

Introduction: Social Capital and City Life

Joseph D. Lewandowski and Gregory W. Streich

In many respects, globalization and urbanization would appear to be coextensive and mutually reinforcing processes. For the emergence of a world society increasingly defined by various forms of economic, political, and social interdependence has been accompanied by persistent and dramatic increases in urban populations and the globalization of urban cultural forms. In fact, today half the globe's population lives in cities; nearly seventy percent of the populations of Latin America, Europe, and the US reside in urban centers, while the once primarily rural populations of Asia and India continue to urbanize rapidly. Even some of the most conservative estimates and models suggest that the percentage of urban dwellers world-wide will increase to two thirds by the middle of this century.

Of course, the forces of globalization and urbanization are uneven. So, too, are the effects, especially on the ways of life and relations between and among today's urban residents. Such effects are not readily captured in a litany of statistical data and population projections. On the contrary, as globalization-friendly neo-liberal economic and political policies have effectively transformed many urban economies from industrial-based manufacturing to information and service economies, the democratic potential of urban civil societies and the social geographies of many cities have been—and will continue to be—profoundly altered.

More specifically, a spectrum of trends in the alteration of the fabric of urban existence has emerged in the past few decades. At one end of the spectrum, urban capitals such as New York and London have become “global cities,” as Saskia Sassen (1991) has argued. With their magnetic stores of skilled human capital, advanced infrastructures and technologies, and growth-oriented approach to economic development, such cities constitute new hubs in the highly interdependent information and service economies and serve as an operational base for global elites who wield outsized influence on the world stage. At the other end of the spectrum, the shift from industrial manufacturing to information and service economies has, quite literally, gutted the working-class populations of many urban centers and generated post-industrial wastelands of abandoned factories and depleted—and socioeconomically and politically weakened—metropolitan populations. Indeed, post-industrial cities such as Cleveland and Detroit in the US, or Manchester and Leipzig in Europe, are “shrinking cities”—not merely in terms of their population but also in their continued capacity to foster the kinds of growth and sociability upon which urban residents once depended for a vibrant

civil society and democratic way of life. In the middle of the spectrum—between global cities and their powerful elites at one end and shrinking cities and their decimated working-class core at the other end—stand the vast majority of urban centers in the contemporary world. In such cities, everyday urban social life is transforming in complex ways that often parallel, but do not simply reproduce, the economic, political, and social dynamics of “global” and “shrinking” cities.

It is the primary objective of this volume to explore processes of social capital formation within urban contexts that range across this very broad spectrum. Indeed, what unites the contributions gathered here is not an abstract concern for the “future” of cities, whatever that may be. Instead, what contributors here seek to do is draw on social capital theory and related research programs to explain how the networks, norms, and ties of contemporary urban existence are formed—or deformed, as the case may be—in contexts of globalization and urbanization. Put differently, the overarching concern of the present inquiry is not simply how many people are—or will end up—living in cities as globalization and urbanization continue apace, but rather how and why contemporary city life unfolds in the myriad ways that it does under such conditions.

For it is precisely in the face of the forces of globalization and urbanization that the formation of social capital has encountered—and will continue to encounter—unique challenges and opportunities. Indeed, in many ways it would not be an exaggeration to say that the basic outline of the possible outcomes of such an encounter is already evident in 19th century discussions of city life in modern industrial capitalist societies. On the one hand, the rise of globalization and urbanization, understood as forces of capitalism writ large, appeared to threaten the “dissolution of mankind into monads” and the “murder of the collective,” to borrow two admittedly ponderous phrases from Engels’ 1844 study of the conditions of the working class in England. On the other hand, the sheer size and density of modern urban centers might, as Simmel (1903) suggested in his work on “metropolis and mental life,” offer distinct opportunities for individuals to unfetter themselves from the primary binding ties of community and fashion instead a unique individual existence by utilizing secondary networks of relations to others more or less unlike themselves.

Yet taken as a whole, the contributions to this volume present a much broader and at the same time more nuanced portrait of the current situation of and prospects for social relations embedded in today’s urban milieu. Indeed, this collection renders no final verdict on the merits or demerits of social capital and its relative potential for transforming urban settings. Instead, it more modestly aims to engage in a critical dialog about the complex nature and diverse functions of the stored value of social relations in heterogeneous urban settings such as Detroit, Los Angeles, Budapest, Prague, Sao Paulo, Hong Kong, Shanghai, Harare, and Auckland, among others. More precisely, the (re)production and circulation of the networks, ties, trust, and norms that define and enable (and also limit) individual and collective action in such urban locations are explored in considerable detail in, for example, analyses of squatter re-settlement projects,

urban funeral societies, an HIV/AIDS community, as well as among pensioners, immigrants, migrants, and gang members.

