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Dieter Thomä, Christoph Henning, Hans Bernhard Schmid (Eds.)

SOCIAL CAPITAL, SOCIAL IDENTITIES

FROM OWNERSHIP TO BELONGING

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Edited by
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and Hans Bernhard Schmid

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Introduction

The term "social capital" brings together two seemingly incompatible terms. Human sociability is combined with economic capital. An internal feature of human behavior is paired with an external resource. In this respect, the term "social capital" is comparable to paradoxical terms like "friendly stone" or "human machine".[1] The latter, the human machine, aptly serves as an example for a semantic synthesis of opposites that cuts both ways. On the one hand, if this term is used to describe a machine, the machine appears humanized; on the other hand, if it is used to describe a person, the person appears technicized. We can transfer this dual effect to the term "social capital": On the one hand, capital itself appears more social (socialized), when combined with sociability – there is a warm glow to it. On the other hand, the social, thus conceived, is reduced to a mere economic function. These linguistic effects are quite powerful both in theory and practice.

Social capital may be acknowledged as another form of capital *apart* from economic capital, or as another form of sociability *in addition* to common social relations. In this collection, these cross-purposes are analyzed and assessed from different interdisciplinary angles. The papers collected in this volume take the tensions contained and concealed in the term "social capital" seriously. The disciplines committed to this task and represented in this volume are economics, sociology, philosophy, and religious studies.

The title "Social Capital, Social Identities" hints at the fact that personal identity transcends an individualistic framework, in which social relations are viewed through the lens of individual interests and benefits only. If identity is "social" from the outset, the independent stance of individuals maximizing their utility and increasing their capital is shattered. The subtitle of this collection "From Ownership to Belonging" opens up a dynamic perspective and suggests that we are well advised to overcome a narrow understanding of social capital based on individual entitlements and ambitions. While revising the notion of social capital, we are prompted to undertake a rapprochement between social capital and the vocabulary of sociability developed in social theory and philosophy at large. This vocabulary includes concepts like belonging, reciprocity, embeddedness, membership, fellow-feeling, attachment, trust, cooperation, the ce-

1 In his paper, Hans Bernhard Schmid stresses the paradox of social capital – and presses: "Social capital brings evil into the world."

ment of society, collective intentionality, social bonds, public goods, and the common good.

Current research focuses on an economic or quasi-economic understanding of social capital and seeks to expand this notion to an economized view of social relations in general. Economic theory has discovered social relations as an economic resource and has "capitalized" on this discovery by studying these relations with economic methods. At the same time, sociologists have criticized this endeavor as an undue economization of social relations, underway both in theory and in practice. The *other* transformative direction of the term "social capital" however, namely the "socialization" of capital as a resource, has received relatively little attention. This collection of papers aims to adjust this one-sided approach by exploring the linguistic potential of the ambivalent construct "social capital" in a more balanced manner. Yes, social relations often do have an economic function, or at least they may be put to such profitable use. But we have reason to suspect that a socialized view of capital has the potential to move beyond the image of a *homo oeconomicus* maximizing his self-interest and caught in his own "hedonic calculus". The old formula of "economic imperialism" may thus be replaced by a renewed attempt to assert the "embeddedness" (Karl Polanyi) of economic behavior and to coordinate research on social capital conducted by economics, other social sciences, and the humanities.[2]

In the light of this interplay, economic language turns out to be not *purely* economic, and economic terms like "capital" or "cooperation" are open to re-interpretation. In this collection, several authors undertake such fine-grained re-readings of economic terms. The sociologist Martin Endress investigates a wide array of different forms of trust, of which "reflexive trust as a strategic resource for action" (Endress) is but one. By highlighting the fact that "belonging to" a community is at odds with economic prerogatives, Endress shifts from strategic cooperation to the requirements associated with a "culture of belonging." Similarly, the economist Sir Partha Dasgupta describes "various social environments in which cooperation is possible," with market interaction being only one of them. He analyzes the complex requirements for securing and enhancing long-term commitments and sustainable cooperation by discussing, among others, trust, mutual affection, and reputation. From a philosophical point of view, Dieter Thomä delineates the economic and non-economic forms of sociability by going back to the notions of ownership and belonging implied in the theory of social capital, Stoicism, and moral sentimentalism: A network of social rela-

2 For another account of the humanities' transformative effects on economics, see Nussbaum (2010).

tions may, to a certain extent, belong to a certain individual, yet it makes equal sense to turn the tables and state that an individual belongs to a community. Like Endress, Thomä argues that a social and cultural realm cannot be "owned" like a tangible thing.

