



Social Capital in Europe: A Comparative Regional Analysis

Emanuele Ferragina

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The book investigates the determinants of social capital across 85 European regions capturing the renewed interest among social capital theorists for the importance of active secondary groups in supporting the correct functioning of society and its democratic institutions. Robert Putnam merged quantitative and historical analyses, suggesting that the lack of social capital in the south of Italy was mainly due to a peculiar historical development rather than being the product of a mix of structural socio-economic factors, a conclusion that has been the subject of fierce criticism and debate.

Emanuele Ferragina analyzes the influence of income inequality, economic development, labor market participation and national divergence. By complementing these socio-economic explanations with a comparative historic-institutional analysis between two deviant cases (Wallonia and the south of Italy) and two regular cases (Flanders and the north east of Italy), the findings suggest that income inequality, labor market participation and national divergence are important factors in explaining the lack of social capital. Furthermore, the traditional historical determinism is refuted with the formulation of the sleeping social capital theory.

Sociologists, political scientists, economic historians and scholars interested in comparative methods and European politics and policy will find this informative book invaluable.

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