



# **Too Much Bonding, Too Little Bridging and Linking. Social Capital in International Sports Associations**

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# **Assumption: actor behaviour in international sports associations**

- in international sports associations, clientilism, secrecy, unaccountability, 'old boys networks', corruption and criminal activity occur more frequently than in most other associations
- intermediate position in-between the normal corporate organization and gated communities/predatory governments/mafia groups
- cases and anecdotes as evidence (investigative journalism): IOC/Salt Lake City, FIFA, International Volleyball Federation, International Boxing Association

# An explanation: the dark side of social capital

- individual traits versus organizational features?
- too much 'bonding' in small closed groups; the cohesion of groups is secured through dense in-group networking, sharing of spoils and enforced group trust, and hostility towards other groups,
- too little 'bridging' in-between groups, i.e. too little generalized trust, voluntary networking and common norms and values
- a modified version of the explanation of behaviour and interaction in predatory governments, mafia groups, criminal gangs and terrorist groups (and to some ethnic groups)



# Other explanations

- very thin form of democracy
- very limited accountability
- very little openness
- footloose multinationals
- very weak countervailing forces against the free display of power games
- all factors are important but they are mobilized and mediated through the role of social capital

# What is social capital?

- social capital is an asset that emanates from participation in social relations
- networks, trust, civic norms (reciprocity, mutuality, honesty), voluntary associations
- definition 1: social capital is the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of relationships
- definition 2: social capital refers to the institutions, relationships and norms that shape the quality and quantity of society's social interactions

# Bonding, bridging and linking

- *bonding social capital*: ties (normally strong ties) between people in similar situations, such as immediate family, close friends and neighbours
- *bridging social capital*: more distant ties (normally weak ties) of like persons, such as loose friendships and workmates
- *linking capital*: relations to unlike people in dissimilar situations, such as those who are entirely outside of the community



# The benefits and the warm glow of social capital

- the beneficial effect of social capital has been documented in a multitude of studies and in different fields: education, health, neighbourhood quality, regional development, organizational citizenship behaviour, innovation processes, economic growth and development, and democracy (voluntary sports associations)
- conclusion: more social capital is good?



# The dark side of social capital

- unfortunately, some forms of bonding social capital are associated with negative outcomes for the wider society and sometimes even for the group itself: downward-leveling social norms, antisocial behaviour, lock-in and weak adaptability, exclusion, racism, religious bigotry, increased inequality and preservation of power structures



# The ambiguities of bonding

- a minimum level of bonding is crucial for socialization and identity
- beyond that level increased social capital can have positive or negative effects on the groups and positive and negative effects on the wider society dependent on the context

# The effects of bonding in international sports associations

- bonding capital is highly beneficial to the privileged members of the individuals and the group in power
- however, the impacts to the wider society are often highly negative: inefficiency, clientilism, exclusion, perversion of democracy
- fertile environment for corruption (“misuse of public office for private ends”)



# Exploiting the opportunities, sharing the spoils and preserving the power

- good opportunities (as well as high individual rewards) for bonding
- while bridging is very difficult (cultural differences) and gives few and uncertain individual rewards
- good opportunities for exclusion and power preservation (strong mutual interests of insiders, fractured opponents with weak interests in changing the situation)
- good opportunities for clientilism and corruption (sharing spoils, corruption indexes, secrecy, weak formal accountability, weak public sphere)



# What can be done?

- objectively implausible
- but room for institutional entrepreneurs and *agents provocateur*
- more openness and accountability
- governments, UN
- WACA