This attempt to place social capital theory and research in a *critical* engagement with contemporary issues of social complexity, inequality, cultural pluralism, and ethnoracial diversity and division constitutes the central and unifying thematic of the book. To paraphrase Granovetter's (1973, 1983) oft-cited formulation, it is the formation, strengths and weaknesses of strong and weak ties in the context of such issues that animates the analyses pursued here. Contributors draw on contemporary theory and research in social capital, political economy, urban planning and policy, social movements, film studies, civil society, and action theory to explore how social norms, networks, connections, and ties are created, deployed—and often frayed—under conditions of social complexity, inequality, cultural pluralism, and ethnoracial diversity and division that increasingly characterize modern urban existence.

Given the diverse range of disciplines and interests represented here, it is perhaps not surprising that individual contributors define and operationalize the notion of “social capital” somewhat differently in what follows. As editors, we have resisted the urge to impose a unifying approach to the study of urban social life. In so doing, it is our hope that each chapter provides impetus for rethinking what, precisely, is meant by the notion of social capital in the metropolitan milieu. Moreover, the deliberate methodological pluralism exhibited here proves essential, or so we would argue, to adequately addressing the broad range of challenges and opportunities posed by the complexity, inequality, pluralism, and diversity of modern city life.

Alina Oxendine begins this engagement in Chapter 1 with an empirically-based consideration of the impact of economic inequality on levels of social capital in urban centers of the US. Advancing Eric Uslaner's insights into the relation between trust and inequality, Oxendine draws on data tracking the rise of income inequality in the US since the 1970s to explain how and why economic disparity undermines social capital formation in urban contexts, where income polarization tends to be the most pronounced. Economic inequality in urban contexts causes a significant decline in civic attitudes and behaviors such as social trust and associational involvement. Moreover, economic inequality diminishes urban citizens' participation in voluntary associations—a finding that has profound implications for democratic life because it negatively impacts both poor and wealthy citizens, albeit in different ways. According to Oxendine, economic inequality not only weakens cross-racial and inter-class trust but also undermines citizens' confidence in government, both key elements for the cultivation of social capital in the urban milieu. In light of such findings, Oxendine identifies public policies, civil society strategies, and a form of urban planning—specifically, “New Urbanism”—that offer promising avenues for the cultivation of cross-class and inter-racial “bridging” social capital in urban contexts.

Oxendine's examination of the inequality–distrust dynamic evident in urban centers is carried forward in Chapter 2, where Katalin Füzér and Judit

Monostori focus squarely on the relationship among economic inequality, social capital, and social exclusion. Using data from the European Union's Statistics on Income and Living Conditions (EU-SILC) and their own data on segregated "crisis" neighborhoods in the city of Pécs, Hungary, Füzér and Monostori offer unique insights into social capital formation and urban rehabilitation projects. By distinguishing different types of social connections that comprise bonding and bridging forms of social capital, their detailed empirical analysis of distinct neighborhoods in Pécs reveals that, among socially excluded groups, the pattern of social capital accumulation differs markedly from that of their more well-off counterparts. Specifically, residents of crisis neighborhoods are surprisingly rich in "bonding" social capital but lack the kind of "bridging" social capital that is thought to be a crucial ingredient of economic well-being and political influence. In drawing their rich discussion to a close, Füzér and Monostori conclude that the unique patterns of social capital accumulation found in such economically segregated neighborhoods should be taken into account by urban planners. Specifically, they recommend a "community planning model" in which local people are "linked" with city managers, academics, and urban planners in the design, implementation, and assessment of urban rehabilitation efforts. Such a strategy, they contend, can enhance bridging and linking forms of social capital within crisis neighborhoods without unduly diluting the already existing supply of bonding social capital.

In taking up an implicit practical function of social capital—that of its potential for resolving collective action problems—Annamária Orbán draws on game theory, empirical research on residency patterns in Budapest condominium communities, and oral interviews with condominium residents in Chapter 3. In so doing, Orbán provides new empirical insights into the social life of condominium-style residential communities that are emerging in the post-Communist "New Europe." More importantly, this chapter helps identify what external and internal factors enable—and disable—shared cooperative action among residents of post-Communist urban societies increasingly characterized by loose social ties. In light of Orbán's analysis, it appears that the resolution of collective action problems within the microcosm of condominium life holds clues to resolving broader issues facing post-Communist societies, such as the clash of public goods with private interests and the problem of cooperation across increasingly stratified socio-economic lines. Indeed, the presence or absence of trust emerges as an important variable when explaining whether urban condominium residents—and urban citizens more generally—engage in altruistic, cooperative, and collective action.

