

CAN SOCIAL CAPITAL CONTRIBUTE TO INTERACTIVE GOVERNANCE THEORY? A PROPOSED FRAMEWORK

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Introduction

Social capital concept is increasingly used in research on fisheries management. Here we propose a framework for the study of social capital at multiple levels of organizations (within and between stakeholder groups). The proposed framework is illustrated by examples from artisanal fisheries in Uruguay, around Piriápolis, which is a major artisanal fishery center, where we are studying conditions for co-management towards fisheries governance.

Social capital and natural resources management

The past twenty years have seen a growing interest in social capital in diverse disciplines, such as political science, sociology, economics, development and most importantly, in the context of this paper, natural resources management (Pretty & Ward 2001, Plummer & FitzGibbon 2007). This growing interest can be partially explained by the frequent association between social capital and improved economic and social wellbeing (Pretty 2003, Grafton 2005). However, the relationship between social capital and collective action should not be interpreted as being straightforward. Likewise, it is acknowledged that social capital is not the only factor explaining the success or failure of resource management (Bodin & Crona 2008), or the only factor to achieve sustainable livelihoods (Pretty & Ward 2001).

Robert Putnam (1993) defined social capital as connections among individuals—social networks, and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them. Even though numerous definitions of social capital can be found in the literature, all of them have “interactions among individuals” as a central component. It is increasingly common to find critiques of the concept of social capital and its limitations (Pretty & Ward 2001, Plummer & FitzGibbon 2007). Some forms of social capital can be negative. For example, in some cases traditional norms (part of social capital) favour elites to which leaders usually belong (Dahal & Adhikari 2008).

Not surprisingly, the wide range of definitions of social capital is accompanied by numerous citations about the difficulty to operationalize this concept (Grafton 2005, Plummer & FitzGibbon 2007). In order to understand social capital more concretely, Uphoff & Wijayaratra (2000, p.1876) proposed a distinction between structural and cognitive social capital. They argued that the former is more external and objective, and “include roles, rules, procedures, and precedents as well as social networks that establish on-going patterns of social interaction”. The latter is more internal and subjective, including “norms, values, attitudes and beliefs that predispose people to cooperate”. Uphoff & Wijayaratra (2000) also noted that

these two forms of social capital are connected and mutually reinforcing. Other authors have suggested combining structural and cognitive aspects (Van Deth 2003, Plummer & FitzGibbon 2007). Moreover, in terms of the structural social capital, three network dimensions should be considered: bonding, bridging, and linking (Grafton 2005). The bonding form occurs within existing groups; the bridging form refers to horizontal connections among similar but different groups; and linking is concerned with vertical connections among groups at different levels of organization.

Despite all these connections across different horizontal and vertical levels, the focus of the majority of studies on social capital in the context of natural resources management has been on the community. For instance, Dahal & Adhikari (2008) stated that many studies have overemphasized local relations (i.e. bonding social capital) in natural resources management, without acknowledging the multi-faceted aspects of social capital. They stressed the need to study bridging and linking social capital, in addition to bonding because there is interplay among the three kinds of social capital.

Pretty & Ward (2001, p.211) identified five types of network connections: (i) Local connections among individuals within local groups and communities; (ii) Local-local connections: horizontal connections between groups within communities or between communities; (iii) Local-external connections: vertical connections between local groups and external agencies or organizations; (iv) External-external connections: horizontal connections between external agencies; and (v) External connections: strong connections between individuals within external agencies. Pretty & Ward (2001) noted that not all these connections were emphasized in practice, e.g. a development agency may focus on the local level without building connections with other external agencies. It seems to us that subsequent research has not given attention to the last two categories, critical importance for the present paper. Furthermore, an important gap identified by Plummer & FitzGibbon (2006) concerns social capital at the government level, and this omission is related to the lack of emphasis on all the connections of social capital identified by Pretty & Ward (2001). “Social capital on the part of resource agencies may be wanting, both in relations with other agencies and with local communities” (Plummer & FitzGibbon 2006, p.59).

A proposed social capital framework

Based on the above gaps, here we propose a social capital framework (Figure 1) which combines the structural and cognitive components of social capital to study relationships among fishery stakeholders at multiple levels (e.g. between fishers – from the same or neighbouring communities; between fishers and the management agency; between fishers and middlemen; between middlemen; between the management agency and the enforcement agency; between employees of the management agency). In this framework, each type of network connection - bonding, bridging and linking (structural social capital) should also include cognitive components (such as trust and respect). Thus, we agree with Devine & Roberts (2003) that structural and cognitive components are mutually constitutive of each other. Our proposed framework includes the five types of connections that were earlier identified by Pretty & Ward (2001), and also calls attention to power relationships. An example of the latter may be found with regards to middlemen (fish buyers). Individual

artisanal fishers find that all five middlemen in Piriápolis pay exactly the same price at any one given time, even though the price does vary throughout the year. Fishers seem to have no power to seek better prices by changing their middleman. Although the five middlemen would never admit to price fixing, their ability to adjust prices in almost perfect coordination implies high social capital among the five.