The critique of the "social capitalist" as social "moron" takes center stage in the paper by philosopher Hans Bernhard Schmid. He argues that the shortcomings of an individualized reading of social capital are to be compensated by a reappraisal of "collective identity" as a core feature of the "normative ideal of democracy". A similar distinction is drawn by philosopher Stephen Darwall who claims that the individual's respect for another person is to be superseded by experiences of "fellow membership". According to Darwall, the paramount form of this membership is citizenship. These considerations are complemented and expanded in the paper by sociologist Mike Savage. By taking an empirical turn, Savage scrutinizes the different social circumstances linked to strategic cooperation, elective affinities, and long-term attachments among humans. Social embeddedness is shown to be a fragile realization of communal life, which depends on various economic and cultural factors and is ridden by social distinction.

Is the ability to familiarize with a social and cultural space or to "put down roots" (Savage) equally accessible to all members of a given society? The answer to this question again uncovers the ambivalence of the term "social capital". Perhaps this term carries the promise of a resource available to individuals notwithstanding their economic circumstances. Everybody is entitled to be a shareholder of this particular sort of capital. Given its accessibility, the distribution of social capital appears to be more egalitarian than the highly unequal distribution of monetary wealth and income. Even in traditional villages and low-income neighborhoods – or maybe especially there – everybody knows everybody else, so that everybody's social capital would seem to be very high, whereas the highly flexible "economic hitman" travelling around the clock may not have any real friends at all (for more on this notion, see Schmid's paper).

This pure, independent image of social capital is tainted by the fact that the very idea of capital comes with an appeal to convertibility. There are unique channels for acquiring social capital, but the whole point of reading social relations as instances of social capital consists in the fact that there could be transfers from social to economic capital and vice-versa. Social networks are expected to create benefits beyond the intrinsic value of sociability itself. The logic of social capital is not fundamentally different from the logic of economic capital.

Local embeddedness may compensate economic shortcomings, but it is questionable whether they can *counteract* economic inequalities. Several papers in this volume, especially the contribution by sociologist Franz Schultheis, tackle these issues of convertibility, compensation, and complementarity. The "exchange rate" of social capital into other forms of capital (economic or cultural capital, in Bourdieu's terms), may be very low, the costs for the "transformation" of capital (Schultheis) need to be considered. Knowing everybody in a poor village may be an advantage, say, in terms of access to childcare. (It takes a village to raise a child, as the proverb has it). Yet in this very village, a woman may be forced to "pay" for this use of social capital by being excluded from the workplace and renouncing the right to have access to economic capital herself. In this case, social capital functions as a consolation, not as a means for empowerment. As social capital is not totally under a person's control or to her disposal, being well-known in a community bears its own risks. If a person decided to marry someone from another cultural background or to openly live in ways perceived as uncustomary, a collapse of her social capital might follow. These repercussions could be more severe if a person were held in high esteem in her community. A collapse of this kind is staged in Ang Lee's movie *Brokeback Mountain* from 2005 (based on a short story about a homosexual cowboy by Annie Proulx). Finally, certain types of social capital may turn out to be a burden or a liability in financial terms. When it comes to getting a job (Granovetter 1974) or obtaining a financial loan at an attractive rate, firm social bonds of the wrong kind may backfire. Having "roots" in a village may have no effect at all, whereas knowing the right people in the right places – mainly *distant* places outside of one's village – may be quite beneficial. Economic inequalities are thus not only reflected in the distribution of social capital, they may be exacerbated and consolidated by the peculiar distribution and stratification of social capital.

Several papers in this volume explore the hidden links between social capital and inequality. Schultheis analyzes the effects of power relations on the accessibility of social capital by using social classes and family relations as examples. The sociologists Martin Diewald and Joerg Luedicke discuss empirical findings showing that "the hope that the availability of social capital is a substitute for unequally distributed other resources is misleading: The positive effects of education and, in a more particular way, of income on the availability of social capital are evident." Moreover, they find that whereas high levels of social inequality have a negative effect on social capital, a decommodifying welfare state does *not* have such effect, contrary to what many researchers expected. The relation between the welfare state and social capital is also examined in Hans G. Kippenberg's and Christoph Henning's papers. Kippenberg shows how a particularly uncanny "growth" of social capital as a private good was preceded by the retrenchment of the welfare state: the growth of private religious groups *taking over* former state functions. Following Kippenberg, this institutional transformation "involves the danger of closed and powerful militant brotherhoods." Religion may work as a "bonding" social capital (Robert Putnam) that glues together smaller groups based on a comprehensive theory of the good (John Rawls). The very functioning of this group identity prevents it from generating a form of "bridging" social capital. Michaela Rehm discusses the limits of such a framing of social identities in a different setting, namely with regard to the binding power of civil religion in the modern state. She states that civil religion is to be regarded as an unqualified resource, a "weak tie" not befitting an integration into a pluralistic society.