In Chapter 4, Joseph Lewandowski broadens and deepens the discussion of the challenges of inequality and ethnoracial diversity for the formation of social capital in urban centers such as São Paulo, Baltimore, and Prague. Specifically, in developing an account of "urban social poverty," Lewandowski aims to identify and assess the effects of what it means to live a socially impoverished life in the urban milieu. The objectives of the chapter are both methodological and political. At the methodological level, elaborating a distinct account of urban social poverty

through the prism of social capital theory should enable further research on poverty to expand its multidimensional analysis to include a more robust consideration of the socially poor, and to consider the diverse mechanisms and asymmetrical effects of social poverty on levels of economic and social inequality in a given urban context. At the political level, the point of identifying specific sites of urban social poverty is to demonstrate the normative obstacles such poverty poses for the cultivation of a democratic culture.

In Chapter 5, Gregory Streich extends Lewandowski's distinction between horizontal and vertical forms of social capital in a discussion of cities and film. Drawing on film studies, social philosophy, and social capital theory, Streich argues that popular culture in general and film more specifically provides textual and pedagogical material for a richer understanding of urban social capital. Because cities are increasingly challenged by economic polarization and political inequality, immigration and xenophobia, as well as social dislocation and spatial isolation, films set in urban settings often examine these challenges and can be read as social critiques of contemporary city life. To illustrate, Streich examines three narratives of social capital at work in Clint Eastwood's 2008 film *Gran Torino*, set in Detroit, Michigan, one of the "shrinking" cities dotting the post-industrial American landscape: a decaying form of white ethnic bonding social capital; a new form of Hmong immigrant bonding social capital that has positive and negative dimensions; and a nascent cross-ethnic bridging form of social capital. By highlighting these distinct strands of social capital evident in city life, Streich suggests that films such as *Gran Torino* not only engage in social critique but also stir and enlarge the moral imaginations of viewers.

While Streich uses film studies to identify youth gangs as an example of the "dark side" of the kind of bonding social capital that reflects and reinforces various urban inequalities, in Chapter 6 Rawiri Taonui and Greg Newbold offer an in-depth historical case study of gangs in New Zealand. With as many as 3,500 gang members in a national population of 4.3 million, New Zealand has more members per capita than many other countries. And the largest New Zealand gangs are the Māori gangs of New Zealand's cities. Indeed, Māori gangs first emerged in the early 1960s and have since become an enduring feature of modern urban New Zealand society. While gangs in general provide a sense of unity, kinship, and identity for members—thus constituting a form of bonding social capital—Taonui and Newbold suggest that Māori gangs should not be understood simply as a result of youth anomie or a manifestation of pre-colonial tribal conflict. Instead, they should be understood through the lens of alienation, intergenerational impoverishment, structural marginalization, and trauma of European colonization and postcolonial dominance. This analysis, Taonui and Newbold argue, not only provides a more fine-grained understanding of the origins of Māori youth gangs but also supports more culturally-tailored programs that help "re-enculturalize" Māori youth into the social bonds, kinship ties, and identities of Māori culture.

As Taonui and Newbold make clear, the ties, bonds, and norms that inform ethnic communities are sources of social capital that, in important ways, help to

sustain marginalized citizens. In Chapter 7, Gift Dafuleya and Scelo Zibagwe bring this into focus with an examination of the social networks and ties within the African urban milieu. Here Dafuleya and Zibagwe consider social capital from the perspective of community life and collective action in urban African funeral societies. Funeral societies are local indigenous organizations made up of friends, relatives, township residents, and workmates who group together to finance, save and/or insure themselves and their extended families against death-related expenses. Such societies constitute a unique source of social capital in at least two respects. First, they are deeply embedded in social relations. Second, they provide opportunities for care, cooperation, risk sharing, and mutual benefit. In this way Dafuleya and Zibagwe use urban funeral societies in Africa to clarify and advance contemporary discussions of urban social capital and collective action. Indeed, they introduce a new dimension to the analysis, that of the “care market” as a mechanism for production and exchange of social capital in the African urban milieu. In addition to providing various forms of “care” for members, Dafuleya and Zibagwe suggest that African funeral societies have an untapped potential to contribute to the economic development of urban communities by becoming more active providers of micro-loans to their members.

In Chapter 8, Innocent Chirisa pursues a broader discussion of social capital among the urban poor in Africa. Indeed, despite many challenges facing most African urban centers, Chirisa argues that post-colonial African cities exhibit a number of continuities in terms of social capital development. Even in the context of endemic political corruption and widespread authoritarianism, strong norms, networks, and ties among poverty-stricken black communities continue to prevail. To illustrate these continuities, Chirisa provides an empirically and historically informed discussion of the daily lives of the urban poor in Harare, Zimbabwe, highlighting how once second-class colonized groups interact in various sectors of the urban economy and jointly cope with the daily challenges they face. There is, the chapter argues, a social connectivity among the poor in Harare that enables these communities to cooperate within contexts of extreme distrust, economic degradation, and political turmoil. In fact, for Chirisa social capital appears to have a collateralizing effect on the poor citizenry of Harare.

