

SOCIAL CAPITAL

Social capital has become a core theoretical concept in the Social Sciences – linking deep insights from sociology and political theory to eminently practical applied interventions within communities and organizations. With this book, Dr Singh provides a clear, cogent review of the current state of the field and how researchers and policymakers can leverage social capital for deep, positive social change. The scholarship is thorough and insightful, tracing the roots of the idea and linking it with modern digital developments and applications across multiple policy domains. This book deserves a place on the shelf of anyone engaged in development research, practice, and policy making.

– Prof James Moody, USA

SOCIAL CAPITAL

Evolution, Contestation, Application
and Digitization

BY

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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

To my toddler daughter

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ABSTRACT

Do we really know social capital? Moreover, is our understanding of the 100-year-old term consistent with the digital world? This book delves into the intricacies of social capital, examining its historical evolution, contemporary contestation, and practical applications. The author introduces a novel refurbished notion of social capital that will improve our conceptual and practical understanding about the term while outlaying future course of actions.

This book begins with an in-depth analysis of the evolution of social capital, tracing its roots from early little known nonscientific casual use (1905) to its modern-day conceptualization. It explores the different concepts, dimensions, and application of social capital, including bonding, bridging, and linking social capital; and how these knowledge contours have changed over time in the digital era. The author examines how social capital has evolved from the traditional society to the age of social media, and online communities. The work describes how social capital is shaped up by social relationships, norms, and institutions and how it also has influenced them in due course of time. It critically examines the confused and ambiguous use of social capital in measurement and conceptualization by scholars, practitioners, and policymakers.

One of the key focuses of the book is the evolution and contestation of social capital term over the years and across the disciplines while recognizing digital form of social capital in present time. It critically examines the debates and controversies surrounding social capital, including issues of inequality, power dynamics, and social exclusion. After a thorough examination, the author devises a sound understanding of the term that has originated in writings of the early scholars while criticizing the ambiguous and overlapping usage that emerged over time in scholarly debates and practice. The author traces the early debates and tensions within and that between sociologists and economists that distorted the meaning of social capital, and made the term highly ambiguous and complex. Not only the concept but also its forms, and states of being of

the term has been varying even in the most popular works that the author will bring fore to the discussion.

On a positive note, this book will examine how social capital has been used for positive social change, including its role in civic engagement in citizen support groups in the United Kingdom, community development programs in Latin America, Africa, and South Asia, and economic welfare in the United States and European countries. The author highlights successful examples of social capital application in the digital realm, ranging from crowdsourcing initiatives to social entrepreneurship, and provides practical recommendations for leveraging social capital for social good in the digital era. While briefly introducing the darker side of social capital in the digital era, such as the spread of misinformation, echo chambers, and online polarization, the author discusses the ethical and moral implications of social capital in a rapidly changing digital landscape. This book is a thought-provoking and timely exploration of the multifaceted concept of social capital in the context of the digital revolution. The write-up has offered a comprehensive overview of the evolution of social capital, critically examines its contestation in the digital age, and provides practical insights for harnessing social capital for positive social change.

FOREWORD

Dr Mudit Singh is a social scientist with PhD from Motilal Nehru Institute of Technology, Allahabad. As a postdoctoral scholar, he worked in sociology discipline of Humanities and Social Sciences Department of Indian Institute of Technology, Kanpur. He worked on the problem of democratic participation in Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRI). He has published a framework on Participatory Local Governance of Energy Transition. The framework was successfully presented before the Elke Weber team at Princeton and other international and national forums. He combines the spirit of a fieldworker and a theorist of social capital. He has published a book, several papers and research reports on social issues and development interventions.

In this book, the author delves into the transformation of social capital from its traditional roots to its modern manifestations in the age of social media and online communities. The text explores how social capital is intricately shaped by social relationships, norms, and institutional structures, while also shedding light on its reciprocal influence on these very elements over time. This book takes a critical stance on the often perplexing and ambiguous utilization of the concept of social capital, a phenomenon observed across the scholarly, practical, and policymaking realms. Central to the book's focus is the historical evolution and ongoing debates regarding the term "social capital," acknowledging its digital adaptation in today's world. The author conducts a thorough examination of these debates and controversies, which encompass issues of inequality, power dynamics, and social exclusion. Ultimately, the author strives to offer a more coherent and well-founded understanding of a concept that was originally rooted in early scholarship but became entangled in an intricate web of overlapping and uncertain usage throughout the course of scholarly discourse and practice.

Furthermore, this book sheds light on how social capital has been harnessed for positive societal transformation, highlighting its role in various contexts such as citizen support groups in the United Kingdom, community development programs across Latin America, Africa, and South Asia, and its contribution to economic welfare in the United States and European nations. While briefly acknowledging the potential negative aspects of social capital in

the digital era, such as the dissemination of misinformation, the creation of echo chambers, and the exacerbation of online polarization, the author also delves into the ethical and moral considerations tied to social capital within the swiftly evolving digital landscape.

In sum, this book serves as a thought-provoking and timely exploration of the multifaceted concept of social capital in the context of the digital revolution, offering a comprehensive review of its evolution, a critical examination of its contested nature in the digital age, and practical insights for harnessing social capital for positive societal progress.

I think the students and young scholars of sociology, development studies, civil society action, and program implementation would benefit significantly from this book.

Arun Kumar Sharma
Senior Professor of Sociology (Retd)
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16 October 2023
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FOREWORD

Social capital has impacted billions of lives since its inception and is equally popular among academicians and policymakers. The term has been applied by the international agencies such as the World Bank and the United Nations since last three decades.

Social capital has been used for positive social change, including its role in civic engagement in citizen support groups in the United Kingdom, community development programs in Latin America, Africa, and South Asia, and economic welfare in the United States and European countries. This book by Dr Mudit Kumar Singh introduces a novel refurbished notion of social capital that will improve our conceptual and practical understanding about the term in the digital era. The book is a thought-provoking and timely exploration of the multifaceted concept of social capital in the context of the digital revolution. The write-up has offered a comprehensive overview of the evolution of social capital, critically examines its contestation in the digital age, and provides practical insights for harnessing social capital for positive social change. The author highlights successful examples of social capital application in the digital realm, ranging from crowdsourcing initiatives to social entrepreneurship, and provides practical recommendations for leveraging social capital for social good in the digital era. While briefly introducing the darker side of social capital in the digital era, such as the spread of misinformation, echo chambers, and online polarization, the author discusses the ethical and moral implications of social capital in a rapidly changing digital landscape.

Chapters in the book will cater to the needs policymakers and that of UG and PG students from wide discipline including Computer Science, Management, Sociology, and Political Science.

I wish Dr Singh's contribution to the knowledge of social capital will benefit the society around the globe.

(Prof Dr V P Kallimani)

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