Politics, Trust and Networks:
Social Capital in Critical Perspective

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Social Capital: Critical Perspectives

The papers presented here were originally given at a Social Capital Dialogue Day, organised as part of the theoretical work of the Families & Social Capital ESRC Research Group in January 2003. The aim of the seminar was to give critical attention to the implications for working with the idea of social capital, and its categories of trust and networks, in research and policy making.

Briefly, 'social capital' is a concept that refers to the ways that people create social networks and social relationships, and to the trust and norms of engagement that ease these interactions. As forms of social capital, networks and trust are seen to generate social solidarity and inclusion. They knit communities together, laying down the negotiated basis of social life, where people support and do things for each other, and which in turn, provide the grounding for general economic productivity and growth. While it is a concept that refers to the social sphere, social capital is framed in economic terms. As 'capital', it has exchange value, and can be accumulated and owned by individuals and communities, yet it is intangible, and has an ethereal quality since it flows in and between people and is only evident in its effect.

This approach to understanding how societies work is situated within a wider conservative perspective on social change, and a sense that the norms and values that once held society together have been gradually eroded over the last fifty years or so, and need to revitalised. A critique, both of the welfare state, that is said to have taken too much responsibility for people's lives, and of the new right emphasis on individual rights over social solidarity, support this view. It is then further compounded, some argue, by the social effects of second wave feminism and identity politics, which loosened the bonds and securities that keep families and communities together.

So, at first glance, social capital theories seem to support a view that social change has been detrimental to family and community, and have a normative understanding of how societies should work in the interests of economic growth and political stability. To tease out the political implications of the effects of this concept in policy and social research, we offer three critical perspectives on working with the idea of social capital. Stephen Baron maps the discourse of social capital and traces its patterns of political influence and its effect in government policy circles; Fran Tonkiss unpacks the category of trust and looks at some problems involved in using the concept across social and economic analysis; and Mike Savage, Gindo Tampubolon and Alan Warde explore the potential of social networks in understanding different forms of social capital and the changing relationship between agency and structure in contemporary societies.

Stephen Baron addresses the growing political influence of the concept of social capital on three levels. First, on the level of theory and ideas, it paints a picture of the 'good' society and identifies the causes of social disorder. Second, pragmatically, it presents 'how to' policy solutions to these identified problems. Then, thirdly as a discourse, social capital reflects a strand of contemporary thinking, identified with New Labour, that feeds a growing common sense understanding about the relationship between the state, society, and individuals. In their reinvention of the left, New Labour have worked with communitarian theory and the concept of social capital to provide a rationale to support their project to move beyond the socialist critique of economy, and the new right dismissal of society. With a communitarian backdrop, the idea of social capital provides a rationale for policies that generate social order, and a secure social basis for a fast moving, globalising economy. Baron shows how this approach 'celebrates', rather than disturbs, 'the economic, cultural and social life of certain already powerful elements of British society'. In supporting existing power relations, these ideas maintain the unequal balance of society, and focus on the 'inadequacies' of the less privileged in society in their

ability to access social capital, the resources that would initiate their social mobility and economic success.   Thus, in this view, communities with 'good' social capital will thrive, with low crime rates, and high levels of membership of local associations, political participation and economic prosperity. Through an analysis of the work of the Prime Minister's Strategy Unit, and the Office for National Statistics, Baron traces the microphysics of power that generate this discourse and points to the class based, power infused assumptions that lie behind the invention of the concept.   Working with the ideas of Iris Marion Young, he highlights one of the many ambiguities of contemporary political rhetoric and practice, that social capital theories can just as easily suggest possibilities for participative democracy, as they can contribute to a new authoritarian style of politics.

In social capital theories, it is understood that the dynamics of individual and social lives are mediated through trust, a central factor in building cohesive and integrated communities, the 'glue' that holds society together. Its presence is seen to have a positive impact on the ways individuals act towards each other and its absence, evident in the breakdown of social and institutional relationships. As Fran Tonkiss points out in her paper, however, working with the concept of trust in theory and research is problematic. Its common sense meaning alone will be different for each of us, according to our experience and the quality of our relationships with others. To add to the complexity, the concept of trust has a range of meanings across economics, political science, sociology and psychology. Tonkiss shows how this is further complicated by the ways that social capital theorists work with trust as an instrumental, clearly defined economic concept, yet hold on to the moral or normative quality of the word as it is understood in everyday language. To overcome this, she argues, we need to isolate a more precise definition, drawing attention to its possibilities and limitations. She clarifies the difference between 'trust' as a normative social concept, and trust as 'confidence' in economic terms. Trust, she argues, is expressed as a feeling, and operates on an informal level, affecting social action and interaction, and, most importantly, allows us to live with and tolerate uncertainty. Confidence, meanwhile, belongs to the formal, contractual arrangements set up to take the personal out of everyday exchanges. Unlike trust, which enables people to live with uncertainty, confidence works to edit out, reduce or restrict risk. To illustrate how they work differently, Tonkiss looks at the choices families make about child care. Choices as to whether we rely on family or people we know, relationships based on trust, or, we pay qualified strangers to look after our children, which brings the confidence of professional, contractual care. Taking people on trust, we hold on to a degree of responsibility, so that the choice is infused with a sense of uncertainty, carrying emotional risk. In paying for child care, we transfer the risk to others. We can ask more questions, interfere legitimately, and have more certainty or confidence around the ability of professionals to care adequately.

In her focus on trust and social interaction, Fran Tonkiss highlights the way that, on the surface, social capital theory works with trust as a common sense idea, whilst in effect confusing instrumental and normative definitions. She is concerned to clarify how different relationships of trust influence how people act and make choices in the context of uncertainty. In their paper on social networks, Mike Savage, Gindo Tampubolon and Alan Warde address the dynamic between social action and social structure. In social capital theory, society is made up of a horizontal system of interwoven networks, as opposed to the vertical structures of class and other social identities. These networks are in turn the sum of a range of social interactions built on trust and reciprocity, that can facilitate social mobility and individual access to social, economic and political opportunities and resources. The authors argue that this picture of how society works has limitations, but suggest that a more sophisticated understanding of social networks has the potential to reveal the diversity of human interactions that shape and are shaped by social structures. Savage and colleagues develop a network analysis which, they argue, gives visibility and space to the distrust, conflicts and power struggles generated in social relationships, as well as to the ways that people come together and develop trust and reciprocity. This is illustrated in

the presentation of their analysis of levels of activism and cooperation in two organizations, one a political party, one a conservation group. In its nuanced form, they argue, network analysis has the potential of opening up the multiplicity of interactions that contribute to social networks, and leads to a more complex understanding of those kinds of networks that might facilitate trust and activism and those which do not.

By placing the idea of social capital in a wider political, theoretical and empirical context, the authors of this working paper point to the implications of using its concepts and categories in policy and research. They have shown how social capital resonates, and has emerged in parallel with, current political paradigms and so cannot be presumed to be neutral; how a common sense understanding of trust as social capital can hide a confusion of moral and economic assumptions; and how social networks can be shaped just as much by conflicting as by reciprocal social relations. Working with 'social capital' in research and policy development therefore, calls for a critical methodology, precise definition of terms and a broader understanding of social change.

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Social Capital in British Politics and Policy Making

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Introduction

This paper is in three parts: First I will trace the root in British 'New Labour's' thinking from the communitarianism of the 1990s to the emerging reliance on social capital in the first years of the new century; secondly I will give a reading of these tendencies in terms of two contrasting government initiatives, the Strategic Futures Project on the Prime Minister's Strategy Unit in the Cabinet Office and the detailed technical work of the Office for National Statistics in seeking measures of social capital in fifteen pre-existing surveys commissioned by departments across government (or otherwise publicly funded) and thus developing the Social Capital Question Bank. Finally I will discuss the implications of the first two parts through analysing the inflections to participative democracy (Young 2000) and to a new authoritarianism which the New Labour use of social capital may entail.

Before embarking on these analyses it is important to outline something of the history of the concept and its take up into politics and policy making (Schuller, Baron & Field 2000). Although the latter trace references to 'social capital' back at least to the 1950s, its current usage can be said to start with the work of Pierre Bourdieu in the late 1960s and 1970s. Here 'social capital' was initially defined as the old boy network, one of a myriad of 'forms of capital' which helped enable the dominant class to dominate. In an essay of that name in 1983, Bourdieu argued that capital can appear in three forms (economic; cultural; social) with economic capital being the root of the other forms in the last instance. Social capital was defined as

> the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalised relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition. (Bourdieu 1997:51)

As we have noted elsewhere

> the use of the concept is often metaphorical rather than analytically disciplined. When applied by Bourdieu to empirical research the substantial problems of operationalizing the concept make this important theoretical corpus appear ill-founded. (Schuller, Baron & Field 2000:5).

More influential in developing the concept, and moving it into the policy arena, was the work of James Coleman in the USA during the 1980s and the 1990s (Coleman 1988; 1994). Where Bourdieu had focused on social capital as a mechanism of the dominant, Coleman first developed it as an explanation, the continuity of values and network between home and school, of how certain underprivileged groups in Catholic schools produced higher levels of attainment than would otherwise have been predicted. Where Bourdieu drew from a Marxist intellectual tradition, Coleman worked within the framework of rational choice economic theory where he wanted to add social capital as the fourth standard term in econometric equations (alongside physical, financial and human capitals).

It was Coleman's work which Robert Putnam, the single most influential theorist of social capital, acknowledged when he introduced the concept, late and in a relatively minor way, to help explain the differences in regional government in Italy. From this relatively abstruse beginning Putnam turned the

concept onto his native country, the United States of America, arguing that, following a long period of social capital formation from the late nineteenth century, the baby boom generation had neglected to maintain its inheritance and that the current Generation X had developed anti-civic perspectives. His major text Bowling Alone starts with a picture of a youthful Putnam with his (multiracial) 1955 bowling team and traces, relentlessly, through multiple measures, the decline of social capital in the USA particularly in the former slave states. Putnam, however, is no missionary pessimist in that he envisages (and works tirelessly for, through the Saguaro Seminar: Civic Engagement in America[1] to help initiate) a vigorous new period of social capital formation adequate to the new century and its social order.

It is this rather varied intellectual legacy which has passed, unevenly I shall argue, into the thinking of 'New Labour' and its policy processes. This rise of social capital in politics and policy thinking is relatively recent in Britain. The first hint of this rise was in a speech by Margaret Hodge while still in opposition warning about a Blade Runner future for Britain's cities. This note of loss and social crisis was complemented by a paper in Renewal in 1999 by Simon Szreter which argued that social capital could provide the new political economy for New Labour, underpinning its politics with a technical economics. In 2001 the Office for National Statistics initiated its development of measures of social capital (now an international effort); in 2002 it set up a cross government working group, with the Prime Minister's Strategy Unit beginning to explore the issue in 2002. Concomitantly the Home Office has established the Active Communities Unit to develop policies based on social capital and held its own seminar on the issue in 2002. When the Economic and Social Research Council Research Seminar, Social Capital: Developing the Research and Policy Agenda, started in 2000 it met with little interest from policy makers. By the time the final seminar was held in 2002 staff from five different governmental organisations were present, constituting one third of the participants. At the Social Capital Dialogue Day organised by the Families & Social Capital ESRC Research Group at London South Bank University in January 2003[2], there were representatives of the Cabinet Office, the Sure Start Unit, Office for National Statistics and HM Treasury present. How has this come about?

New Labour: From Communitarianism to Social Capital

In developing the New Labour repertoire in opposition, and indeed during its first term of office, the Labour party explicitly drew from the communitarian movement in the USA. Deliberately mirroring the language of the Founders of the American Constitution, Amitai Etzioni, the foremost communitarian writer, claims a series of self evident truths which define the need for 'a new moral, social and public order based on restored communities, without allowing Puritanism or oppression' (Etzioni 1993:2). The core of this new order was defined in his opening words of the Preface to the 1995 British edition of The Spirit of Community:

> Communitarians call to restore civic values, for people to live up to their responsibilities and not merely focus on their entitlements, and to shore up the moral foundations of society. (Etzioni 1995:ix)

This appeal to duty and moral order provided the basis for his definition of community ('communities are social webs of people who know one another and have a moral voice' (Etzioni 1995:ix)). As ever (Williams 1983) 'community' was largely defined by Etzioni by its negation: 'increasing rates of violent crime, illegitimacy, drug abuse, children who kill and show no remorse and, yes, and political

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[1] Named after a Cactus which survives for long arid periods only to burst forth in flower when seemingly dead.
[2] A preliminary version of this paper was presented at this event

corruption', with America being seen as subject to 'moral anarchy and the crumbling of social institutions (Etzioni 1995:x).

The communitarian agenda was rapidly adopted and adapted in Britain by the Labour Party after its traumatic 1992 General Election defeat. In 1994 a collection of essays Reinventing the Left was published (edited by David Miliband, now Minister for Schools' Standards) seeking to re-launch the Left which 'needs a radical and new identity if it is to do more than rail against the (many injustices) of the present' (Miliband 1994:2). One of the key essays was by Gordon Brown (now Chancellor of the Exchequer) who proposed A New Agenda for Labour (Brown 1994).

The new popular socialism proposed by Brown was to rest on four foundations: a redistribution of power away from 'entrenched interests and unjust accumulations of power and privilege'; an enabling state 'showing that the true role of government is to foster personal responsibility and not to substitute for it'; a new economic egalitarianism based on 'enhancing the skills of everyone'; a new constitutional settlement between individuals, their communities and the state – 'I believe to re-invent government we must first reconstruct the very idea of community' (Brown 1994:114).

Traditional definitions of community were seen as having broken down (and having thus enabled the individualistic attack of the Right): the stable territorial base of communities had disappeared, as had stable individual identities and life-styles, through the impacts of globalisation. For Brown such definitions of community were in any case superficial, concealing the true, and continuing, base of community – interdependence.

From the four foundations Brown drew two major political imperatives in communitarian fashion: individuals must take more responsibility for their own welfare (broadly conceived) as monolithic state bureaucracies are disaggregated (and become providers of last resort); the re-structuring of responsibilities must be balanced by a major new cluster of rights (the right to develop individual potential).

