics of comparative politics against the experimental and the statistical method. He emphasized how the selection of deviant cases was the best way to sharpen conclusions and produce theory (Lijphart 1971: 692).

As already emphasized, after the 1960s, the quantitative comparative paradigm became dominant in political science and sociology (see Sartori 2009). In reaction to this pre-eminence comparative historical sociology progressively re-emerged.<sup>11</sup> During the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s many sociologists (Anderson 1964; 1974; Bendix 1964; Eisenstadt 1963; Giddens 1979; Marshall 1950; 1963; Barrington Moore 1966; Tilly 1964; 1978; Thompson 1968) revived the interest in this discipline recalling the work of Hume, Marx, Tocqueville, Durkheim, Weber, Adorno, Horkheimer, Bloch, Polanyi and others. This is what Smith defined in *The Rise of Historical Sociology*<sup>12</sup> (Smith 1991). The importance of this tradition<sup>13</sup> and its modern revival influenced comparative scholars who were dissatisfied by the prevalence of quantitative synchronic approaches in the literature (Mahoney and Rueschemeyer 2003).

However, historical comparative sociologists<sup>14</sup> are not a homogenous group of scholars. They use various methodologies and analyse different types of cases (nations, regions, departments) sharing only three main common characteristics (see Mahoney and Rueschemeyer 2003: 11–13): (1) the concern for the 'identification and explanation' of causal configuration that produces certain outcomes of interest; (2) the analysis of historical sequences to avoid static explanations of reality; and (3) the systematic and contextualized comparison of similar and contrasting cases.

Skocpol (1979) proposed applying this methodology to overcome the absence of a diachronic perspective in quantitative studies. *States and Revolutions* is a manifesto for the renewal of comparative historical analysis. However, comparative historical analysis also has some important shortcomings.

Firstly, comparative historical methods alone cannot help to select an appropriate unit of analysis<sup>15</sup> (Skocpol 1979). To face this limitation we melt the boundaries between quantitative and historical methodologies.

The reconciliation of the two methods is proposed by selecting Wallonia and the South of Italy, looking specifically at the residuals of the quantitative model.

Secondly, comparative historical methods may be theoretically weak, as highlighted by Kiser and Hetcher<sup>16</sup> (1991), from a rational choice theory perspective. They lamented that in comparative historical analysis the inductive process completely overtakes theoretical reflection (Kiser and Hetcher 1991: 24). This position raised an interesting debate; Quadagno and Knapp (1992) argued that comparative historical sociologists did not forsake the importance of theory,<sup>17</sup> subsequently, Somers<sup>18</sup> (1998: 739) replied by proposing the integration of theory and historical induction: history can help to construct general knowledge and it is not only useful for illustrative and descriptive purposes but also to generate causal inference. In this work the general theoretical explanatory power of the comparative historical analysis is derived from the comparison between the South of Italy and Wallonia with Flanders and the North East of Italy (see Lijphart 1971).

Thirdly, comparative historical methods often rely on the widespread use of narrative logic and path dependency approaches without adequate support for sequential problem solving (Haydu 1998: 353–4):

Advocates of narrative tales fail to clearly identify the mechanisms that link events into overarching tales. Path dependency identifies some of these mechanisms but fails to provide the overarching tales. [. . .]. One way of meeting these needs is to link facts from different periods into larger sequences of problem solving. Periods are demarcated on the basis of contrasting solutions to recurring problems, not different values of a causal variable or diverging outcomes between historical turning points.

By describing both the continuity and discontinuity of historical evolutions, it is possible to connect the historical and institutional development of a region without being deterministic. A sequential approach, in this sense, can provide a fuller sense of past causal experience and a way to integrate multiple registers of historical time (Haydu 1998: 358). This approach will be illustrated and applied in Chapters 7 and 8 in opposition to deterministic theories.

### 1.3 SUMMARY OF THE BOOK

The book is articulated into three parts. The first (Chapters 1, 2 and 3) clarifies the methodological tool box, the second (Chapters 4, 5 and 6) investigates the socio-economic model and the third (Chapters 7 and 8)

compares the divergent cases emerging from the socio-economic analysis at the historic-institutional level. Chapter 9 provides concluding thoughts.

More specifically, Chapter 2 defines social capital and describes its measurement. The objective is not to provide a new conceptual framework or a new definition, but to explain the theoretical and technical arguments that contributed to the construction of the index used in this work. The first section reviews the measurements proposed in the previous literature. The second clarifies the need for a new indicator, the methodology adopted to define the indicators and the dimensions of social capital, the characteristics of the regional units of analysis and the limitations of the new index.

