



Making Democracy 1993

Work: Civic

Traditions in

Modern Italy

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Robert Putnam, with

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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 MAKING DEMOCRACY WORK CIVIL TRADITIONS IN MODERN ITALY Robert D. Putnam with
Rob...Â Chapter 5 Tracing the Roots of the Civic Community The Civic Legacies of Medieval Italy Civic Traditions After Unification
Measuring the Durability of Civic Traditions Economic Development and Civic Traditions. 121 121 137 148 152. 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 Equilibria Lessons from the Italian Regional
Experiment. 177 181. Making Democracy Work is such a book, one that will no doubt become a classic in the social science literature
and should be read by all economists. In 1970, fifteen new regional governments were created in Italy and were given essentially the
same powers and responsibilities.[1] By the 1990s these governments were spending nearly a tenth of Italy's GDP, so that they
were quite powerful structures. This creation of nearly identical governments offered Putnam the exceedingly rare opportunity to study
something that resembles a controlled experiment in the natural sciences.Â What Putnam found was that the successful governments
were located in areas where he also found a high degree of "civic tradition." Why do some democratic governments succeed and
others fail? In a book that has received attention from policymakers and civic activists in America and around t...Â Their focus is on a
unique experiment begun in 1970 when Italy created new governments for each of its regions. After spending two decades analyzing the
efficacy of these governments in such fields as agriculture, housing, and health services, they reveal patterns of associationism, trust,
and cooperation that facilitate good governance and economic prosperity.