Henning makes a similar point on a more abstract, general level. He suggests that social capital should be understood as a remnant of a lost entity, namely a social sphere dedicated to the "common good" and securing the provision of public goods. Transforming public goods into privately appropriated social capital may lead to an increase in social inequality and to a tragedy of the commons, e.g. to a decline of generalized trust in political institutions. This discussion connects to Albert Hirschman's analysis of the "shifting involvements" between private interest and public action.

The above-mentioned ambivalence of the term "social capital" unfolds in a paradoxical development in which the formation and rise of social capital is concomitant with its reduction and impairment. Its ubiquity is undermined by the reservations limiting its use and scope – reservations that can not only lead to the deterioration of social capital, but also to its use for "exploitation" (Dasgupta) and exclusion. This phenomenon can be studied empirically and conceptually, as shown by Dasgupta and Schmid in their papers. So much for social capital as a "dark matter" (Dasgupta) or as the "dark heart of community" (Schmid). But the interdisciplinary re-reading of social capital is not a brainchild of an "age of suspicion" and is not limited to criticism. Conceptual clarifications and the assessment of empirical data give ground for a positive outlook. Undermining "any naïve idea of 'good' and 'caring' institutions" (Endress) goes hand in hand with working towards a proper understanding of what a "good and just society" (Darwall) would look like. The rise of social capital in economics and social theory can be read as a (biased? half-hearted? heavy-handed?) attempt to overcome the rift between the individual and the state, between interests and institutions. It focuses on how individuals contribute to the social fabric and how their identity, as social identity, relies on it. We need "a sense of common purpose" (Darwall) or a "cooperative-mindedness" which functions as a "capacity to pool our forces and act together" (Schmid). Being aware of the factors fostering this attitude is instrumental for making it more prevalent. Several authors in this volume (Diewald/Luedicke, Endress, Henning, Savage, and Schultheis) agree that less social inequality is a precondition for this attitude. Benevolence towards others is not enough: We also need to respect the "authority" of each individual (Darwall calls this "second-person respect"), for it is *individual* "beliefs" (Dasgupta) and *individual* "knowledge" (Endress) that decide over the path *social* capital and *social* identities will take in the future.

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Dieter Thomä

Varieties of Belonging: Between Appropriation and Familiarization

1 Social capital and belonging: a conceptual conundrum

The term "belonging" allows for arranging and re-arranging its assigned subjects and objects in fairly different ways. Questions like 'Does that belong to you?' or 'Do you belong to him?' are examples of such varieties. They serve as a blueprint for an ambiguity which many theorists addressing the concept of social capital have found puzzling or cumbersome. The following two findings may illustrate this ambiguity. On the one hand social capital describes a setting in which a person is part of (or belongs to) a network. On the other hand, social capital is described as a resource that is at the disposal of a person (or figures among her belongings). Inevitably, the question of ownership comes into play in this case: If there is capital, you expect a capitalist to be around. Yet subjects and objects in social relations involving belonging are anything but fixed. Maintaining property claims in this area turns out to be more difficult than in the case of other forms of capital that are more tangible.

In this article I will try to shed some light on the ambiguity of social capital by going back to the varieties of belonging or to the different meanings of the phrase of 'x belongs to y'. Let me begin with some preliminary remarks on the semantics of 'belonging to.' If something belongs to a person, it is available to her, she disposes of it, she is in possession or in command of it. Some kind of ownership is involved here, yet it seems to be of a special kind. Let me point out two things.

First: To say that something belongs to someone seems to express a form of ownership that comes with fewer legal constrictions than others. Thus John Locke distinguishes between a first state, in which a thing was in "the hands of nature, where it was common, and belonged equally to all her children," and a second state, in which man's "*labour* hath taken it out of the hands of nature [...] and hath thereby appropriated it to himself."[1] Locke thus draws a dis-

1 "Man, by being master of himself, and proprietor of his own person, and the actions or labour of it, had [...] in himself the great foundation of property" – "His *labour* hath taken it out of the

tinction between informal belongings that come to you naturally and formal property.