> At root our objective is that individuals should have the opportunity to realize their potential to the full – that individuals should have the opportunity to bridge the gap between what they are and what they have it in themselves to become. (Brown 1994:113)

It is this latter imperative which drove Brown beyond the Etzionian framework and towards the idea of social capital. Brown re-interpreted the history of socialism's struggle to control the means of production, distribution and exchange ('the old agenda' 1994:114) as a struggle for the realization of human potential underpinned by three ethical principles:

> First, a belief that individual potential is far greater than can be realized in a wholly capitalist society; second, a belief that individuals are not just self-centred but also co-operative; and third, a belief not only that individuals thrive best in a community and that the potential of the individual is enhanced by membership of a community but also that a strong community is essential for the advancement of potential. (Brown 1994:115, emphasis added)

Brown's qualifications highlighted in the quotation above signalled the shift (in the new agenda) to engagement with the market economy not as temporary pragmatic necessity but as an ethical and economic good:

> The key question is not whether we abolish markets but how we set standards, or regulate, in a way that ensures that markets work in the public interest. (Brown 1994:116)

The changed nature of markets, through globalisation and the alleged skills revolution, meant, for Brown, that 'individual liberation arises from the enhancement of the value of labour rather than the abolition of private capital' (Brown 1994:116). The realization of individual potential (now largely interpreted as 'skills' saleable in the market, with the ability to choose from a multiplicity of public services a distant second) could only take place in a new form of 'co-operative community'.

In developing this reasoning Brown clearly moved beyond communitarianism: the reliance on the idea of one moral community remained (together with the key assumption that New Labour is the expression of it) but the lack of economic reasoning in communitarianism demanded a further intellectual framework to theorize the link between individual, community and the global market economy. Social capital helped provide this. The work of Coleman both produced a model of increasing the realization of potential in disadvantaged groups and provided a link into rational choice economics. In order for both of these to be operationalized into policy making there was a need for what Schuller has called a 'technomethodology' (Schuller, 2000). It was a model of this which the voluminous work of Putnam in Bowling Alone offered: twenty pages of Appendices (Putnam, 2000: 415-435) are devoted to specifying the data sources for the ninety-six Figures and 9 Tables of the main text (a rate of one every four pages). This work was ground breaking not only for its provocative political thesis but also for its operationalization of social solidarity as social capital in a way which had largely eluded theorists of 'community' (its predecessor).

The Banquo at this new policy feast was, of course, Bourdieu. There is little sense in Brown's vision of the social and cultural mechanisms by which dominant classes maintain their dominance and how these power processes articulate with economic power.

In order to explore how the communitarian themes of moral community and individual responsibility have combined, in the politics and policy making of New Labour, with the re-worked socialist ethic of the realization of human potential, with the re-definition of community as interdependence and with rational choice economics, I turn now to analyse the microphysics of two contrasting government initiatives: the 'blue skies' thinking of the Prime Minister's Future Strategy Unit and the use of existing, and the development of new, questionnaire items in social surveys commissioned by government departments.

Social Capital and the Cabinet Office's Strategic Futures Project

The Prime Minister's Strategy Unit is a section of the Cabinet Office whose aim is 'to improve Government's capacity to address strategic, cross-cutting issues and promote innovation in the development of policy and the delivery of Government's objectives' (Cabinet Office 2003a). It was set up in 2002 as an amalgamation of the Performance and Innovation Unit, the Prime Minister's Forward Strategy Unit and parts of the Centre for Management and Policy Studies. The Cabinet Office's work on social capital straddles the former and the current office organisation and, for the sake of clarity, will be discussed in terms of the current structures.

The Strategy Unit proclaims four main roles: long term strategic reviews of major areas of policy; studies of cross-cutting policy issues; strategic audits of government performance; promoting strategic thinking across Whitehall (Cabinet Office 2003a). The Strategic Futures team within the Strategy Unit runs a series of Strategic Thinkers seminars 'to promote the consideration and discussion of strategic cross-cutting issues with a broad audience from Government, Academia and Industry' (Cabinet Office 2003b). To date, fifteen such seminars have been initiated on topics ranging from specific policy areas

(for example, transport, energy, workforce development) to more abstract issues underlying several policy areas (for example, life satisfaction, creating public value, geographic mobility).

The Strategy Unit's work on social capital was part of one of these latter seminars. Two sources are here used to explore how the concept of social capital is being realized into British policy thinking: a paper by David Halpern (a Cambridge academic seconded to the Strategy Unit to lead on the social capital work) read to the final Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) Research Seminar, Social Capital: Developing the Research and Policy Agenda in March 2002; and a Discussion Paper of April 2002 prepared for the Strategic Thinkers seminar by Stephen Aldridge, David Halpern and Sarah Fitzpatrick of the Strategy Unit.

The Discussion Paper (Aldridge et al. 2002) is an extensive (eighty page) review of literature addressing questions of the definitions, determinants and measurement of social capital before seeking to draw out trends and the potential for policy interventions. It is strict in recognising that social capital can have 'downsides' as well as its much publicised benefits. The paper nods in the direction of Bourdieu: the Forms of Capital paper is in the References but it is not referred to in the text; the possibility of 'old boy networks' is recognised (Aldridge et al. 2002:32) as is potential fungibility between forms of capital.

The policy suggestions which are derived from the concept tell another story. The following Table of possible policy initiatives is derived from Halpern 2002:

Level/Timescale	Current Policy	Future Policy
Individual	Millennium Volunteers Experience Corps Mentoring Connexions Welfare to Work Employment Zones	Parenthood education Parenting for the disadvantaged Social Capital Credits Entitlement to Guidance Sponsor a child Sponsor a class New approach to offenders Transfer Social Capital benefits of Higher Education to non-HE contexts Volunteering
Meso	Homezones Surestart School clusters Neighbourhood Regeneration Education-Business links Partnership Fund Devolution	Devolution & Regional policy ICT Networking Compulsory purchase of back gardens Experimental layouts Street/café culture Reading groups Dispersal of social housing Recruitment chains from disadvantaged areas
Macro	Citizenship Education 14-19 Matriculation Diplomas Compulsory Volunteering Reform of Honours System Reducing inequality	Citizenship Education: Shared norms & mutual respect Community Credit Schemes: LETTS; Timebanks Gift & fungible economy: reciprocal care; child endowments Citizens' Juries & deliberative polls

Source: David Halpern, Senior Policy Adviser, PIU, ESRC Social Capital Seminar, London, 14/3/02

These policy futures may appear as a rather random admixture of themes from Etzioni and from Putnam. Some of them are new: for example, the compulsory purchase of parts of back gardens to form enclosed neighbourly space (no doubt for Putnam reading groups); Child Endowments; Social Capital Credits. The discourse of the majority of these policy suggestions (realised or proposed) is, however, very familiar from the succession of 'community' policies tried (and, I suggest, found wanting) in the deprived parts of Britain from the late 1960s onwards: for example, early years education; parenthood education; area based physical, economic and employment regeneration initiatives. Some of the policy suggestions are strikingly Orwellian in tone: Entitlement to Guidance and Welfare to Work herald a punitive approach to unemployment; Citizenship Education for shared norms assumes the unitary moral community (as expressed, of course, in New Labour)[3]; Compulsory Volunteering simply takes us deep into Double-Speak.

Despite the disparate appearance of these policy suggestions there are underlying consistencies: the focus for social capital policies is to be the poor, especially the young poor, of Britain; the mechanisms of social capital formation, deployment and transmission of dominant groups are to remain unaddressed; the articulation of existing forms of social capital with economic and cultural capital is similarly to be undisturbed (except to insert the poor into the current structures). While there is an explicit commitment to reducing inequality there is little sense of its structural, rather than personal, origins. The conceptual schema underlying such policies is, I suggest, rather simple: there is good social capital, there is bad social capital, there are parts of Britain which are devoid of social capital, with government being the agency which can define, measure and change these dimensions. Evidence for this contention may be adduced from the work of the Office for National Statistics' Social Capital Project which started in 2001.

The Office for National Statistics' Social Capital Project

The Social Capital Project was initiated in 2001 as a pan-Government effort 'to develop an operational definition of social capital in conjunction with a framework for measurement and analysis' (ONS 2003a). Following the OECD definition ONS treat social capital thus:

> Individuals, families and communities potentially can benefit from social capital and its key indicators include social relations, formal and informal social networks, group membership, generalised trust, mutual reciprocity and civic engagement. It has well established relationship with several areas of policy interest, including economic growth, social inclusion, educational attainment, levels of crime, improved health and more effective government. (ONS 2003)

To date the project has completed a literature review, set up a cross-departmental Social Capital Working Group, participated in the international Siena Group on Social Statistics, developed a Social Capital Question Bank and, since the London South Bank Dialogue Day, published the lead article in Social Trends 33 (Stationery Office 2003). It is on the latter two that I shall focus.

Faced with a political imperative quickly to produce consistent measures and trends of social capital, ONS identified twenty one different governmental and non-governmental surveys which included 'some aspects of social capital' (ONS 2002:3). While some of the surveys had modules or questions

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[3] One mischievous participant in the final ESRC Social Capital Seminar suggested that soon the Social Capital Police would be formed to deal with areas of low social capital. It would seem that this is under active discussion in Blunkett's Home Office.

specifically designed to measure social capital (ranging, for example, from the 2001 Citizens Audit Questionnaire whose focus was almost exclusively on social capital or its proxies, through the 2001 Home Office Citizenship Survey in which social capital had a major focus, to the Health Survey for England which had social capital as its 'guest' module in 2000). In other cases ONS was forced to infer social capital into existing surveys such as the British Crime Survey, the British Election Study or British Household Panel Survey.

The items from this disparate set of surveys were then mapped onto a matrix developed from that of Blaxter in the Health Development Agency study of older people and social capital (ONS 2002:15).

Theme	Number of Sub-Themes	Number of Items
Participation, social engagement & commitment	11	88
Control & self efficacy	8	39
Perception of community level structures and characteristics	12	109
Social interaction, social networks & social support	9	74
Trust, reciprocity and social cohesion	8	50
Totals	48	360

This complex array of themes, sub-themes and items was then made available as an interactive Social Capital Question Bank. Analysis of the discourse underlying this Bank suggests that, in ONS practice, social capital slides from being defined in terms of the literature's triad of networks, trust and norms into an ever expanding metaphor for 'social problems'. This elision can, in the context of this paper, be best discerned through (ideal typical) portraits of the Good Social Capitalist, and of her shadowy alter egos, The Bad Social Capitalist and the Social Proletarian (dispossessed of social capital and sans everything) implicit in the various items of the Question Bank and, secondly, through analysis of the stimulus examples used in the Citizens Audit Questionnaire of 2001.

The Good Social Capitalist is in paid employment and enjoys frequent contact with a wide range of friends, workmates, family and neighbours. She is active is organized leisure pursuits and formally constituted voluntary organisations (of which she is probably an office bearer). She lives in a stable residential area of owner occupiers in which she feels safe. She feels in control of her life and health and has confidence in the public services necessary to meet her needs. She votes regularly and engages in lobbying when necessary, having confidence in political and public institutions.

The Social Proletarian is the inverse of the Good Social Capitalist: economically deprived and/or unstable and living in a physically poor neighbourhood where social contacts are restricted and fears for safety predominate. She feels out of control of many aspects of her life, and that public and political institutions will do little to help address the issues which dominate her life.

The Bad Social Capitalist lurks in the shadows of ONS. He is young with few educational qualifications and little involvement in the legitimated economy. He is alienated from public institutions and political processes. He has a strong, but limited, social network of similar young men. They hang around on the streets, and are responsible for many of the fears of the Social Proletarian, there gaining a sense of self efficacy by 'having a laff'.

If we complement these ideal types with an analysis of the Citizens Audit Questionnaire 2001 (funded by the Economic and Social Research Council and conducted by the University of Sheffield) then the microphysics of power generating this discourse becomes more clear. Asked to record their

involvement in 'local groups' participants (3,500 interviewees and 10,000 questionnaires) were given stimulus examples of what was meant by 'local groups' (ONS 2002:10-11). Variously these were:

- The Scouts
- Greenpeace
- The National Trust
- The Royal Society for the Protection of Animals
- Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament
- Amnesty International
- Shelter
- British Heart Foundation
- Royal National Institute for the Blind
- Help the Aged
- Royal British Legion
- UNISON
- British Chamber of Commerce
- British Medical Association
- The Consumers Association
- Stamp Collecting Group
- Automobile Association
- Neighbourhood Watch
- Black Resource Centre
- Women's Institute
- Working Men's Club

It does not take a great leap of imagination to realise that such examples of a 'local group' (and thus who is a Good Social Capitalist, and who is a Social Proletarian or, perhaps, a Bad Social Capitalist) is heavily inflected with age, class, ethnicity, area, employment, nation and gender. It is no accident, for example, that the Baron household (middle aged, white school librarian and an academic) is (or has been) variously involved with Greenpeace, The National Trust, The Royal Society for the Protection of Animals, Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, Amnesty International, Shelter, British Heart Foundation, Royal National Institute for the Blind, Help the Aged, UNISON and AA (Automobile Association). As a girl Jane Baron could not join the Girl Guides (notably absent from the stimulus list) as her family of origin could not afford the uniform while, the saving grace in this shameful tale of social conformity, as a teenager Stephen Baron was rejected by The Scouts as being of the 'wrong type'.

This reading of the ONS Question Bank was empirically verified after the Dialogue Day with the publication of the lead article in ONS's Social Trends 33 (Stationery Office 2003). In this Haezewindt (2003) provides an elegant overview of the findings on social capital from ONS and other surveys (principally the General Household Survey module). As part of the discussion of the benefits of social capital towards the end of the paper he provides Table A.6 (reproduced below) in which the Good Social Capitalist and the Social Proletarian are defined:

Characteristics of people with high and low social capital	
High Social Capital	Low Social Capital
Lives outside London region	Lives in London region
Aged 30 and above	Aged 29 and below
Women	Men
Married	Single
Highly educated	Little/no education
Higher income	Lower income
Employed	Unemployed
Least deprived area	Most deprived area
Homeowner	Private renter
5+ years residence	0-4 years residence

Source: Office for National Statistics from the General Household Survey, 2000/01

Although not tabulated, the Bad Social Capitalist appears in the Social Trends analysis. Variously we learn that:

> criminal gangs are often characterised by strong internal social capital … a cartel is an example of how a group of businesses may join forces to limit competition … in strongly sectarian societies, high levels of social capital may be found within groups, but very little social capital may be found between them. (Haezewindt. 2003: 25-26)

Significantly absent from the Social Trends analysis of high, low and bad social capital is ethnicity - the Social Proletarian of ONS's analysis (deprived young male with little or no education {itself an interesting concept} living in the London region) is disproportionately likely to be black[4].

