



Making Democracy 1993

Work: Civic

Traditions in

Modern Italy

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Robert Putnam, with

Robert Leonardi and

Rafaella Y. Nanetti

Harvard political scientist Robert Putnam is well known for his contention, first presented in an article entitled “Bowling Alone,” that civic engagement in con-

temporary America is in decline. The intellectual foundation for his argument was this book, *Making Democracy Work*, based on research done by Putnam and his associates, not in the United States but in Italy, contrasting the social and political structures of the country’s northern and southern regions. An examination of the mechanics of successful democracy, the book has become in the twelve years since its publication a contemporary classic of political science.

Putnam argued that northern Italy had flourishing political institutions because of the complex web of informal and formal organizations that brought people together, fostered communications, and increased involvement in the community. He contrasted this with the comparative paucity of such social organizations in southern Italy, which had much weaker political institutions. Economic development did not explain the strength of political institutions; rather, it was the quality of civic life—voter turnout, newspaper readership, and membership in associations ranging from sports clubs to choral societies—that brought about the strength and efficacy of political institutions.

The book was hailed in the *New York Times Book Review* as a “rare classic in political science,” and in the *Nation* as the modern successor to Tocqueville’s classic *Democracy in America*. The *Economist* described it as a “great work of social science, worthy to rank alongside de Tocqueville, Pareto, and Weber.”

Making democracy work. CIVIC Traditions in modern Italy. Robert D. Putnam. with Robert Leonardi and Raffaella Y. Nonetti. The Civic Legacies of Medieval Italy Civic Traditions After Unification Measuring the Durability of Civic Traditions Economic Development and Civic Traditions. Chapter 6 Social Capital and Institutional Success. Dilemmas of Collective Action Social Capital, Trust, and Rotating Credit Associations Norms of Reciprocity and Networks of Civic Engagement History and Institutional Performance: Two Social. Since its publication in 1993, Robert Putnam's *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy*,¹ has generated more discussion and debate than any work of political science in recent years. For the compelling arguments it makes, the innovative methodology it employs and the exciting research agenda it initiates, it is a path breaking work which has already changed the way academics and policy-makers approach the relationship between politics and society. In northern Italy, where citizens participate actively in sports clubs, literary guilds, service groups and choral societies, regional governments are "efficient in their internal operation, creative in their policy initiatives and effective in implementing those initiatives Putnam argued that northern Italy had flourishing political institutions because of the complex web of informal and formal organizations that brought people together, fostered communications, and increased involvement in the community. He contrasted this with the comparative paucity of such social organizations in southern Italy, which had much weaker political institutions. Economic development did not explain the strength of political institutions; rather, it was the quality of civic life—voter turnout, newspaper readership, and membership in associations ranging from sports clubs to choral