Second: Belonging seems to entail a practical dimension or some kind of active involvement that exceeds the standard conditions for property in general. Directedness or intentionality are part of the language game of belonging. This becomes evident when we think of the link between belonging and longing. You aim at something, you reach out to something in order to finally get what suits you. The English 'longing' is related to the German word 'langen,' which we know from the phrase 'er langte nach dem Glas' ('he reached for the glass'). Talking about my belongings is different from talking about my stocks. We usually have them with us, they are within reach or, as Heidegger would put it, "ready-to-hand". The request "Please take all your belongings with you!" betrays the fact that this is where you usually want them to be.

Belonging in a broader sense is based on the correspondence between an intention and its object. In some instances it rather expresses the incidence of fitting than a relation of ownership. If you state that a certain object, like a piece of furniture, just 'belongs there,' you mean to say that it is in the right place. I will get back to that later, as it will force me to question the contention that has guided me so far: namely that belonging implies some kind of ownership.

Let me first further investigate the finding that belonging seems to imply some kind of practical relation. This finding can be corroborated when we switch to the German equivalent of 'belonging,' namely to 'gehören.' In the case of 'gehören' the practical relation is not defined by the intentional link between a state of *longing* and a state in which the thing you are after is at your disposition or *belongs* to you. The word hiding in 'gehören' is 'hören' ('hearing', 'listening'). The semantics of 'gehören' do not lead back to an intentional act directed at an object (as in belonging), but to an interaction between x, who speaks, talks, gives orders and y, who is supposed to hear, to listen, to obey. Here the notion of ownership leads back to the authority to command.

'Gehören' can relate to all kinds of persons and things that are under my sway, that comply with my demands. It literally leads back to a relation between humans, yet as the interaction involved is asymmetrical, it is possible to extend it or to equate it to a relation between a person and a thing: someone is in charge, and like a person obeying orders, a thing is subject to dispositions. That is why not only children belong or 'gehören' to their parents, but cars belong or 'gehö-

hands of nature, where it was common, and belonged equally to all her children, and hath thereby appropriated it to himself." Cf. Locke 1988, 298, 289 (II. 40; II. 29); cf. II. 26, 28, 120.

ren' to their owners and are expected to readily 'respond' at full throttle. Both 'belonging' and 'gehören' refer to asymmetrical relations between persons or between a person and a thing.

Now what happens if I am not in the position of counting my belongings but if I happen to belong to y, or z? As somebody belonging to something or to somebody else, I am certainly not in the position of being the owner or proprietor, but rather in the position of being owned. This does not strike me as a particularly comfortable position, even though I can relate to Gilbert Bécaud's song "Je t'appartiens" which expresses a strong feeling of belonging in the sense of depending on a person and being devoted to her. ("De tout mon être/ Tu es le seul maître/ Je dois me soumettre/ Je t'appartiens." – "Of all my being/ You are the sole master/ I must surrender/ I belong to you.") According to Bécaud's testimony, belonging implies a strong notion of ownership or command. Human relations are thus transformed into a power game, albeit an exciting or seductive one.

Yet we also know of forms of belonging that are more symmetrical – and we are inclined to embrace them. Let us take a closer look at them. If we say that children belong to their parents, we refer by now to the closeness of this relationship rather than to the legal privileges of the parents. (There is no need to remind you of the fact that this was different in the 18th century and remains so in some parts of the world today. The struggle against the property rights of the father over his children and of the husband over his spouse has been long and arduous.) If I belong to a family or to a group, I am not necessarily subject to the orders or intentions issued by the head of the family or the leader of the pack, nor am I to follow the rules set by an anonymous code. How the duties linked to my membership are defined very much depends on the type of collective I belong to. Oftentimes this belonging comes without proprietor, without a strong notion of ownership.

We register a major alteration in the language game of belonging here. According to my first account of belonging, the person to whom something 'belongs' typically is human and what belongs to him typically is a thing or a thing-like, objectified person. The image that comes to mind now, in this second version of the language game of belonging, is altogether different. Those who belong to x typically are humans, and they belong to other humans or to man-made institutions or abstract entities (like a group, a law firm, a club, a nation). If, in the first version of the language game of belonging, the intentional stance is clearly on the side of the one longing for something and appropriating it, in this new setting it is no longer clear where to look for such intentionality.

