



*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.”

Civic Traditions and the Civic Community Today 5.4. Traditions of Civic Involvement, 1860-1920, and Institutional Performance, 1978-1985 5.5. Possible Effects among Civic Involvement, Socioeconomic Development, and Institutional Performance: Italy, 1900s-1980s 5.6. In 1976 Seveso, a modest, modern town in the mixed industrial-andfarming belt ten miles north of Milan, became world-famous as the site of a major ecological disaster, when a local chemical plant exploded, spewing poisonous dioxin across its homes and workshops and fields and inhabitants. Making Democracy Work book. Read 38 reviews from the world's largest community for readers. Why do some democratic governments succeed and others fail? I... Dec 04, 2018 Francesca Calarco rated it liked it. While Robert Putnam's Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy is a solid case study on the sociopolitical divide between northern and southern Italy, it also makes a strong argument on the important role 'social capital' plays in facilitating democracy. Collective life in the less civic regions of Italy has been blighted for a thousand years and more. Why? It can hardly be that the inhabitants prefer solitary and submissive squalor. Foreign oppression might once have been part of the explanation for their plight, but the regional experiment suggests that self-government is no panacea. One is tempted to ask in exasperation: Have people in these troubled regions learned nothing at all from their melancholy experience? Surely they must see that they would all be better off if only everyone would cooperate for the common good. David Hume, the eighteenth-century Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy by Robert Putnam, Robert Leonardi and Raffaella Nanetti was published in 1993. It was a landmark work that launched the field of social capital research. It was also the more hard-core academic precursor to Putnam's even better known Bowling Alone which focused on the decline of community (and social capital) in the US. It was a seminal work in a variety of ways: from its use of statistical methods (as well as traditional descriptive and historical materials) to its overall thesis about the importance of social capital (or what I would call