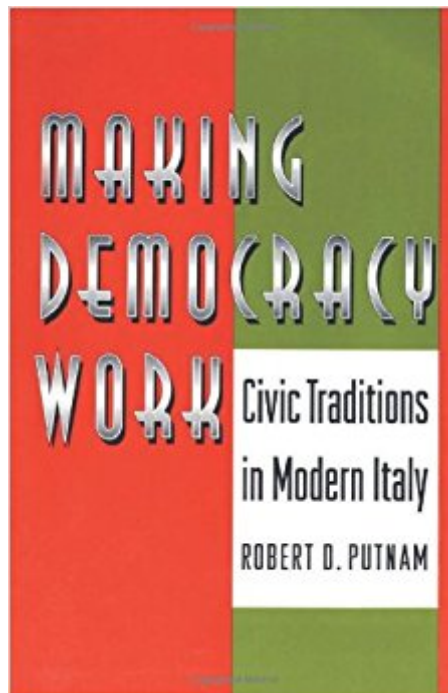




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# Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions In Modern Italy



## Synopsis

Why do some democratic governments succeed and others fail? In a book that has received attention from policymakers and civic activists in America and around the world, Robert Putnam and his collaborators offer empirical evidence for the importance of "civic community" in developing successful institutions. Their focus is on a unique experiment begun in 1970 when Italy created new governments for each of its regions. After spending two decades analyzing the efficacy of these governments in such fields as agriculture, housing, and health services, they reveal patterns of associationism, trust, and cooperation that facilitate good governance and economic prosperity.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Harvard professor Putnam offers an in-depth examination of Italian politics and government.

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Winner of the 1994 Gregory Luebbert Award  
Winner of the 1993 Louis Brownlow Book Award, National Academy of Public Administration  
Honorable Mention for the 1993 Award for Best Professional/Scholarly Book in Government and Political Science, Association of American Publishers  
"Seminal, epochal, path-breaking: All those overworked words apply to a book that, to make the point brazenly, is a Democracy in America for our times."--David L. Kirp, The Nation  
"A great work of social science, worthy to rank alongside de Tocqueville, Pareto, and Weber.... If [Putnam's] claims about the

essential conditions of successful democracy are correct (and they almost certainly are), then politicians and political scientists alike will have to think again about democracy's prospects in Asia, Latin America, and Eastern Europe."--The Economist"A remarkable study of `civic traditions.'"--Steven Lukes, The Times Literary Supplement"It is rare that one comes across a classic in political science, yet in Robert D. Putnam's *Making Democracy Work* we undoubtedly have one. . . . Mr. Putnam's seminal work addresses in a rigorously empirical way the central question of democratic theory: What makes democratic institutions stable and effective? . . . [His] findings strikingly corroborate the political theory of civic humanism, according to which strong and free government depends on a virtuous and public-spirited citizenry--on an undergirding civic community. . . . One crucial implication of *Making Democracy Work* is that feeble and corrupt government, operating against the background of a weak and uncivic society, tends not to foster the creation of wealth, but rather to renew poverty. Overmighty government may stifle economic initiative. But enfeebled government and unrepresentative government kills it, or diverts it into corruption and criminality. . . . This may not, perhaps, be a universal truth; but it is directly relevant to the prospects of democracy in the United States today."--The New York Times Book Review

I'm not a fan of books that rest on self-reporting (surveys that ask how you "feel" about a government). But this book compelled me because my family is from Southern Italy so I know there's truth to its core premise that civic trust is lacking there. This book focuses on the pressing issue of how to govern people who don't self-govern - people disposed to break the law when they think they can get away with it. How do you prosper or even survive in a place where you know you can't trust your neighbors? The authors wind their way to the conclusion that it takes a very long time for civic virtue to grow, but there is no alternative. Social capital is essential for development and it only grows the organic way: daring to trust your neighbor and not having your trust betrayed must be experienced over and over until it becomes a habit. It can take many generations. That's not an answer anyone wants to hear. Even Southern Italian leaders were disconcerted by the researcher's lack of a pill to prescribe for a fast cure. Everyone wants a short-cut to the development process, so I credit the authors for resisting that temptation. No one likes to acknowledge the routine violation of basic neighbor-to-neighbor trust in some cultures. I grew up in such a culture and saw the harm it did, so I applaud the authors for speaking of it. (I refer here not to the community I actually lived in but to the old-world culture my parents had internalized.) I gave this book three stars because it reads like an academic paper. It flops between statistical methodology and sweeping abstractions. While I agree with the content, you have to really struggle to extract it.

Nevertheless, I am passionate about the subject of the core mammalian need for trust within a herd or pack or troop. Readers who share that interest might want to check out *I, Mammal: Why Your Brain Links Status and Happiness*

Got the book on time before I needed it for class, didn't exactly enjoy the book but that's simply school for you.

You wanna measure social capital? here is how!

Can be a little dense, though the information is fascinating. Generally well-written, in my humble opinion.

I had to read this book for my political science class and I was a lot more interested that all the political science books I read before

The book was in good condition. I'm satisfied.

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