What may we conclude about ONS's emerging work on social capital? For the avoidance of doubt, the critique in this paper is not of ONS staff, who are exceptionally competent and thoughtful, but of the context where ONS is being expected both to map a concept, in retrospect, onto instruments not designed for the purpose and to develop new measures already imbued with well formed political imperatives. At heart the Good-Low-Bad social capital continuum underpinning ONS's work already contains its political conclusions. The assumptions of what constitutes social capital: celebrate the economic, cultural and social life of certain, already powerful, elements of British society (the Good Social Capitalist/ONS High Social Capital holder); misunderstand other, less powerful, elements (the assumed absence of social capital of the Social Proletariat/Low Social Capital holder) by not recognising the dynamics of their lives; and demonise the lives of the Bad Social Capitalist/Low Social Capital holder. The structural similarities between the Bad Social Capitalist of the early years of the 21st century and the 'mugger' of the early 1970s are striking. As Hall et al. (1978) argue, the image of the mugger was potent in initiating a period of social authoritarianism under Heath's Conservatives. Is social capital becoming thus potent under Blair's New Labour? It is to this question which we turn by way of conclusion.

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[4] This omission is occasioned by the sampling strategy of GHS which does not produce a sample large enough to disaggregate in terms of ethnicity. Other surveys have 'booster' samples from ethnic minorities to address this problem.

Social Capital: Inflection to participative democracy and inflections to new authoritarianism

In the past decade political philosophers have increasingly questioned the sustainability of what has been termed 'aggregative democracy' both in terms of its inherent weaknesses and its suitability for rapidly changing social and cultural orders. 'Another model lies in the shadows', deliberative democracy, of which Iris Marion Young is a leading exponent (Young 2000:22).

The aggregative model of democracy is defined by Young thus:

> Individuals in the polity have varying preferences about what they want government institutions to do. They know that other individuals also have preferences, which may or may not match their own. Democracy is a competitive process in which political parties and candidates offer their platforms and attempt to satisfy the largest number of people's preferences … Assuming the process of competition, strategizing, coalition building and responding to pressure is open and fair, the outcome of both elections and legislative decisions reflects the aggregation of the strongest or most widely held preferences in the population. (Young 2000:19)

Young offers four major criticisms of this model: it takes political preferences as given, formed outwith the political process and incapable of comparative evaluation; it can develop no sense of a public realm; it entails 'a thin and individualistic form of rationality'; it cannot develop claims to moral legitimacy beyond the preferences of the majority (Young 2000:20-21).

Young counter-proposes a model of deliberative democracy based on four principles: Inclusion so that all affected by a political decision are included in that process of decision making; Political Equality so that all have the effective right to be included on equal terms in decision making; Reasonableness so that decisions are made through a process of negotiation aiming to reach a consensus; Publicity so that decisions are made in a public realm in which reasonableness can be exercised and people held to account for their views (Young 2000:23-25).

There are considerable areas of consonance between Young's model of deliberative democracy and a politics based on social capital, particularly bridging social capital, understood as norms, networks and trust. Spontaneous social networks can provide the mechanism through which disparate groups can be included in political discourse in conditions which are conducive to their participation. This is particular true of marginalised groups for whom existing political institutions and the mechanisms of interest group politics have little to offer. Such networks can also provide grounds for engagement on terms of political equality so long as Young's condition of freedom from domination is met. This means that there should be no prior political judgment about which are legitimate networks and norms and which are not (except if the network rejects the processes of deliberative democracy). The criteria of reasonableness and publicity can be met through the building of bridging social capital between spontaneous social networks through deliberative processes whereby the rationality of apparently very different perspectives is explored in public debate.

If we put New Labour's approach to a politics of social capital against this template then we can see a little movement in the direction of deliberative democracy. Several of the initiatives which Halpern (2002) suggests aim to develop bridging social capital between marginalised groups and, principally, the economy (for example, mentoring and sponsorship schemes, recruitment chains). Furthermore, he suggests explicitly non-aggregative mechanisms in terms of citizens' juries and deliberative polls.

These modest moves towards a deliberative democracy of social capital are overshadowed by the consequences of marrying a partial reading of the concept onto an aggregative democratic model and an unquestioning commitment to capitalist markets and rational choice economics. The formal political equality of aggregative democracy in the context of structural economic, cultural and social inequality at best limits the reduction of such inequality and, following Bourdieu (1977), at worst serves to reproduce it. As formulated by the Cabinet Office Strategy Unit and by the ONS Question Bank, social capital is based on the implicit claim by government to be the moral voice of an unitary community which has the right and capacity to define good, deficient and bad forms of spontaneous social life. In part this reproduces the thirty year old policy discourse of deeming people, particularly young people, in structurally impoverished areas as being socially, culturally and psychologically pathological. In part this represents the extension of this thirty year old discourse further into the realms of personal life and spontaneous social networks, opening these up for more intrusive surveillance and intervention through new 'soft policing' methods[5]. The wag at the 2002 ESRC Seminar, speculating on the formation of the Social Capital Police, may have been signalling a fundamental truth. These tendencies are, I suggest, sufficient to speak of the emergence through social capital discourse of a 'new authoritarianism' similar to that heralded by the 'mugging' moral panic of the early 1970s.

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Trust and Social Capital

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Concepts of trust and social capital appear to offer a social take on a range of current problems: from economic development and educational attainment, to crime and fear of crime, political disaffection, health outcomes and social mobility. Each term carries a freight of meaning - as well, it might be said, as a weight of expectations - but also tends to be variable or at least smudgy in definition. The category of trust, for one, is complicated by its relevance to quite different economic, legal and moral contexts, as well as its more everyday meaning within social and personal relationships. And while social capital is no longer the 'unanalysed concept' identified by James Coleman (1988: S101), there remains serious debate as to its analytic value - not least in terms of the normative claims that hang around it. The aim of this paper is firstly to outline key terms of definition for trust and social capital, and the relation between the two. It goes on to sketch out certain ways they might look in relation to families, and concludes with some problems involved in using notions of trust and social capital in social and economic analysis.

Trust and social capital

The idea of trust may be a notable feature of recent social and political debates, but it frequently operates within them as an analytic shorthand - catching at certain social relations and social norms - rather than as a theoretical concept that itself requires definition. Much of the public debate in this area has been informed by social attitude surveys, tracking expressed levels of trust in a range of actors and institutions (see Passey and Tonkiss 2000). While responses over time to a statement such as 'most people can be trusted' (the wording comes from the World Values Survey) says something about comparative and changing public attitudes, on another level they say rather little about the nature and limits of trust itself. Talk about trust has a kind of commonsense resonance, but does not necessarily get at the way respondents understand or act on trust: what someone means when they say they trust their neighbour or their doctor or a police officer - or, perhaps more importantly, how these trusting or untrusting attitudes shape their behaviour.

Trust plays a critical but variable role, too, in the literature on social capital. We can take two well-known examples here. For Fukuyama (1995) trust is both the condition for, and the effect of, the forms of social capital - collective values, social networks and cultural mores - that underpin social cohesion and shape economic growth. Trust is defined as,

> the expectation that arises within a community of regular, honest and co-operative behaviour, based on commonly shared norms. (1995: 26)

In a somewhat circular argument, it follows that 'social capital is a capability that arises from the prevalence of trust in a society or in certain parts of it' (ibid.). Robert Putnam, in contrast, sees trust in less general terms as one element of social capital - one of those 'features of social organization', along with norms and networks, 'that can improve the efficiency of society by facilitating coordinated action' (Putnam 1993: 167). It seems clear in each case that an interest in trust is part of a contemporary engagement with the collective action problem which has concerned social theorists for so long. It offers some sort of answer to the question of how individuals manage to get their collective acts

together for common or at least mutual ends. Trust provides the oil for social interaction and associations, and in turn is a product of them (or, at any rate, of some of them).

What we might note is the extent to which these conceptions of trust are already publicised; that is, they are taken to operate in a collective and indeed an impersonal context. By framing his definition on this scale, for instance, Fukuyama is able to distinguish 'high-trust' from 'low-trust' societies based on people's general readiness to form associations outside the obligations of family or the compulsion of the state. Under this scheme such apparently different societies as the United States and Japan are both seen as 'high-trust' given their propensity for forms of voluntary association, including (and especially) private businesses. They contrast on one side with current or ex-Communist states, or even those liberal democracies - France is the primary culprit here – where Fukuyama sees social organisation as shaped more by the state than by informal norms of association. They differ on the other side from societies – China or Italy, say - where family networks have endured as the basis not only of social but of economic life. Fukuyama (1995: 98) notes that these generalising schema need to be qualified in various ways, but his argument is intended to work at a macro-scale, where levels of trust indicate a broad social (in fact, national) character. Robert Putnam, whose work otherwise is quite different from Fukuyama's, has worked at a similarly macro-level of analysis, particularly in tracing a national malaise in trust and civic participation in the United States (see Putnam 1995a; 1995b, 2000).

Trust is treated in these accounts as a kind of social fact, a feature of collective action that is effective and - in principle - measurable in comparative terms. At the other end of these large-scale analyses, however, or on the other side of the social attitudes survey, stand individuals who trust some people, in some situations, some of the time. There is a clue in British survey findings that show respondents are more likely to say they trust their own general practitioner or a schoolteacher than the health service or teachers in general (see Tonkiss and Passey 1999). At the sharp end, that is, questions of trust turn on relations between individuals. And it is not always obvious how these particular interactions relate to general accounts of social trust. Rather, they chime with theoretical approaches to trust that begin with freely chosen and essentially private interactions, as on the model of friendship or love (see Rorty 1996; Seligman 1997). While friendship provides the ideal, this conception of trust can be applied more broadly to interactions between individuals that are not secured by contract or enforced by law, from those who are closest to us to those who are strangest. We rely on trust, simply, in situations of uncertainty with others: trust is a means of mediating the risks of social interaction (see Luhmann 1988). At the most mundane social level, then, trust is the assumption that 'those one does not know and those who do not know you… are nevertheless not dangerous' (Seligman 2000:17). It is this type of low-level trust, in the good faith or the tolerance or even simply the indifference of others, that makes everyday social action and interaction possible – that allows us to get on the underground everyday, or to walk down the street after dark. Trust in this sense is both generalised and highly situational; one draws on resources of trust routinely and often unconsciously, but always in the context of specific settings and social encounters, however glancing. It is clear, of course, that this form of trust is uneven and fragile: for those who are or feel vulnerable to sexual or racial harassment or violence, trust in the harmless intentions of strangers is often insecure. (And in this connection it's not clear how high rates of gun ownership square with Fukuyama's characterisation of the US as a 'high-trust' society, although one assumes that these vivacious joiners do not always take their guns to meetings.)

Trust, in this reading, is one means of responding to uncertainty in our interactions with others. It lets us feel the fear, as it were, and do it anyway. An alternative is to reduce uncertainty through forms of contract and regulation. These latter can be understood as securing relations of confidence, in contrast to those of trust (Luhmann 1988; Seligman 1997; see also Tonkiss and Passey 1999). Relations of confidence tend to be based on clearly-defined social roles, formal contract or well-established obligations. I can, mostly, hold pretty rational expectations regarding my relation with my employer,

governed as it is by contract, law and forms of sanction. I am in the (perhaps fortunate) position of not having to 'trust' my employer, because our relationship is sufficiently constrained, the contract - at least for now - sufficiently secure, to clearly formalise our interaction. Indeed, it might be said that I don't really know who my employer is. Relations of confidence work to depersonalise exchanges, to reduce uncertainty and manage risk, whereas trust relations live with uncertainty, take on risk. Clearly this distinction between trust and confidence is simplified for the sake of definition - the overlap between norms, obligations, contract and trust is more complicated than such a model would suggest, and as the example of the employment relation might indicate. However separating out these concepts can be helpful in thinking about the basis on which different social relations and interactions are entered, sustained and reproduced.

Trust, social capital and the family

One critical area in which the boundaries of trust and confidence become especially blurred is in respect of families. Family relations are a complex (and changeable) mix of trust, duty, law, contract, norms and convention. Trust relations in this context tend to involve a stronger sense of mutuality than the minimal assumption that the other person means you no harm. Family interactions rarely are (or, at least, rarely feel) 'freely' entered. The forms of contract and law that institute the family as a legal entity are overlaid with strong moral and affective investments. Neat-ish separations in theory between voluntary relations based on trust and formal relations governed by confidence are hard to apply to a social form that leads multiple lives as an economic unit, a legal subject, a policy object, a domestic arrangement, and a moral and emotional tie. This is why the efforts of rational choice theorists to analyse family relations via an economic model of cost and utility always look a bit funny, even if they work fine as technical explanations (see Becker 1976, 1981; Becker and Murphy 2000). The economics of the family is morally charged, and does not reduce in any simple way to questions of rational interest, formal contract, and degrees of confidence, no matter how calculating family members at times can be.

While one would want to be confident, for instance, about the services offered by individuals and agencies responsible for the care of one's children or elderly parents, confidence might not seem enough in these cases. It is difficult (and this includes the marriage contract) to enforce a contract that someone should feel a certain way; should like, or love or care about one's child or parent, as distinct from taking care of them to a specific standard. Even so, confidence costs; trust is usually cheaper. Formal childcare is expensive; having family members help out with childcare is comparatively cheap. Trust reduces both the social costs (searching for information, looking for care provision, securing and maintaining the contract) as well as the money costs of this social exchange. But of course the failure or breakdown of trust, in this as in other cases, can involve a very, very high price.

Family policy tends to get caught in this margin between trust and confidence. The categories, it should be stressed, are not clearly distinct: rather they mark different degrees of formality and informality, of contractual and voluntary ties. At a formal end, we might think of policy measures to compel absent parents to contribute to the care of their children, financially if not in other ways; at the other end lie intermittently popular ideas about mobilising a 'Mums Army' in schools, as a fairly informal and certainly relatively cheap way of addressing issues of educational provision. (The gendering of these examples is, of course, interesting in itself.) A great deal of policy anxiety is generated around programmes to impose norms of family conduct - from child curfews and initiatives on truancy, to parenting classes and child support; even more where public authorities take on the duty of care or the legal responsibilities otherwise assumed to rest with the family.