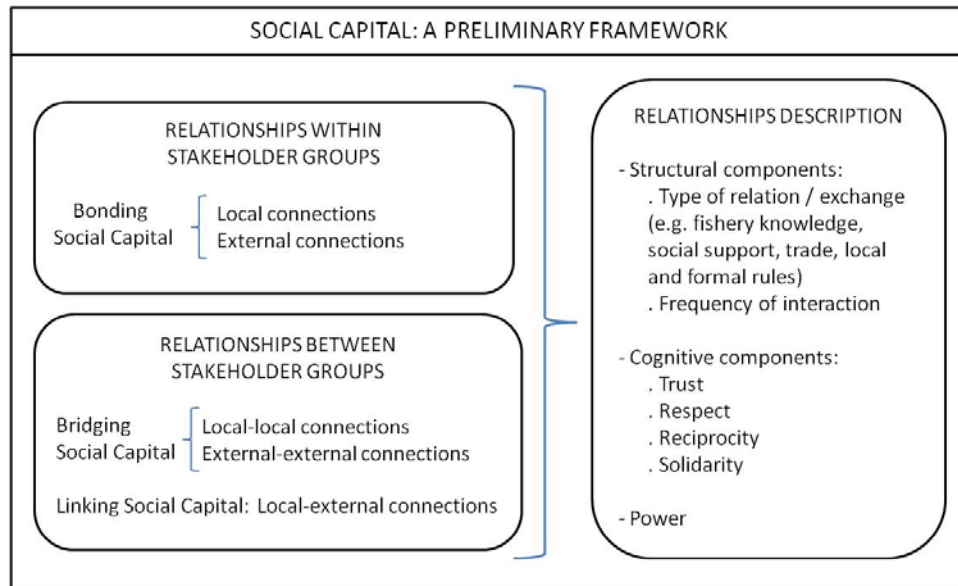


Figure 1 A preliminary framework for studying social capital at multiple levels: within and between stakeholder groups (e.g. artisanal fishers; management agency; enforcement agency; middlemen; academics; NGOs).

In order to operationalize this framework, fishery stakeholders can logically be asked about their relationships with other stakeholders, both with regards to structural and cognitive components of social capital. However, it is likely that certain aspects of those relationships can best be appreciated by participant observation (at landing sites, fish markets, government institutions, meetings) or by giving attention to stakeholder discourses in interviews. Such an approach would be supported by Van Deth (2003) who argued that using questions about perceptions instead of relying on observations was one of the pitfalls of social capital research. In our case study in Uruguay, the importance of stakeholder discourse in interviews can be exemplified by looking at the relationship between the fisheries management agency (DINARA) and the National Navy Prefecture (PNN) in charge of enforcing some of the fisheries regulations. Even though employees of both institutions stated that there is a good (or very good) relationship between DINARA and PNN (i.e. structural social capital of an external-external connection), a DINARA fisheries manager in an interview showed distrust (i.e. cognitive social capital) when he said that he was not sure if PNN would in fact undertake their part of the responsibility for a new initiative that the two agencies had jointly decided recently.

Can the social capital framework contribute to interactive governance theory?

According to interactive governance theory, fisheries and coastal governance consist of three systems: a system-to-be-governed (the fish chain that links producers to consumers – including

the natural and socio-economic systems), a governing system (including all of those individuals and institutions that have formal or informal power over the governance of the fish chain), and a system of governing interactions (linking those who govern the fish chain and those who work within the fish chain) (Kooiman et al. 2005).

Another important concept within interactive governance theory is governability, which is defined as the overall capacity for governance at any societal entity or system (Kooiman et al. 2005). Thus, interactive governance theory assumes that there are limits to how governable fisheries and coastal systems are and what level of governability they can achieve.

Chuenpagdee & Jentoft (2009) pointed out that the more diverse, complex and dynamic the fisheries systems are, the more difficult it is to govern their functioning. Therefore, governance is seen as a way to promote governability. Following this train of thought, assessing the governability of a system is seen as a first step in fisheries governance. To take this first step, Chuenpagdee & Jentoft (2009) proposed a governability assessment matrix, which involves the estimation of the potential of the governing system, given the limitations of the governability of the system-to-be governed, the governing system itself, and their interactions. Here we argue that some of the questions they proposed in the governability assessment matrix (Chuenpagdee & Jentoft 2009) could be answered through the social capital framework:

- (1) Regarding the socio-economic system: How do stakeholders interact?
- (2) Regarding the governing system: What is the governing mode: top-down, co-management or bottom-up?
- (3) Regarding the system of governing interactions: What are the existing forms of interactions (communication, participation, representation)? Do they actually transmit information, raising demands and exercising influence?

There are several ways through which the social capital framework could contribute to answering these questions. Firstly, it proposes a way to study stakeholders' interactions combining structural and cognitive components. Secondly, it looks at stakeholders' interactions within the three governance systems. In other words, the social capital framework not only helps us look at the interactions between those who govern and those who are governed (i.e. system of governing interactions – corresponding to linking social capital), but also at the system-to-be-governed and the governing system. For instance, in the case of hierarchical governance (i.e. top-down management), community social capital would be included in the former, whereas government social capital would fit in the latter.

Lastly, the proposed social capital framework enables to uncover differing stakeholder views about their relationships, and thus, helps find out limitations of the system in terms of the governability of the fishery. This can be illustrated with an example from the relationship between artisanal fishers and the management agency (DINARA) in Uruguay (i.e. local-external connection, linking social capital). Many fishers expressed that they do not have a good relationship with DINARA (i.e. structural social capital). Also, most fishers no longer trust this government institution (i.e. cognitive social capital) because every time they have complained about a problem, they have been told by DINARA “We’ll see what we can do” without any change afterwards. (This identical phrase has been mentioned by numerous fishers.) On the other side, a DINARA manager expressed that he has a good relationship with fishers, although he added that fishers might not have the same perception of this relationship.

Differing views can also be found within DINARA about fisher participation: some employees (including the Director) stated that currently there are numerous instances of fisher participation, whereas a manager of the artisanal fishery said that there is very little or none.

In summary, the proposed social capital framework could contribute to governability assessment, and thus to interactive governance theory, by enhancing the understanding of the socio-economic system, the governing system, and the system of governing interactions.

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