So it goes two ways: I can make something belong to me by an act of appropriation, or I can belong to something. In the latter case this affiliation is either involuntary (you cannot pick your parents yourself) or it is based on your choice of becoming a member, of making yourself belong to something. Yet even in this second case you have to rely on some kind of welcoming gesture or go through some kind of protocol in order to be accepted.

Belonging in this second sense comes close to membership or association. Let me illustrate this with a small anecdote that may be elucidating in this regard. When I joined the Getty Research Institute in 2002, I learnt that it was inappropriate and politically incorrect to speak of those accompanying the fellows as their spouses or their family. This did not come as a surprise. Some of the persons concerned were not married, there were gay couples, etc. So there was the need for a different kind of wording. Those who belonged to the fellows were officially called "associates." I must confess that I found that slightly odd, yet I did not have a compelling alternative to offer. To be sure, this expression aptly rendered the fact that those accompanying the fellows had joined them by consent, voluntarily. It would, however, be jumping to conclusions if I said that belonging could be transformed into association without any semantic loss or alteration. Belonging still seems to be slightly more demanding and less self-determined than association.

I was describing the turning of the tables that takes place between version one and version two of the language game of belonging. The intentional stance can be maintained to a certain extent when we switch from those who have belongings to those who belong to something. We can think of associates, members, partners and the like who act based on the intention to belong to somebody or something. Yet the retention or reappropriation of the intentional stance is not complete. If you belong to something you are not fully in charge, you cannot possibly be in possession of what you belong to. The intentional stance can be redefined, relocated, adopted, but you cannot claim to be endowed with property rights when in the position of belonging to something or somebody.

Social capital is not my main focus in this paper, but since social capital is about benefitting from belonging to social networks, my discussion of belonging should have some bearing on the discussion of social capital as well. What would it look like?

We are used to the idea that capital comes with an owner. It is hard to think of it as something unappropriated. This is not only true of economic capital, but of social capital as well. One way of meeting this requirement is to conceptualize social capital as something 'stored' in networks for individuals. Thus they are to be recognized as its owners. As a matter of fact, this is what has been argued by James Coleman (1988, S98) and other theorists of social capital who frame it in an individualistic setting. Robert Putnam and others settle for a form of social capital that is collectively generated and exploited (Putnam 1995, 67); they do not clearly attribute it to a proprietor. This prevents them from making strong claims on ownership. The price they pay is that their concept of social capital tends to be vague and that the link between social capital and other forms of capital, first and foremost economic assets, becomes rather weak.

Yet arguing for a more individualistic reading of social capital is also tricky. In light of the previous discussion on belonging, attributing social capital to an individual owner appears to be self-defeating. It does not make a lot of sense to say that you own what you belong to, that belonging to a group could coalesce with being in possession of the relations constitutive for this group. Thus we are confronted with a conundrum: Either we stick to an individualistic reading of capital ownership and have a hard time coping with the fact that we do not have full power over the networks we make use of, or we settle for a more collective notion of social capital and run the risk of employing a less than rigid notion of capital.

There are two obvious ways out of this calamity, two ways that may allow social capital theory to make use of the idea of belonging within its conceptual framework. Both strategies need to return from version two of the language game of belonging (I belong to a group, etc.) to version one of the language game of belonging (something belongs to me, etc.). It remains to be seen whether these ways are viable.

According to the first of these strategies, I would have to insist on the fact that I do not belong to a group but that this group belongs to me. In this case the capital generated and stored within this group evidently belongs to me as well. A mobster may be in this position, but we know from Mario Puzo's and Francis Ford Coppola's "Godfather" that such a privileged position isn't carved in stone. In a world of fierce competition and distrust such a position appears to be extremely unstable.

According to the second of these strategies I would have to settle for some kind of collective ownership. I would not only belong to a group, but would also climb the ladder and think of myself as being a shareholder owning parts of the stock of this group or "credit slips" (Coleman 1988, S103). By upholding these property rights I would be entitled to use the capital stored and provided by this group. But it is hard to imagine how this second-order ownership is to be conceptualized and formally implemented.

Let me pause for a moment. I started my considerations with the still indisputable claim that the discourse on social capital entails a reference to belonging. It was also taken for granted that the concept of social capital cannot do without some reference to the second version of the language game of belonging that features persons belonging to a group or to other persons. Yet I have run into problems when figuring out how the notion of property that seems to be part and parcel of any notion of capital coalesces with these findings. The situation gets