Some of this complexity lies in the gap between the family as an ideal social form and an untidy social reality. It is not always easy to translate between general or normative models of the family - in theoretical debates or in policy rhetoric - and its many empirical versions. This is especially pronounced within accounts of trust and social capital, where the figure of the family plays a critical role. Familial relations represent an exemplary source of trust, and the family is a basic unit of social capital. Beyond these generalities, however, the relation of the family to trust and social capital is more complicated. For one thing, thinking about trust within families puts into question the notion of trust as essentially voluntary (as in Seligman 1997). Seligman would say that familial ties are not, exactly, trust relations, given that they are constrained by strong obligations, clear role expectations and compelling norms. Fukuyama, too, sees family relations as distinct from those kinds of voluntary association that rely on and are productive of trust (Fukuyama 1995: 26). Retaining a concept of trust, however, can be important both in indicating how far (and for whom) the 'obligations' of family are voluntary, and for addressing the issue of power within families. In a very basic sense, the less powerful members (especially children) can only trust that others will act out their duties, play their role, be susceptible to social norms. Trust in this context is an ambivalent social good, its meaning lying closer to dependence than to voluntarism or freedom.

This ambivalence is typical of how trust plays in approaches to social capital, particularly in terms of its status as both a social or moral good and an economic resource. Trust can be seen, after all, as an end in itself, as well as a 'lubricant' for social and economic action (Luhmann 1988). Taking an instrumental view of trust as an element of social capital is however to think about how trust can be capitalised. That is, how are relations of trust used to mobilise resources, including financial capital, and to access opportunities? Feeling able to trust people might be a good thing, but what else do you get out of it? James Coleman (1988) uses an example that has often been cited, but one that gets at the overlap between trust as a social relation and as quasi-economic capital. He takes the case of the wholesale diamond trade in Brooklyn, up to the 1980s at least, and the role of Jewish family and community networks in instituting and regulating that trade. His argument is that the social, cultural and family ties that operated in this local trade provided a form of security for exchanges within it, and thereby did away with the need for costly forms of contract, surveillance or sanction. Individuals could take valuable items away for inspection, and hold them during the course of an exchange, without imposing real risk on the seller. Trust, here, is a means of mediating economic risks (and reducing associated costs) by way of social relations and shared norms. The traders' social networks are productive of a kind of trust that is neither simply 'cultural' nor strictly economic in character. This is indicative of how social capital – family, community and neighbourhood ties in Coleman's example – involves forms of trust that can facilitate economic exchange, be used to access economic opportunities, or mobilise economic resources, especially in the absence of formal contracts or access to 'mainstream' economic institutions.

Problems in using trust and social capital

If accounts of trust and social capital have the effect of 'socialising' economic analysis, the downside of this can be a sort of halo effect where anything vaguely social is seen as good for you. This final part of the discussion points to some of the critical problems such a normative tone can stumble into. I referred earlier to the kind of moral charge carried by the economics of the family. In this respect, families bring into focus one of the key problems in analysis of social capital: the way in which economic and normative arguments can become confused. Drawing on resources of trust, utilising social networks and contacts, is economically beneficial when it allows someone to access work or finance, save money or minimise other costs, obtain information or an inside edge. There is not necessarily anything 'moral' about any of this. Economic benefits and social goods are not the same things, although they

can coincide. To return to the example of childcare: say a working mother draws on her social capital to obtain childcare – her mother or her aunt comes daily to her house to provide free or low-cost care for her child while she is working. Clearly, there is economic benefit for the woman in question; she saves (a lot of) money and time. Whether or not she or her child also receives better care is a somewhat separate matter involving different kinds of calculation, although the two evaluations often are run together. It is worth stressing that it is the family context that makes things so fuzzy, here. If the same woman had got her job partly on the basis of a good word from an influential former colleague or a well-placed friend, the 'value' of social capital in that case would be much less ambiguous.

The economic value of social capital, then, is in large part an instrumental question. Its social value – for families, networks or communities – is less straightforward. But while I would argue that an instrumental approach is analytically useful in thinking about social capital in economic terms, there is also a danger in simply importing economic assumptions into such an analysis. Social capital is a good metaphor, but it does not translate directly into economic models. Perhaps the most dicey economic assumption to borrow in this context is that of 'choice'; indeed perspectives on social capital offer critical insights into just how constrained actors' economic choices can be. I have presented the preceding example, for instance, as a fairly straight choice between paid, formal childcare (using economic capital) and unpaid or low-paid family childcare (drawing on social capital). Assuming a simple basis of choice in such a case, though, is to assume rather a lot. The example of childcare points to the way that actors' range of choice is often very limited, as well as the way that economic and non-economic calculations tend to fall over each other.

Social capital is a good metaphor in part because it provides a fresh label for talking about things we already know. In looking for a job, for example, good contacts can be useful things to have. Families can be a lender of first or last resort. Simple points, but important ones – and arguments that theories of social capital might help to capture, but certainly do not invent (cf. Granovetter 1973). Moreover, we can call these economic effects of social capital, but we also can call them nepotism, favouritism, corruption, insider dealing – or simply 'class' (see Bourdieu and Passeron 1990). Exploiting social capital can be a means of accessing opportunities, but also of closing them off: think of the way that social networks (including trade unions) at times have worked to keep women or black workers out of certain jobs. The closure of social networks and the restriction of trust have particular relevance to families as sources of social capital. Granovetter's critical argument, for instance, was that social ties were important resources for people seeking work, but that 'weak ties' to acquaintances were often more valuable in this respect than the strong ties of close friendship and family, given their potential for accessing information and opening up new contacts outside a person's own circle. This simple but very central argument in the sociology of networks is picked up in the distinction between 'bonding' social capital (which might be seen as typical of families) that knits groups together, and forms of 'bridging' social capital (typical of looser networks) that can create links between and across groups (see Putnam 2000). It also recalls longstanding arguments on the effects of 'familism' – where trust is confined to family networks – in impeding exchanges with outsiders, and stunting economic and social development at the level of communities or even regions (see, classically, Banfield 1958; see also Putnam 1993). Similar accounts have been used to explain problems in sustaining and expanding family businesses over time without recourse to external capital or expertise (see Fukuyama, 1995). Families have a dual edge as primary sites for the formation of trust and social capital, and as potential curbs on their development. Where trust is limited to an in-group - and families are exemplary in-groups - the negative effects can fall not only on excluded others, but at the cost of those on the inside.

The categories of trust and social capital are valuable in drawing attention to the social features of economic action and economic relations. It is a fairly short step from there, however, to suggest that social factors can explain economic outcomes. In considering the systematic economic disadvantage of

certain African-American populations, for instance, Fukuyama proposes a 'causal linkage between inability to cohere socially and poverty' (1995: 303). Such reasoning appears in a watered-down version in notions of 'network poverty' that point to the economic and other disadvantages of having weak or limited social capital. These kinds of explanation – about cultures of poverty – are not at all new, even if they might carry the relatively novel label of 'social capital'. But we also need to look at the problem from the other direction: to address the ways in which having to rely on trust is an index of a relative lack of the social or economic power to secure binding 'contracts' in their various forms; or the ways in which social networks (however 'rich' in other respects) do not necessarily open up access to resources or opportunities. Social capital is not always or easily substitutable for forms of economic capital; networks do not of themselves create jobs; not all families can double as banks. In this sense, it is important to note the sanitising effect of terms like trust and social capital, where these function as proxies for talking about issues of exclusion, inequality and discrimination. The analysis of social capital, otherwise, can boil down to the conclusion that one should choose one's friends carefully – and you should be even more careful when choosing your family.

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Social Capital and Political Activism: A Social Network Approach

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1. Introduction

Over the past decade there has been considerable concern about falling rates of political participation in many democratic nations, with key indicators ranging from declining electoral turnout, falling party membership, increased public cynicism and falling levels of trust. Much of this interest has centered on the arguments of Robert Putnam that these trends are related to a wide-ranging collapse in levels of social capital (Putnam 1995; 2000; 2002). Although Putnam's work is based on evidence from the United States, there is now an increasing amount of comparative research in this area (on the UK, see Hall 1999, Warde et al.2003, and Li et al. 2002). Much of this research focuses on aggregate trends in membership of voluntary associations and in reported levels of civic engagement. The concept of social capital gestures, also, to the significance of social networks, for instance in Putnam's definition of social capital as 'features of social organization such as networks, norms, and social trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit' (1996: 67), yet network approaches continue to be under utilized in current research on social capital.

Our paper considers the potential of network approaches for showing how social capital may be generated through associational membership. Existing research has not explored which kinds of associations may be likely to generate trust and social capital. We show how the internal social networks of organizations can be conducive or non conducive to the construction of social capital. We report on our network analysis of two similarly sized political groups to explain why one (a local branch of the Labour Party) appears able to generate more activism and involvement from its members, whilst another (a local branch of a conservation group), fails to generate systematic involvement. This comparison allows us to redeem the promise held out that social network analysis can systematically advance our understanding of social capital (Lin 2000; Portes 1998).

Some of our endeavour involves developing an appropriate mode of application of social network analysis. Here we distinguish two ways of operationalising network approaches. One way, which is close to more conventional studies of political activism, sees networks as an asset or resource that aids mobilisation. Thus, in the famous study of Granovetter (1973), people having larger numbers of contacts who they did not know very well ('weak ties') were better able to find jobs than those people who had a smaller number of contacts who they knew better ('strong ties'). In this vein, Snow (1980) shows that prior contacts with members encourage entry to organisations. This kind of resource-based approach can be linked fairly to individual survey data and can be seen as an extension of conventional, resource based approaches to political mobilization (for instance, that of Parry et al. 1992).

However, our main concern is with a second, broader, approach to networks. This emphasises the value of networks as a means of empirically unpacking the relationship between structure and agency (Emirbayer and Goodwin 1994; Diani 2002). We see network methods as a valuable heuristic which

enables us to understand the kind of network structures which may facilitate trust and activism, and those which do not. Within this broader approach we are not only interested in how social ties act as personal resources, but also how 'structural holes' (Burt 1992) and the whole web of associations may generate particular kinds of social capital. We thus couch our approach within the structural approach to social network analysis developed by White, Breiger, Burt, and others.

In section 2 we lay out our theoretical perspective on social capital and social networks. In the third section we outline our case study organisations and explain our research methodology. Here we emphasise the distinctiveness of our research in gaining data on (1) whole networks rather than on samples of individuals and (2) network connections around different intra-organisational functions. The fourth part of the paper examines how activism was orchestrated in each of the organisations. We show that very different amounts of involvement were evident in the two organisations and that these levels of activism cannot be explained in terms of individual attributes of members. We therefore go on to explore network structures as an alternative explanation in Section 5. This examines the nature of cliques in the organisations, where we show important differences in the way that cliques are organised in the cases studied. Section 6 reports the results of block-modelling of the network structures. We show that the Labour Party, which appears to generate most social capital, also has the more partitioned structure.

2. Social capital and social networks

The concept of social capital gestures towards the importance of social networks. For Putnam (2000: 19), 'the core idea of social capital theory is that social networks have value… social capital refers to connections among individuals – social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them'. For Lin (2000: 3), the theory of social capital involves exploring 'hierarchical structures, social networks and actors'. Similarly, for Bourdieu (1996: 51), 'social capital is the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition'. Yet, for all this, social network approaches are remarkably under-developed within the study of social capital, the existence and extent of which is usually inferred from other types of data.

This is especially true for the important arguments of Robert Putnam. In his first significant work on social capital, Making Democracy Work (1993), Putnam has little direct interest in social networks. Instead, he uses a careful historical analysis to argue that the voluntary associations found in Northern Italy helps explain its greater democratic vitality compared to Southern Italy. Here he elaborates a neo-Tocqvillian approach to the positive social virtues of voluntary associations. In his subsequent work, Bowling Alone (2000), Putnam extends his definition to include informal social ties. Nonetheless, the heart of his analysis is centered on this account of trends in associational membership, where he argues that declining membership trends for most types of voluntary association poses worrying problems for the future of democratic cultures. Here he uses survey data on trends in voluntary association membership and skillfully interprets wide ranging trends in membership to claim that there is a general trends towards disengagement in American life. Although he has a chapter on informal social networks of friendship and neighbouring, here he only reports aggregate figures on the amount of informal socializing, and nowhere examines the structure of the relationships involved.

This is a significant limitation because we need to understand the precise mechanisms by which membership of voluntary associations generates social capital. Putnam is clear that some kinds of membership do not convey social capital, and he assumes that locally organized associations generate more 'generalised reciprocity'. But other than a neo-Tocqvillian assumption about how people learn to

relate to others in such settings, it is not clear what creates the virtuous effects attributed to organisational membership. Associations thus tend to figure as a kind of 'black box', the exact mechanics of which are largely unknown. The same is true for numerous other studies of social capital which use only membership of associations as an indicator (Paxton 1999; 2002; Li et al. 2002, 2003). One of the purposes of the paper is to use information about network structure to describe some of the intra-organisational processes germane to the creation of communal social capital.

Pragmatically, of course, there are good reasons why social scientists may need to rely on simple indicators, details of which are collected in reliable national surveys. Yet it is also important to consider how social networks within associations actually work to unravel the precise mechanisms by which networks may generate trust and activism. Here, we can learn to some extent from the rich tradition of social network analysis conducted within the social movements literature. Over the past two decades the study of social movements is one of the relatively few sub-fields of sociology to be strongly influenced by social network methods[7]. Arguably, only in the area of social movements studies do theoretical interests in networks, represented most famously in the work of Melucci (1989), cross-fertilise with strong methodological currents in network analysis, to produce a series of studies that are methodologically robust and which have major substantive importance (see for instance Gould 1995; Bearman and Everett 1993; Diani 1995; Diani and McAdam 2003).

It is possible to trace the development of network approaches from early studies (Snow et al. 1980) couched within a resource mobilization tradition. Here resources were seen as effective for mobilisation within the context of opportunities and constraints imposed by political environments. Rather than emphasizing individual participants' attributes, attention is focused on the 'meso-level' of organisations, institutions and communication networks in the emergence of collective action, so that activism is seen as driven by 'demand' as well as 'supply' (see the overviews by Morris 1997; Mueller 1997; Rudig 1990). Within this context, social networks tend to be seen as some kind of personal resource. People's contacts can allow them to gain knowledge, further contacts, or resources that they can use, such that networks can be seen as a measure of 'social capital' (see generally, Portes 1998)[8]. This was the early dominant interest in networks within social movement studies, where attention has focused on how networks may explain whether an individual is available for participation (McAdam and Snow 1997: 120-1), with a key feature of 'structural availability' being an individual's positioning within pre-existing personal or organisational networks, which operate to facilitate their recruitment into activism (Snow et al. 1980; McAdam 1986; McAdam and Paulsen 1993).