Similarly, the daily struggles of the urban poor stand as the focus of Chapter 9, which concentrates specifically on the challenges faced by urban squatters in Kathmandu, Nepal. Here Urmi Sengupta and Sujeet Sharma detail a case study of the Kirtipur Housing Project (KHP), the first ever grassroots-led squatter resettlement project in Kathmandu. Inasmuch as the KHP provides a legal, affordable, and good quality housing solution through grassroots mobilization, the project is considered a success story by local residents. The chapter analyzes the complex dynamics of this mobilization and the roles of different actors—including local grassroots federations, local government and non-governmental agencies, as well as international non-governmental organizations—to explain the conditions that enable community engagement, civil action, and local government interests to converge in a constructive

partnership. Indeed, aside from meeting the narrowly defined objective to resettle 44 households, the KHP reflects the exceptional capacity of a community that is economically impoverished yet rich in social capital to succeed in the area of project planning and management. As such, the KHP stands as a concrete case study in how the urban poor can collectively organize and deploy their social capital in ways that directly improves their well-being.

While several chapters in this volume identify ways in which social capital can be mobilized to improve the lives of the urban poor even under conditions of political, social, economic, and cultural marginalization, we must also be cognizant of the possibility—or risk—that social ties, networks, and connections might perpetuate a community's marginalization. This double-edged nature of social capital is highlighted in Chapter 10 by Lois Takahashi and Michelle Magalong. Drawing on their ethnographically-based analysis of Filipino men living with AIDS/HIV in Los Angeles, California, Takahashi and Magalong define and operationalize a “disruptive social capital” framework for analyzing various urban social issues clustered around health and illness. Echoing themes discussed by Taonui and Newbold, they remind us that the social networks, ties, and resources within marginalized urban communities are often unstable, turbulent, and double-edged inasmuch as they risk perpetuating a community's marginalization. This chapter illustrates how, on the one hand, “disrupted” groups can and do use their networks, connections, and ties to gain increased access to various health resources and empowerment and yet, on the other hand and precisely as a result of such networks, connections, and ties, such groups simultaneously risk engendering health-denigrating conditions that perpetuate illness and marginalization.

In Chapter 11 Sam Wong adds a crucial—and all too often overlooked—dimension to the discussion of social capital and urban life, namely, that of gender. Pursuing issues alluded to by Charisa, Wong draws on first-hand research into the lives of mainland Chinese migrants to examine this “gendered dimension.” In particular, Wong explores the potential theoretical and methodological limitations of the predominantly gendered approach to social capital studies. Without denying the importance of gender in the production, circulation, and accumulation of urban social capital, the chapter highlights the importance of social standing and status in social capital wealth or impoverishment. Painting a vivid picture of male Chinese migrants' social lives in Hong Kong, the chapter offers an ethnographically informed argument about the role of gender and status in social capital formation. Wong's discussion not only compares how male and female migrants exhibit different strategies of cross-border movement as well as different perceptions and uses of public space, it also addresses the issue of power in gender relations *vis-à-vis* larger socio-economic processes, especially migration and neo-liberalism.

Finally, in Chapter 12 Chen Honglin and Wong Yu-Cheung offer a quantitative analysis of the formation and circulation of urban social capital, this time among older adults living in the urban communities of Shanghai, China. Just as poor communities are often rich sources of social capital, elderly residents are important bearers of social capital in their respective communities. Honglin and Yu-Cheung

demonstrate that social networks, community norms, and political participation are key indicators of the presence of stocks of social capital among older Shanghai residents. In particular, political participation in the form of Communist party membership reveals itself to be the most significant factor for higher levels of social capital among the city's aging population. Because of the under-appreciated ways in which aging populations are bearers and contributors of social capital in a rapidly urbanizing China, Honglin and Yu-Cheung observe that such rich stocks of social capital are at risk when elderly residents are relocated and uprooted. Echoing themes raised by Füzér and Monostori, Honglin and Yu-Cheung recommend that urban planners take heed of elderly residents so as to avoid diluting and diminishing their rich stocks of social capital when neighborhood relocation projects are pursued.

In sum, the chapters collected here are designed to analyze social capital (de)formation in the urban milieu from a varied and rich variety of disciplinary and geographic perspectives. The result is a kind of kaleidoscopic view of contemporary urban existence under the twin imperatives of globalization and urbanization. As noted above, such a collection cannot—and surely does not—propose to offer a definitive account of social capital and city life. But neither does it simply pretend to describe the norms and forms of social life informed by such imperatives. On the contrary, it is our hope that the work collected here promotes *critical* discussions of how individual urban residents and the various networks and groups to which they belong reflexively engage one another and the urban societies in which they are embedded.