Chapter 3 proposes historical, institutional and empirical reasons to shift from the national to the regional level of analysis. From an historical perspective, the regional analysis helps to account for the particular evolutions of certain areas, namely the South of Italy, Flanders and Wallonia, Eastern Germany and so on. From an institutional perspective, the regional analysis takes into consideration the impact of the European integration process and the progressive decentralization of competences from the central states to the regions, which have become more pronounced in the last decades as demonstrated by the Regional Authority Index (RAI). From an empirical point of view, the regional analysis is the most suited to capture the evolution of social capital because the Europeans that identify themselves with their region, rather than their local community or nation, tend to have stronger social networks and more generalized trust.

Chapter 4 presents the social capital scores for the European regions. The regional measurement is introduced by the theoretical debate between the Manchester school and the social networks theorists and by national measurement. In the theoretical debate, the necessity to bridge the gap between the use of individual observational data to measure social capital and the use of macro-independent variables is discussed. The national measurement has the function to show that the results gathered from the new index are consistent with the previous comparative literature. After this introduction, the new regional scores are compared to Beugelsdijk and Van Schaik's (2005a) scores and subsequently the 85 regions analysed are grouped into seven categories, according to the scores in the three social capital dimensions (formal social networks, informal social networks and social trust).

Chapter 5 clarifies the relevance of the socio-economic predictors and the technical arrangements adopted to measure their impact on social capital. The nexus between these variables and social capital is approached looking at: the theoretical debate on the rise of income inequality in Western European countries; the evolution of activation labour

market policies and the opportunity to introduce a universal basic income; the previous study on the relation between economic development, culture and social capital; and the relevance of national fragmentation.

Chapter 6 discusses the effects of the socio-economic predictors on social capital and connects the quantitative model to the historic-institutional analysis. The relative impact of the four independent variables on social capital and its three dimensions is tested using an ordinary least square regression (OLS) model. The model indicates that income inequality, labour market participation and national divergence are the most important predictors of social capital, while economic development is not significant. This result is refined in four ways: establishing a hierarchy among the predictors of social capital, investigating the impact of each variable on the three social capital dimensions, proposing different empirical models by dropping variables in turn, and testing the impact of the predictors on regions with different social capital rankings. Finally, the results of the quantitative model and the historic-institutional analysis (that is undertaken in Chapters 7 and 8) are connected through the selection of two divergent cases. The selection process is based on the residuals of the OLS model.

Chapter 7 discusses the relation between historical evolutions and social capital in the South of Italy and Wallonia. Vico's philosophy of history serves to introduce the results from the socio-economic model and the comparative historical analysis. The characteristics of the deviant cases are highlighted by comparing two control cases (Flanders and the North East of Italy). It is argued that, in the divergent cases the value of historical legacy is curtailed by the negative impact of the socio-economic factors; it is as if social capital 'sleeps'. The image of a historically passive South is critically re-assessed using the example of the *fasci siciliani*.

Chapter 8 integrates the historical discussion with an institutional perspective. The analysis is framed according to North's theory of institutional change and the use of a problem-solving approach. In both countries social fragmentation has been handled by political parties distributing public resources among their clientele. The high level of corruption and the strong control of public life by political parties has reduced the incentive for citizens to create secondary groups (outside the party's system) progressively eroding social trust and horizontal ties. The collapse of this system in the 1990s accelerated the decentralization process. Federalism was conceived as a way to increase accountability and social participation. However, the effects of the decentralization process on social capital in asymmetrical countries are not always positive.