This approach to social networks indicates generally the conditions under which social networks become resources, and hence might generate social capital. But we might also note the elaboration of a broader interest in social networks within social movement studies that has deeper implications for the analysis of social capital. As Diani and McAdam (2003) indicate, in the past decade there has been a growing interest in reconciling American approaches, which tend to be couched within a rational choice framework ultimately reliant on a structural, resources based approach to analysis, and European approaches, more likely to emphasize culture and interested in the agency of social movements themselves (see the discussion in Crossley 2001). In the hands of some network researchers, notably Harrison White (1992), the relational properties of networks are seen as crucial to the formation of identities, with the resulting implication that network approaches offer the potential for reconciling structure and agency. If this is indeed possible, then network approaches might provide the

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[7] Other fields where network approaches are strong include economic sociology and urban sociology but in both these areas their application is partial and uneven. See Scott's (2002) four-volume collection for some of the key contributions.
[8] The classic demonstration remains Granovetter's (1973) argument that those whose networks are characterized by weak ties (lots of people they do not know well) have greater potential to find jobs compared to those with strong tie networks.

prospect of methodologically resolving the major theoretical dispute within the discipline of sociology.

However, there is as yet no coherent and fully-fledged application of this perspective which might stand as exemplar for a new paradigm, but only pointers to what such an approach might entail. This involves not using network methods to show how observed inter-personal ties facilitate mobilization, towards a more structural account of how the holes and absences of ties (Burt 1992; Padgett and Ansell 1993) affect mobilization. Theoretically, this has led some network writers to argue for the need to elaborate a 'relational sociology' (Emirbayer 1997). Although attracted to the orientation of this 'manifesto', we think that the contrast between relational and individualistic approaches evoked in this literature is too simplistic to be of much analytical use. Empirically, whilst rational choice theory is methodologically individualist, its specific applications depend on the structural context in which individuals act, and therefore can lead to structural explanations of social phenomena.[9]

Rather than just construing social network connections as individual resources, we need also to consider the structural properties of networks to assess what kinds of ties and non-ties might generate the most powerful forms of engagement and activism. It does not follow that successful mobilization depends on the number of ties, but rather the nature of positioning within a broader network structure, as for instance Padgett and Ansell (1993) show with respect to the power of the Medici in renaissance Florence resting on their ability to bridge two separate networks. Methodologically, a key implication for studies of social networks is that for certain purposes it is necessary to focus not on 'ego networks' but on 'whole networks'[10]. However, within social movement studies most studies of whole networks tend to be of movement organizations, rather than individuals. There are few whole network studies of all individuals within a social movement organization. And to date there have been no studies of the role of whole networks within organizations sustaining, developing or dissuading individuals from action once they have initially joined. Given the volatility of associational membership (see Warde et al. 2003) it is crucial to understand not only why individuals join associations, but also why they persist in membership, and why some people may increase their activism once they have joined, whilst others do not.

These considerations bear upon the analysis of social capital. The term social capital is a somewhat confused one. The confusions have at least two sources: somewhat indiscriminate reference to two different types of social capital; and a tendency to conflate processes and outcomes. First, the literature countenances two types of social capital, what might be called personal and communal social capital. Personal social capital gives individuals special advantages in the pursuit of their private projects – ties produce favours. Communal social capital refers to understandings and norms shared within a group, locality or society which facilitate widespread cooperation and collective goods. Putnam is primarily concerned with this latter group - with the social climate within which individuals are forced to act. For him, the more that climate is characterised by 'mutual support, cooperation, trust and institutional effectiveness', the greater the public good and the private welfare. Such a climate emerges, he contends, from extensive interpersonal interaction in impersonal situations. Thus he looks for its sources in associational memberships, voluntary activities, contacts in public space. As noted above, he considers associational membership particularly important in providing opportunities for contact with diverse persons who are not familiars.

Second, and particularly vis-à-vis communal social capital, it is difficult to separate the cause from

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[9] An example would be Goldthorpe's form of class analysis, or Lin's approach to social capital.
[10] This is both a theoretical and technical issue. Whole network analysis requires data on the ties of whole populations so that the networks of these populations in their entirety can be analysed. Ego networks only require data on the ties of samples, so that it is possible to say that particular types of people are more or less likely to have particular types of network (see Scott 1991).

consequence, because a fairly simple isomorphism is presumed between the processes occurring within organisations (cooperation, trust, etc.) and the societal effect (cooperation, trust, etc.). Left opaque is the question of whether some organisations generate more social capital than others, and if so why. Our data promises a pioneering investigation of the details of how reliable is the assumption that associations generate opportunities for contact and thus formation of social capital. We are able to show how the 'whole networks' of two case study associations are related to activism within them. We take the interpersonal connections (social contacts reported by members) that are the by-product of intra-organisational activity as the main indicator of the extent and nature of the formation of social capital. We describe the relationship between the characteristics of the networks and reported levels of engagement in activities. We thus consider the possibilities that different kinds of network structure may generate different levels and types of social capital. With this aim in view, we now introduce our case study organizations and research methods

3. Methods and case study organisations

To re-iterate, most studies of political activism have either used detailed case studies of particular social movements (or social movement organisations) (e.g. Bagguley 1995; Diani 1995; Eckersley 1989; Mueller 1997), or survey analyses examining the characteristics of members or activists in general (e.g. Parry et al. 1992; Hall 1999; Warde et al. 2003; Li et al. 2002)[11]. The originality of our approach in this paper lies in the fact that we explore the membership characteristics of two diverse social movement organisations, linking them to the network ties of all members, so that we can systematically compare the structure and dynamics of activism between them. Whilst our two case studies cannot be assumed to be representative of the broader picture of associational activity in the North-west of England, or more generally, the cases were deliberately chosen to reflect different kinds of social movement organisation, specifically: an orthodox political party and a campaigning group.[12]

The first case study is a local Labour Party branch, representing a long established participatory organisation in the British political party system[13]. The branch, situated within a strongly middle class area of Cheshire, is relatively active. The branch comprises a number of adjacent wards, which operate together organisationally because of low membership levels. The size of the branch membership at the time of the survey was 128.

Our other case study is a conservation group. This is an example of a traditional nature protection association, engaging in 'pressure politics' through established channels of institutional influence. The organisation began life as a group of locally-based wildlife gardeners, and only later broadened its concerns to the conservation of wildlife within the city as a whole. The group participates in a national network of similar groups, but operates structurally as an autonomous local group. Like many local

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[11] The exceptions here include historical studies of social mobilization where it is possible to use archival data to glean information on the characteristics of political activists. See Gould 1995.

[12] Practical constraints necessarily curtailed our choice of case study organisations. The network methods we planned to use required relatively formal organisations, of a similar size, with a clearly defined membership, in order to investigate relations amongst all members of the organisation. We also required strong support from the groups concerned in order to obtain good response rates. Our process of selection began by compiling basic demographic information for over 500 organisations in the Greater Manchester area, then exploring access issues with 60+ groups, and eventually making collective visits to nine organisations, before deciding on the three organisations for the research. We initially gained access to a fourth case study organisation also, but an internal feud between its officers led to us being denied access after our fieldwork had begun.

[13] Both Conservative and Liberal Democrat local constituency parties declined to participate in the research because of concerns regarding data protection and membership confidentiality issues.

environmental groups (see Lowe and Goyder 1983), it seeks to influence the local authority in safeguarding particular sites, as well as influencing general policies on conservation and development. The conservation group was in a quieter phase of a 'protest cycle' (Tarrow 1995) at the time of the research, and its activities were maintained by a small number of key personnel, with a largely passive wider membership. There was a membership of 121 in the group.

A postal questionnaire was sent to all members of each of the two organisations, asking for details on respondents' socio-economic position, the means by which they were recruited to the organisation, and the extent and nature of their participation and commitment[14]. This postal questionnaire obtained response rates of around 80 per cent but contained only limited information about social networks. At the end of this postal questionnaire, respondents were asked if they would be interviewed face-to-face about their social networks. A follow up interview was held with 108 members of our two organisations, in which full network data was obtained[15]. Because the collection of second phase network data involved asking respondents to identify, from a roster of named members, who they interacted with in various specified settings it does not matter that response rate is not 100 per cent, though it limits our ability to examine reciprocal ties (ie some of those named by a respondent will not have been interviewed thus we cannot check whether they in turn name the respondent).

A further feature of our methods was that we wanted to investigate network connections with respect to different types of activity. In the first phase questionnaire, we simply asked who people in the organization shared information with. In the more intensive second phase, we asked who they met socially outside the organization; who they got information from, and with whom they discussed organisational matters. In this way, we were able to assess whether social networks were specific to one of these contexts or whether they spanned them. We also tapped people's networks outside the organization, though we do not analyse this data in this paper since it goes beyond our interest in intra-organisational networks.

4. Networks and activism

A key point of our comparative analysis is that the two organizations differ in the extent of involvement of their members. Table 2 (see appendix) shows that for most types of activity, more members were active in the Labour Party than in the conservation group. Activism in the conservation group was lower overall and required less effort, with the most frequent activity being reading the newsletter. Less than a quarter of the membership attended meetings or wrote letters of protest. By contrast, Labour party members were more likely to attend meetings, were more likely to donate money, sign petitions, and get involved in fund raising, and they were considerably more sociable.

Interesting in the light of the Putnam's arguments, party members were also more trusting than those in the conservation group. Table 3 (see appendix) presents comparison of the means of an index of trust in people in general and in various institutions between the Labour Party and the conservation group (using two-sample t-test with unequal variances using Satterthwaite's approximation). The p-values in

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[14] The third organisation was a branch of an environmental movement. For the purposes of this paper, however, we refer to its characteristics in only one of our calculations. We leave it aside in this paper not because it demonstrates any features inconsistent with the current analysis, but because the pairwise comparison makes the presentation simpler to comprehend and interpret.

[15] Complete response rates were as follows. For the first phase postal questionnaire Conservation Group 78.5%, Labour Party 80.3%. For the second phase face to face interviews, Conservation group 46% of all members (58% of those who had returned postal questionnaires) and Labour Party 41% (52%).

the last column in parenthesis show that the Labour Party respondents are significantly more trusting on every item, except for trust in the financial institutions where there is no significant difference. Some of these results regarding institutions might be explained as a result of there being a Labour government in office. But it is interesting that in response to the standard question about trust in people[16] there was exhibited a difference at the .01 level of confidence. To the extent that high levels of trust is an indicator of the presence of social capital, we might infer the existence of high levels of social capital within the social circles of members of that branch.

These differences cannot be explained in terms of the different size of the organisations since their numbers are similar[17]. Nor is it obvious that there are any differences in the extent to which the two organisations offer incentives. The Labour Party operated in a 'hopeless' area, where it had never succeeded in seeing any of its candidates elected either as members of parliament or as local councillors. In addition, local branches have very little say in policy making at a national level, with the result that there are very few instrumental reasons for its members to become involved in the Party. If anything, the conservation group offered its members more incentives, in that it had succeeded in opposing planning applications and in lobbying for environmental protection. Yet, as we have seen, this did not mean that its members were more active. The issue, then, is how the Labour Party is able to generate more activism from its members than the conservation group.

One possibility is that the differences reflect individual attributes, with Labour Party members having more of the kinds of attributes that are known to be conducive to activism than the conservation group. Relevant attributes include income (with affluent groups being more active), occupational class (with the professional and managerial service class being more active), educational level (with the highly educated being more active), age (with the middle aged and elderly being more active). Table 4 (see appendix) shows that there were not great differences in the socio-demographic composition of the two memberships. The conservation group members had somewhat lower incomes, were more often found in intermediate white collar occupations, less often in professional positions, but had somewhat higher educational qualifications.

Although the differences appear slight, we did (using pooled data from three organisations) formally model the factors which predispose members to activism. We did this by conducting a factor analysis which showed that there were three, relatively independent, main types of activism. Collective activism consists of joining campaigning actions taken in concert. Individualised action involves people doing work alone and in their own time, for instance tasks of administration or representation. A third mode involves simply making financial donations. Consider how each of these forms of activism are related to characteristics of the members. Figure 1 (appendix) summarises the association between socio-demographic variables, network position, and the three modes of activism. No standard socio-demographic variable such as class, education, age, income, gender, organisational effectiveness, having children, marital status, have major effect. Hence, whilst socio-demographic characteristics are important in pre-disposing people to join associations, there is no evidence that they have significant impact on extent of activism once having joined. Nor do they appear able to explain why the Labour Party generates more social capital than the conservation group. We are therefore able to discount individual attributes as significant factors which might explain why the Labour Party generates higher levels of activism.

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[16] The question was, 'Some people believe that most people can be trusted. Others believe you cannot be too careful with people', please rank on a scale of 1 - 7.

[17] We should note that our research also examined a third organization, an environmental group, which reported high levels of activism but which had many fewer members. For the purposes of this analysis we have therefore omitted it.

Although socio-demographic variables have little significance for activism, Figure 1 shows network position and identification with the organisation are important. Being a core member of an organization (defined here as having 5 or more people with whom one discusses organisational matters within the organization[18]) is significant, as is identification with the organization. These two forces are shown in further detail in Figures 2 and 3 (see appendices). Figure 2 shows that those who identify with the organisation have higher scores on all 3 activism factors, while those who have no identification have low scores on all 3 factors. There is less variation on factor 2 - the financial factor. Only those who very strongly identify with the organisations score highly on the individualised activism factor. This suggests that a hardcore of members with 'strong identity' do most of the within these organisations, though this is a relatively small number of people (around 10 per cent of the total).

Figure 3 shows the relationship between activism and network centrality. We used first phase questionnaire data to identify patterns of contacts in the branch. Core members shared information about the organisation with at least five other members; peripherals shared information with between 1 and 4 other members; and outsiders share discuss information with no-one. Cores engage in all three forms of activism. Outsiders are unlikely to engage in collective activities or individual ones, but are average when it comes to donations. Peripheral members are average on collective action, but lower than average on the other two types. The striking thing is that the relatively small cores (about 14 per cent) do most of the work and donate most of the cash of the organisations.

We can see prima facie evidence that network and identity factors are involved in the generation of activism. Of course this is not itself surprising, and indicates a kind of virtuous circle whereby those who are active are also core members and identify as active. The fact that there is a relationship between respondent's sense of personal efficacy and activism indicates that those people who make more than the usual effort do so because they think they have something to contribute to the organization that might make a difference. Identification with the organization cannot be predicted by any socio-demographic variables, only length of time in the organisation has influence. This suggests that it is more a matter of loyalty and commitment to the local association than personal ambition that sustains the cycle of centrality, identity and activism.

5. Cores, networks and equivalences

Having established that activism is not a function of the socio-demographic characteristics of incumbents of positions, we now move to explore whether the structure of positions in the organisation per se can offer an explanation. We have seen that being a member of a core increases activism. But does it matter what type of core, or what set of relationships exist between core, periphery and isolates? These questions can be approached through formal network analysis. We examine the precise ways that the social networks of members differ between our two case studies with a view to estimating whether such differences might account for different levels of activism. We do this in three ways. Firstly, we use first phase data to distinguish members according to the number of ties they have with other members. Secondly, using second phase data, we assess whether there is an overlap between ties based on three functional dimensions - obtaining information, discussing organisational matters, and meeting socially outside the organization. This shows significant differences between the organizations in the extent to which there is homogeneity across the types of ties. Finally, we use blockmodels to examine which members are structurally equivalent to each other, a measure of the overall structure of positions in the two organisations, irrespective of interpersonal interaction patterns. These three probes allow us to judge whether the types of networks within associations might be said

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[18] The precise questions was, 'with whom do you discuss things to do with the organisation (for example, activities, issues, strategy)'.

to generate activism and, more generally, social capital.

5.1 Cores and peripheries

Figures 4 and 5 (see appendices) report the social networks of the two organizations, revealing the people with whom the members reported sharing organisational information. Figure 4 reveals a rather high proportion of isolates within the Labour Party, almost two-thirds. The core of the Labour Party network consists of nine people (9 per cent of the total membership) but ties between core members are well developed, as are their links to members of the periphery. Figure 5 shows that just over half of the members of the conservation group are isolates. The core of the group, however, is much smaller, containing only five members (5 per cent of the total membership), with members of the periphery communicating primarily with only two members of the core. Beyond their ties to these two dominant individuals, there are very few other ties between members of the periphery. This is a very sparse network with a small core.

Figures 4 and 5 indicate that the cores of the two organisations are very different. Since there are actually slightly more isolates within the Labour Party, suggesting that perhaps some of its activities are conducted by members without network ties. However, the core group within the party is larger than that of the conservation group. The organization of the core members may be important for understanding their differences. We can explore this specific point using second phase network data.

5.2 Types of network and the multiplexity of ties

The cores described in the previous section were identified on the basis of their having discussed organisational matters with five or more members. But this is just one of many possible dimensions of connection among members arising from the functioning of an organisation. In phase two we asked about three such dimensions along which networks of ties are formed – transfer of information about the organisation, discussing organisational matters again, and meeting members for social purposes.[19] It is an empirical question whether any individual has similar contacts across these three dimensions. If so, with networks superimposed one upon the other, then relationships between members would be multiplex and ties perhaps stronger as a result. (It would also mean, for data collection purposes, that in describing the network structure it would be adequate to ask only one such question.) If, on the contrary, social and business networks were independent of one another, the possibility arises that some types of contact are more important than others in determining activism and in creating social capital, as well as having the methodological implication that the question is strategic. As we noted above, our study is well placed to be able to compare the network patterns surrounding different activities.

Figure 6 (see appendix) shows patterns of ties for each of two activities, obtaining information and meeting socially. Obtaining information networks are reported at the top of Figure 6, and meeting socially at the bottom. We might think that obtaining information is a critical aspect of the conduct of business within an organisation. Transfer of information is necessary to generate coordinated activity and without it there could be no meaningful participation by anyone except office holders. The pattern of information flow, in other words, is one way of describing the democratic characteristics of operations. Being sociable, on the other hand, has no direct effect on formal operations, but might be

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[19] The questions were:
'which of the people [on the roster] would you get information about the activities of the group?';
'with whom [on the roster] have you discussed issues to do with the organisation in the last year?';
'in the last year, who [on the roster] have you met with outside of the activities of the [Group]?'

seen nevertheless as an important context for the generation and consolidation of social capital, and also in factionalised organisations a means for enhancing factional loyalties. Both, then, are relevant dimensions of the overall network structure of an organisation.

It is clear that the two types of network do not produce overlapping links. In both the conservation group and the party the pattern of relationships is dissimilar. Figure 6 (top right) shows that in the conservation group only two people [17 and 83] are much involved in delivering information. They have many contacts (the size of the circle indicates volume of contacts) and few others have ties other than with them. This appears to be a sparse and hierarchical structure of business relationship. The pattern of sociability (Figure 6: bottom right) is significantly different. A few members have a number of contacts, including the two delivering most information, but the network is not dominated by the latter. There are fewer isolates. But again, there is no sign of factionalism. Figure 6, describing the Labour Party's network, also shows differences between the two network dimensions. There are a large number of people isolated from the information network (Figure 6: top left). Of the remainder, there are more than a handful of individuals involved in exchange of information, with none apparently dominant. The diagram showing sociability (Figure 6: bottom left) indicates a greater degree of mutual engagement, with a significant number of individuals having several associates. By and large, however, it is the same individuals who are at the core of information distribution who are central to the network of sociable ties. The sociable connections are denser than those facilitating information transmission.

It is also clear that the patterns differ between the organisations. The conservation group exhibits a much more hierarchical and sparse set of links for passing on information than does the party, though information reaches a larger proportion of the membership. The party seems to have more decentralised channels of communication, as indeed was implied by the networks of discussion described in Figure 4.

We can also see that the party has more isolates and a greater concentration of ties around particular individuals (there are more large circles on the diagram, indicating multiple connections). Some of the explanation of the difference, derived from data obtained in another part of our study, is that members of the conservation group reported a substantial number of joint memberships with other conservation and environmental organisations and it is their engagement in these other associational activities which produce the dispersed pattern of sociable interaction mapped in Figure 6.

Another way to describe the overlapping relations is shown in Figure 7 (see appendix). This shows the proportion of individuals who were in one, two, or three of the networks investigated in Phase 2. It shows that 52 per cent of the Labour members who reported ties, had ties on all three dimensions, compared to 42 per cent of conservation group members. Consequently, a smaller proportion of Labour members had ties on only one dimension (24 per cent) compared to 34 per cent for the conservation group. This shows once again, lower levels of superimposition of ties for the conservation group who have fewer multiplex ties.

Prima facie, these results suggest that it is not ideal methodologically to ask about links with respect to only one type of activity. We should not expect strong superimposition. Substantively we might also suggest that interaction contexts are not equivalent because despite there being fewer isolates in the conservation group, they are less active, probably because not all types of ties increase the sense of reciprocity. We cannot be certain if the Labour Party's higher levels of activism are in any way a consequence of these patterns, but it might be thought, by analogy with a weak ties argument, that the existence of a larger number of core members, with reciprocal links to each other and more diverse connections with the periphery made it possible to mobilise more members more often. Less clear is whether these structural differences make a difference to the ability of the organisation to create greater

social capital. Of course if social capital is measured simply by connections internal to the organisation, then the connections within the Labour Party are more multiplex and differentiated. But if one has Putnam's concerns, for the effects of intermediate associations on the external environment for cooperation and democratic determination, we have no metric for determining for certain whether the party pattern is superior. However, the more extensive connections, the higher level of activism, and the greater degree of trust displayed by members make this a plausible hypothesis and worthy of further investigation.

Thus, we see some differences between the Labour Party and the conservation group in terms of the overlap between their formal and informal social networks. The Labour Party has a significant group of members who are involved in sociable activities, and there is considerable detachment between the sociable networks of the members and their official, formal structure. This is not the case in the conservation group where those active in any way tend to hold formal position. We are left with the indication that the richer and more diverse social networks of the party lies in the differentiation of its networks on several dimensions. In the party there are fewer ties replicated across networks, and thus redundant with respect to the virtues associated with associational membership. The structure of ties in the party is conducive to more ties. This is the type of structure which would be welcomed by Putnam since, all other things being equal, it requires more interaction between (comparative) strangers, more negotiation, and more opportunities for the building of trust from impersonal connections. Associations with structures like that of the Party will contribute more to communal social capital. The issue we address next is whether there is a structural basis (ie a different pattern of roles) for this.

5.3 Blockmodels of network structures

As developed by White, Boorman, and associates, blockmodels allow a way of assessing the structure of whole networks through assessing the structural equivalence of people within the network. Rather than exploring the ties of particular egos within the relevant population, the focus is on the social network structure as a matrix, so that people are allocated to blocks not on the basis of their personal ties with each other, but on the basis of their having an equivalent position vis-à-vis all other people in the population. It is a measure of their common role relative to all other roles in a given social space. This is a route to describing the structure of ties as a whole within a population. Figure 8 reports the dendrograms and Figure 9 indicates which respondents are in various blocks. (see appendices)

We examine blockmodels for the various dimensions of social networks that we have measured. The top of Figure 9 examines the receipt of information from other members, showing there is evidence of hierarchy within the Labour Party, with block 5 (only one person) delivering information to blocks 2, 3, and 4, (and only receiving from 3). Block 2 and 4 circulate information amongst themselves, but these are only blocks of two people. The key person in block 4 holds a central position in both the discussion and the information networks, but not in the network of sociability elicited from the question 'which other members do you meet outside?'.

In the conservation group there is also a hierarchical structure, with block 3 controlling the flow of the information. This block of one person, interestingly, is in the core of all 3 networks in the conservation group. This is further testimony to the point made above that there is a tighter fit between the formal and informal roles in the conservation group than in the Labour Party.

If we turn to consider the blockmodels for 'meeting outside' (ie for social contacts), (bottom Figure 9) the Labour Party displays considerable interaction between blocks 3-7 who send and receive ties to each other. Only one of the four people in block 3 is in the 'met outside' core, indicating that they do not

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have many reported ties, but by meeting with people in block 4 they are connected to the Party. Whilst the two members of block 5 are both in all 3 cores, the single members of block 6 and 7 are in the cores of the met outside and information sharing, but not discussion groups. In short these networks are dispersed and fractionalised.

By contrast, the conservation group has two blocks with reciprocal friendships. These two people are also both members of the cores on all three dimensions. Block 1 has some ties with block 2 whilst block 3 is largely isolated. These observations point to one interesting conclusion. The success of the Labour Party in encouraging activity and thereby generating social capital coincides with the existence of diffuse network structures. People who engage with each other in sociable settings do not necessarily share information or discuss the Party with each other, and vice versa. And similarly, the various blocks, defined by the relative importance of their roles in the structure of the organisation, do not map directly onto membership of the network cores. By contrast, the conservation group displays more overlap between spheres, and this appears part and parcel of their lower levels of activism and social capital. A simple way of registering these differences is to note that all the people in the dominant blocks for sending information and meeting socially are also in all three cores of the conservation group, but this is not true for the Labour Party.

6. Conclusions

In this paper, we have shown that two organisations of similar sizes exhibit different propensities to generate social capital through participation in the organisation's activities. A branch of the Labour Party sustains higher levels of political activism, sees more engagement in sociable activities, and its members display higher levels of trust in other people and in institutions, than does a local conservation group. Why?

We have shown that their differences cannot be explained by the attributes of the individuals in the organisations. The socio-demographic structure of membership is rather similar, and in any case, socio-demographic position has very little impact on activity levels once one has become a member. Our model (Figure 1) shows that the main determinants of activism amongst members was whether one was a core member and whether one identified with the organisation. Of course there is a virtuous circle at work here, since these features are likely themselves to be a consequence of being active: those active are likely to become core members by virtue of being active, and being active is likely to increase identification with the organisation. The key issue is whether we can go beyond describing this virtuous circle in order to determine why the Labour Party was better able to generate higher levels of aggregate involvement.

To address this issue we firstly looked at the networks within the two organisations to examine the nature of the cores of each organisation and the multiplexity of their ties. We saw that the structure of the networks did appear to be different in that the Labour Party's cores revolved around seven interlocked people, whereas in the conservation group there was one key member, and another slightly less central. The networks of the conservation group are both more sparse and more centralised around two dominant positions. This pattern applied both to formal and informal interpersonal ties. It was also confirmed by our block modelling exercise.

One of the interesting features of this analysis is to speculate whether, since organisations produce interpersonal contact of different kinds, all are equally valuable in generating social capital. The evidence here might suggest that the social capital generated within the party may be greater because its various component networks are not superimposed upon one another. Rather than the Labour Party

functioning as an integrated, centralised entity with a few core members filling the central roles in each functioning network, it is actually the greater differentiation of networks according to different activities and the lack of coincidence between the personnel of network cores and of blocks that help it mobilise its members. If true, perhaps organisations generate less social capital when in the form of surrogate communities where all know all, and generate more social capital where, providing members can work together for some purposes, they are less tightly knit together. The opportunity to raise this possibility, and to follow it up in empirical analysis, is a consequence of the analysis facilitated by being able to collect whole network data. Accounting for activism within an organisation benefits from reference to both multiplexity and core-periphery links. Membership figures are not an adequate proxy for the internal features of processes within associations. No doubt, few people assume that all organisations generate the same type and amount of social capital. However, this type of study offers a data set and an analytic approach capable of investigating the processes operating inside what has previously been a black box in accounts of social capital. Our findings are limited in many ways. But measuring multiplicity and core-periphery structure are two means for clarifying rather nebulous notions about the origins of social capital.

This is an important point in view of recent policy interests in encouraging the formation of social capital through top-down initiatives. We have shown that the conservation group, which is organised hierarchically, with clear lines of communication flowing downward from people in positions of formal responsibility, does not generate the same kind or quantity of social capital as the Labour Party with its dispersed networks. This is salutary for those who think it possible to 'plan' the expansion of social capital simply through increasing membership of voluntary associations. Our case studies suggest that social capital arises, at least sometimes, from complex processes whereby people look to the same organisation for different things, where they do not necessarily identify with the organisation as a whole and communicate only with a minority of people within it. Social capital does not require generalised reciprocity among all members, an assumption lingering still in 'communitarian' understandings of the concept.