## NOTES

1. The positive residuals do not undermine the condition of normality (see Chapter 6).
2. He considered kinship, neighbourhood and friendship as part of the *Gemeinschaft* which constitute the pillars of the social capital dimension labelled in this work (see Chapter 2) as informal social networks.
3. We will allude to this difference in our measurement of social capital with the distinction between formal and informal social networks (Chapter 2). However the distinction between formal and informal social networks cannot be fully assimilated to bonding and bridging social capital. The formal social networks dimension largely corresponds to what Putnam defined bridging social capital, but there are elements of the informal social networks dimension (such as meeting colleagues outside work) that cannot be considered bonding social capital.
4. He looked with nostalgia at the image of the man in the past. The idea of 'natural and political man', an image which provides a positive idea of social connectedness, was substituted in the twentieth century discourse by concepts like 'inadequate man', 'insufficient man' or 'disenchanted man'.
5. The first appearance of the concept, with the exception of Hanifan (1916), is in 1961 with Jane Jacobs' *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*. She criticized the artificial development of American cities and suggested putting social capital at the centre of city planning. Some authors adumbrated the impact of social relations on social structure and public policies without using the words 'social capital', but by describing similar phenomena (see Bott 1957; Banfield 1958; Mitchell 1969; Granovetter 1973). However it is only with Bourdieu (1980) that the concept gained academic recognition in the sociological debate. The main contemporary approaches to social capital analysis originate from differing points of view in many important aspects: the role of the individual in society and their duties (Fukuyama 1995; Pizzorno 1999; Sudgen 2000); the capacity of individuals to make rational choices and the impact they receive from different groups (Coleman 1998; 1990; Becker 1996); the evaluation of the institutional role (Woolcock and Narayan 2000; Rothstein and Stolle 2003) and the Welfare State (Van Oorschot and Arts 2005); the importance attributed to strong and weak ties (Granovetter 1973); the perpetual tension between community and society (Bagnasco 1999); the possible negative impact of this tension (Portes 1998); and the evolution of a neo-capital theory that postulates the shift from a class-based to an actor-based perspective (Lin 2000).
6. *Making Democracy Work* has been cited 21,068 times and *Bowling Alone* 19,043 times (Google Scholar <http://scholar.google.it/scholar?q=robert+Putnam&hl=it&btnG=Cerca&lr=>, accessed 26 December 2011).
7. Mill proposed to enhance comparative studies on the basis of the methods of agreement and difference (1882: 278–80). This methodological distinction is still widely used in the literature (Skocpol 1979; King et al. 1994).
8. Barrington Moore was largely inspired by the work of Brinton (1938); in *The Anatomy of Revolution* he compared the similarities between four major revolutions (English, American, French and Russian).
9. Almond and Verba tested a theory based on Lasswell's work (1948) with comparable empirical data collected in the United States, Germany, Mexico, Italy and the United Kingdom. In the words of Stein Rokkan (1964: 676): 'This book represents an innovation in the literature of comparative politics: it opens up new perspectives on the theory of democratic politics; it demonstrates the potentialities of a new method of data gathering and analysis; it points to a series of problems for further research and theorizing on the sources of national differences in the character of the relationship between government and the governed.' Another cross-national comparison largely influential in the literature has been proposed by Wilensky (1975).
10. They are especially famous for the proposition of two alternative research designs: 'the most similar and the most different system design'.

11. Comparative historical sociology is an old discipline; its roots can be traced to the work of important political philosophers, such as Hume and Marx, and the founding fathers of sociology, Tocqueville, Durkheim and Weber. The expansion of the discipline has been threatened largely by the advent of totalitarianism, and has survived only through the work of outstanding intellectuals (Adorno 1950; Adorno and Horkheimer 1979; Bloch 1954; Polanyi 1957).
12. Between 1958 and 1978, the number of American doctoral dissertations in the broad field of social history quadrupled (Smith 1991: 2).
13. On the connection between the comparative historical analysis and the work of the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s see Skocpol (1984). A more recent systematization of comparative historical sociology has been published by Mahoney and Rueschemeyer (2003).
14. A broad definition of historical sociology has been provided by Skocpol (1984: 1): 'Truly historical sociological studies have some or all of the following characteristics. Most basically, they ask questions about social structures or processes understood to be concretely situated in time and space. Second, they address processes over time, and take temporal sequence seriously in accounting for outcomes. Third, most historical analyses attend to the interplay of meaningful actions and structural contexts, in order to make sense of the unfolding of unintended as well as intended outcomes in individual lives and social transformations. Finally, historical sociological studies highlight the particular and varying features of specific kinds of social structures and patterns of change. Along with temporal processes and contexts, social and cultural differences are intrinsically of interest to historically oriented sociologists.'
15. Skocpol highlighted two other limitations of comparative historical analysis. The impossibility to control for all potential dependent variables: 'often it is not possible to find exactly the historical cases that one needs for the logic of certain comparisons. And even when the cases are roughly appropriate, perfect controls for all potentially relevant variables can never be achieved' (Skocpol 1979: 38), and the assumption that each case is independent: 'another set of problems stems from the fact that comparative historical analysis necessarily assumes (like any multivariate logic) that the units being compared are independent of one other. But actually, this assumption is rarely if ever fully valid for macro-phenomena such as revolutions. [ . . . ] These phenomena occur in unique world-historical contexts that change over time, and they happen within international structures that tie societies to one other' (Skocpol 1979: 39).
16. Another interesting criticism has been proposed by Goldthorpe (1991; 1997). Without denying the importance of history in sociological analysis he rejected the idea that the two subjects cannot be separated. He used different instruments to collect empirical evidence to show the divergence between the inquiries carried out by historians and sociologists.
17. Also authors like Tilly (1984), Ragin (1987), Abbott (1990), Bonnell (1980) and Skocpol (1984) highlighted the importance of theoretical interpretations in comparative historical analysis.
18. Their discussion is integrated by the contribution of: Boudon (1998) on the limitations of rational choice theory; and Goldstone (1998) and Calhoun (1998), on the recognition of the importance of Kiser and Hetcher's criticism. However, they take a distant position from the generalization of their judgment. According to them not all historical sociologists undermine the role of theory. Nearly an entire issue of the *American Journal of Sociology* (Vol. 104 (3) 1998) is dedicated to this discussion.