As regards the theoretical issues raised in section 2, we can see that the use of 'whole network' information, across the different component networks of an organisation, supplies an unusual source of insight into the role of social ties in mobilisation. Not only are we able to separate out and compare formal and informal connections, we can see that their structures are different and also potentially variable. Informal social ties in the conservation group had a structure just as monolithic as that of its formal business procedures. With whole network data it is possible, as we did in our block-modelling, to describe with precision the overall structure of a network thereby to use it as an explanatory factor in determining the outcomes of courses of action or social processes. Of course we would require similar information on a greater number of organisations in order to establish the typical consequences of particular types of network structure. But it seems clear enough that when arguments are adduced for the importance of voluntary associations in the generation of social capital it actually matters how such associations are structured. Homogeneous memberships engaged in a highly integrated fashion across activity domains, a surrogate organisational form for traditional communitas, do not provide the most fruitful, or possibly even fail to provide sufficient, basis for the generation of social capital.

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Appendices

Table 1: Schematic contrast between network approaches within social movement studies

Dimension	Ego network approaches	Whole network approaches
Theoretical orientation	Resource mobilization/ individualistic	Relational
Nodes	Individual members/ activists	Social movement organizations
Ties	Existing ties	Ties and absence of ties
Accounts of	Variations in activism (of individuals and between SMOs)	Forms of mobilization

Table 2: Members engaging in particular activities at least once a year (percentages)

Activity	Labour Party	conservation
Reading newsletter	83	98
Donating money	42	11
Writing letter of protest	19	23
Signing petition	33	11
Purchasing merchandise	4	4
Attending meetings	40	23
Attending demonstrations	8	5
Awareness or fund raising	23	9
Organising social event	6	0
Attending social event	28	2
Administrative work	17	9
Research or writing	8	11
Presentations to outside organisation	4	4
Liaising with media	6	7
Consultation	7	11
Representation on committees	12	7
Direct action	0	4

Table 3: Levels of trust expressed by members of case study organisations

People or institutions trusted	Mean index of trust (1-7)		Difference in means, Labour – Conservation	t-statistics of two-sided alternatives with p-values in parenthesis
	Labour	Conservation		
People!	5.11	4.54	.57	2.763(0.0064)
Government*	4.52	2.97	1.55	7.459(0.0000)
House of commons*	4.17	3.22	.95	4.719(0.0000)
Civil service*	4.09	3.29	.80	3.805(0.0002)
Police*	4.06	3.45	.61	2.653(0.0087)
Local government*	3.72	3.04	.68	3.186(0.0017)
EU*	3.91	2.94	.96	4.500(0.0000)
Financial institutions*	3.26	2.96	.30	1.244(0.2152)
Major companies*	3.04	2.52	.52	2.464(0.0148)
BBC*	4.74	4.25	.49	2.306(0.0223)

Notes
! Respondents were asked ''Some people believe that most people can be trusted. Others believe you cannot be too careful with people', please rank on a scale of 1 - 7.
* Respondents were asked

Table 4: Socio-economic characteristics of the memberships

	Labour Party branch % N=102	Conservation group % N=94
Occupational class		
Service class	84	72
Routine non-manual and personal service workers	7	22
Petite bourgeoisie	3	2
Foremen and technicians	-	2
Skilled, semi- and unskilled workers	6	1
Income		
Less than 10,000	23	41
10-20,000	28	38
20-30,000	15	11
30-40,000	11	8
40,000 and over	24	2
Highest educational qualification		
None	10	2
CSE/ GCSE	12	6
A level	13	14
Technical (HND/ HNC)	7	16
Degree and higher degree	55	59
Occupational group		
Managers and administrators	25	26
Professionals	42	30
Assoc professionals and technicians	15	19
Clerical and secretarial	5	15
Craft and related	6	2
Personal and protective services	1	4
Sales and related	3	3
Plant and machine operatives	1	
Other	3	

Figure 1: A model of activism

ACTIVISM

COLLECTIVE

COREMEMBER → INDIVIDUAL ← ORG IDENTITY

FINANCIAL

Younger   Individually effective   Length of time in organisation
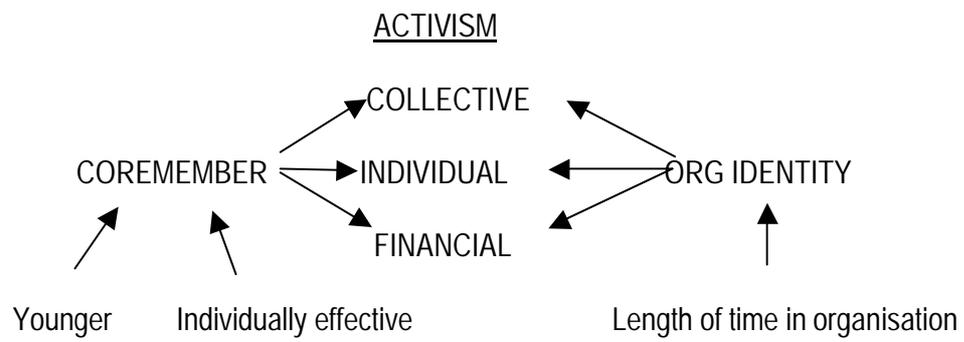
Figure 2. Three factors of modes of activism by organisational identity
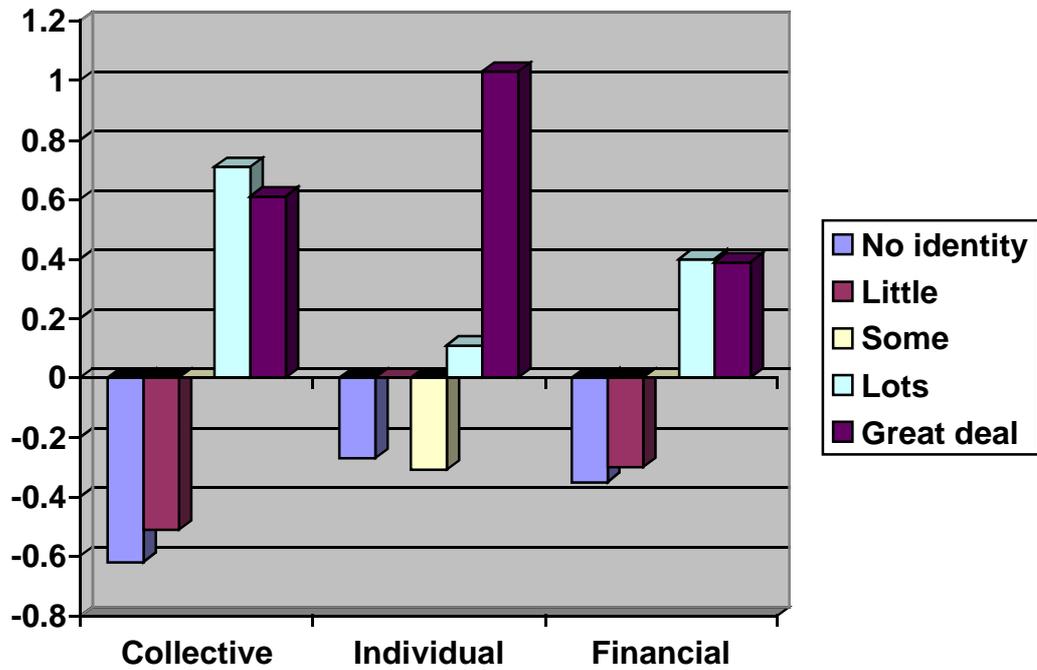
Figure 3. Three factors of modes of activism by network position
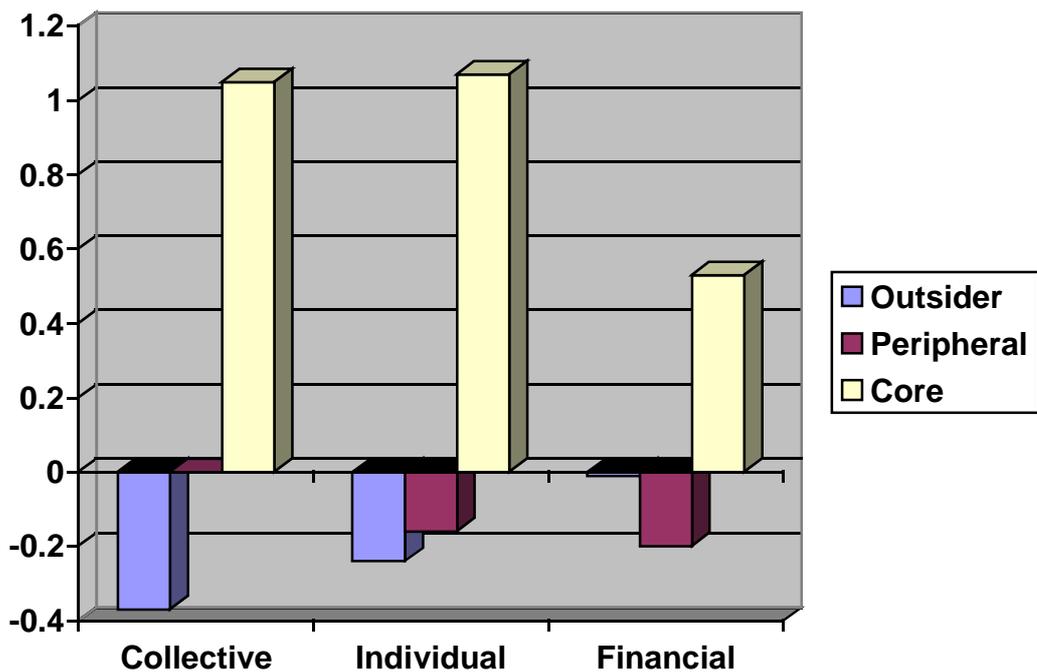
Figure 4: Communication networks within the Labour Party
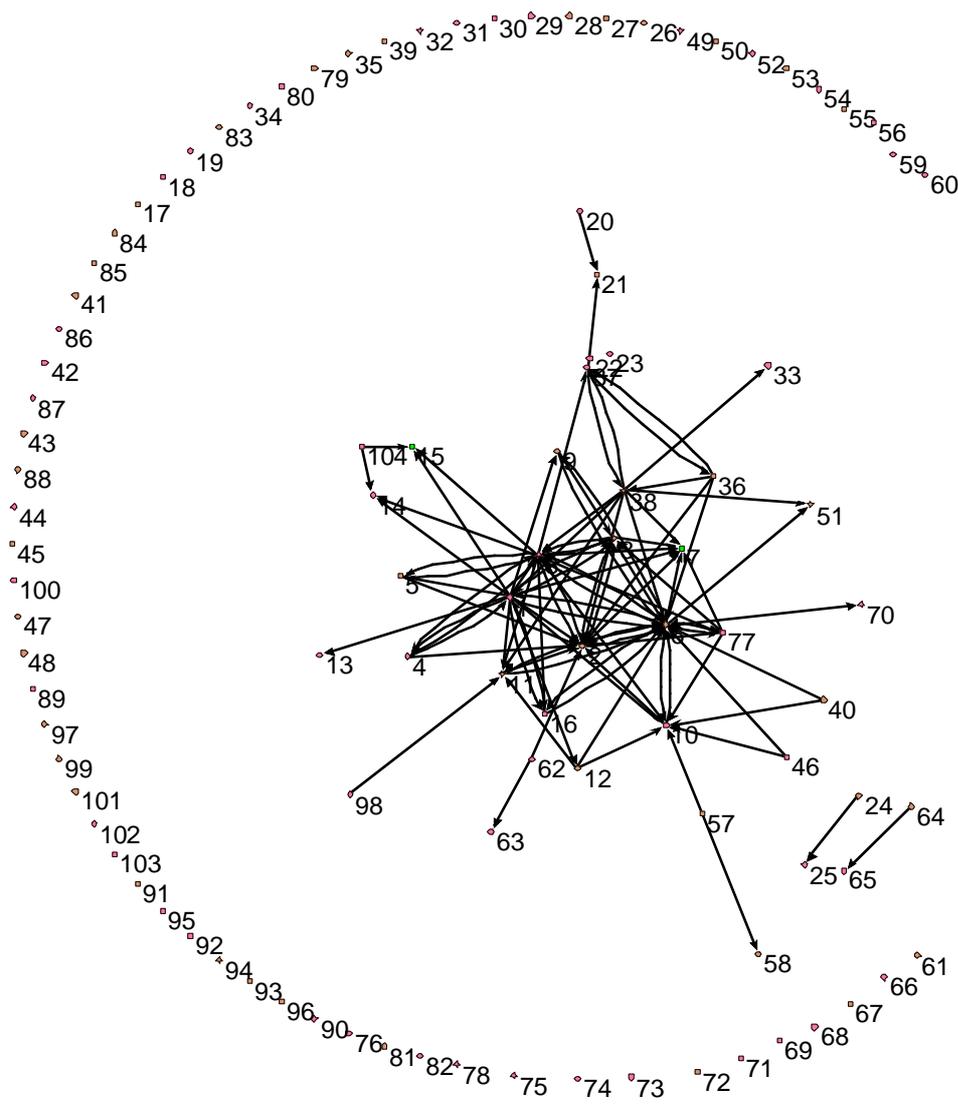
Note
Respondents were asked 'with whom do you discuss things to do with the organisation (for example, activities, issues, strategy)'.

Figure 5: Communication networks within the conservation group
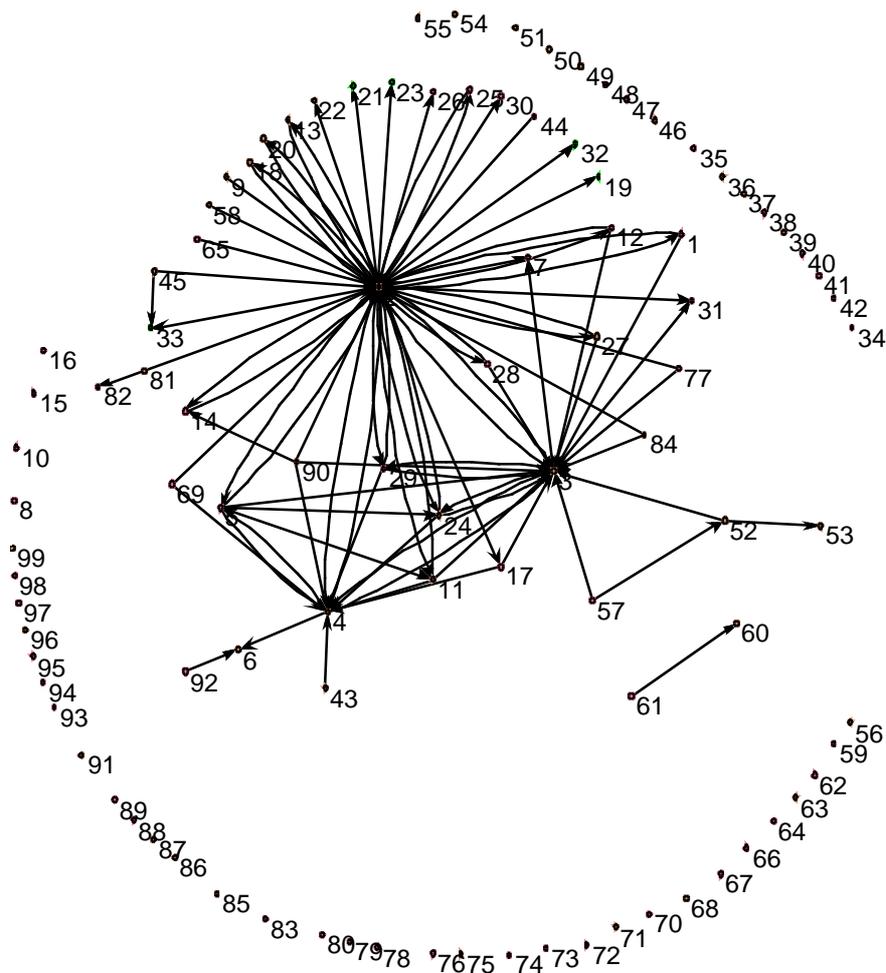
Note
Respondents were asked 'with whom do you discuss things to do with the organisation (for example, activities, issues, strategy)'.
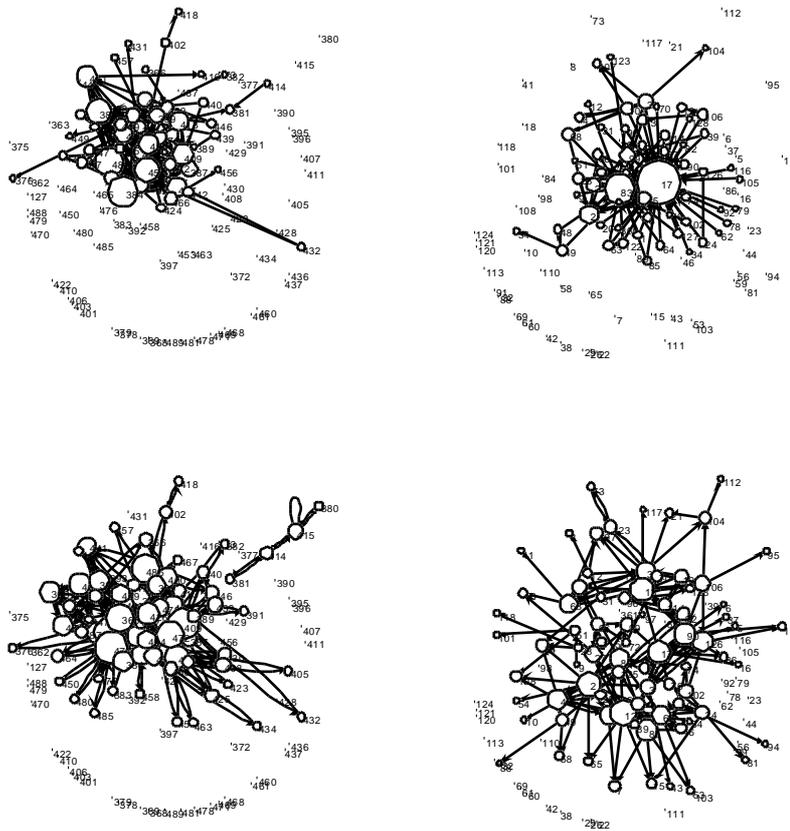
Figure 6: Labour Party (left: top – bottom) Get information and meet outside networks; conservation group (right: top – bottom) Get information and meet outside networks.

Figure 7: Members with ties in three types of network (receiving information, discussing organisational affairs and meeting outside the organisation); Labour party and conservation group

8(1) Labour Party
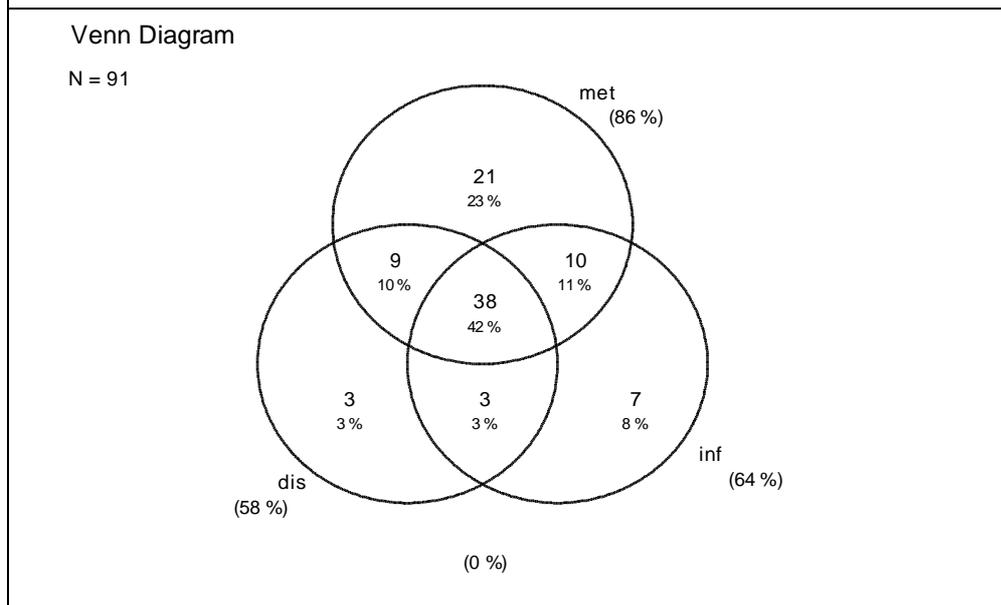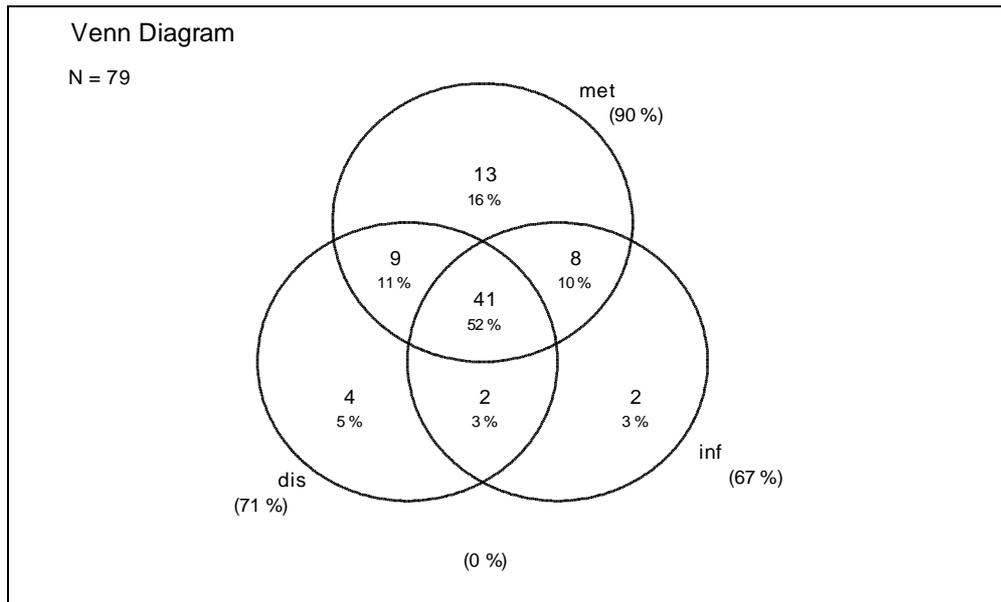
8(2) Conservation group

Labour and conservation Venn diagrams
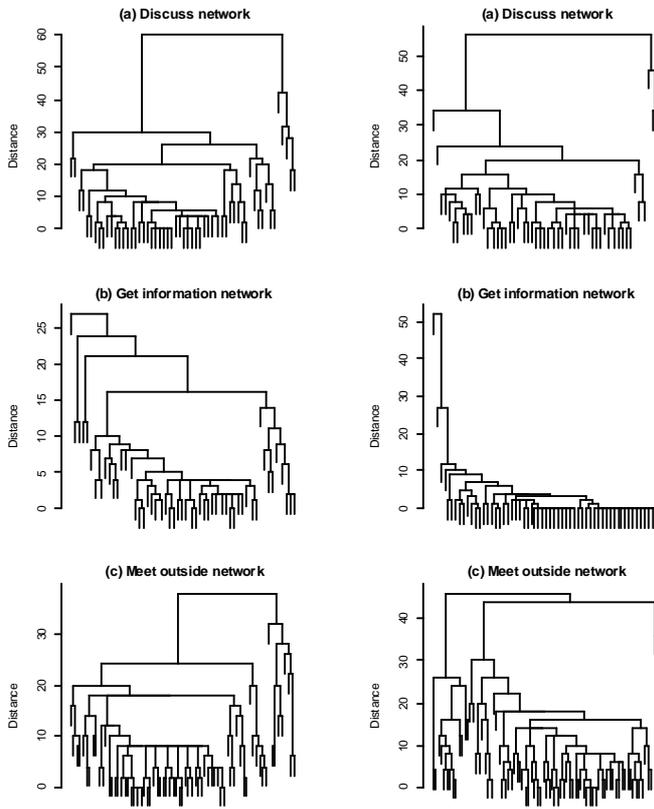
Figure 8. Labour Party (left) and Conservation group (right) dendrogram of blockmodels.
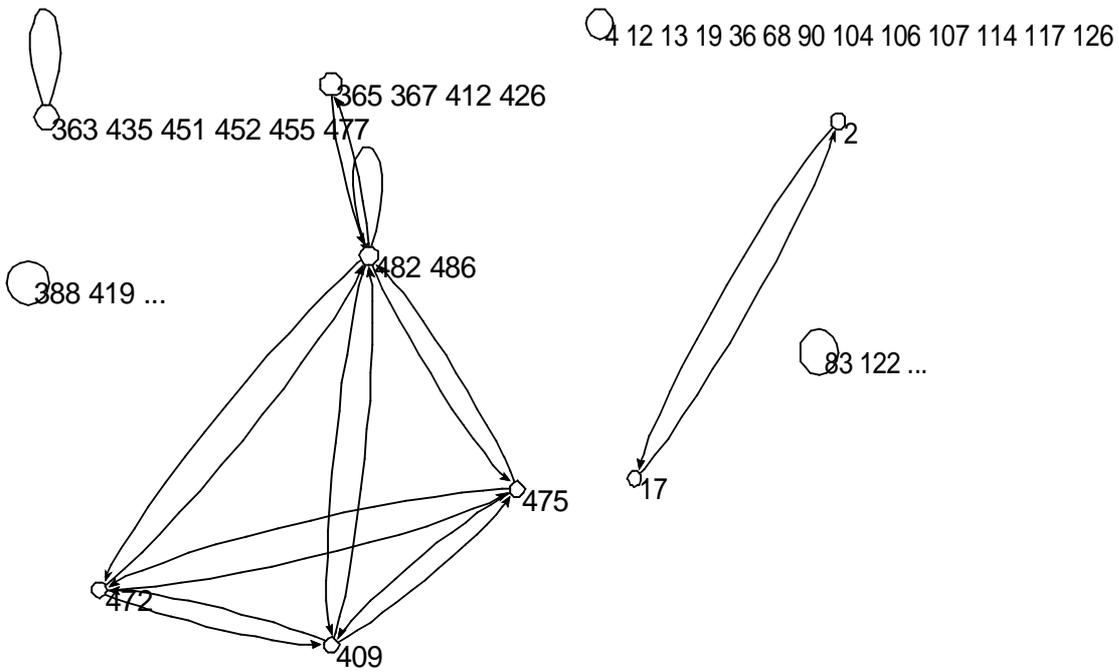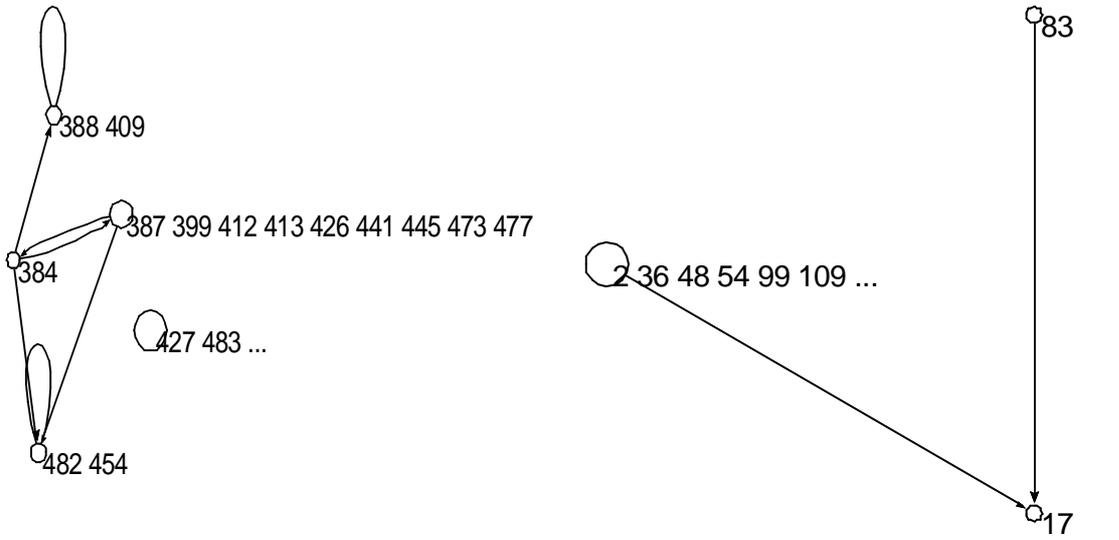
Figure 9: Labour Party (left) and conservation group (right) blockmodels of 'get-information' (top) and 'meet outside' (bottom). Three dots in each figure signify the rest of members.