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What's the Civil in Civil Society?
Robert Putnam's Italian Republicanism

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WHAT'S THE CIVIL IN CIVIL SOCIETY? ROBERT PUTNAM'S ITALIAN REPUBLICANISM[1]

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1. Introduction

Seven years have passed since the publishing of Robert Putnam's (and his Italian associates' - Robert Leonardi and Rafaella Y. Nanetti) remarkable book *Making Democracy Work. Civic Traditions in Modern Italy* which became an instant standard bearer for the ongoing theoretical turn to 'civil society', not least on account of its use of the term *social capital* (not in fact invented by Putnam himself) - by now a catchword in social science departments, think tanks and public debate across the globe. Acclaim was earned, initially, for the fact that a short and easily accessible book could be based on such an impressive combination of large scale use of survey data, descriptive economic statistics, time series, elite interviews, and even political macro history - all elegantly woven together to support a single important thesis, apparently with striking strength and consistency.

Putnam's civil society is not the economical, social relations, and class-struggle-centred civil society of Marxist political economy. It is the idea that good government performance *as well* as economic development is a product of 'civic community', i.e. the networks of trust, reciprocity, and habits of co-operation that arise in the associational micro-spheres of civil society such as the soccer club, the Lion's Club, or the choral society. The notion that not only economic development but also such popular political culture is necessary for a political system to 'work' - indeed that such a culture is part and parcel of a 'political development' that cannot be separated from economic-material developments - is not new. Indeed, Putnam clearly intended *Making Democracy Work* as the *The Civic Culture* of the nineties. Behind the functionalist vocabulary and. the potentially conservative assumptions of systemic harmony in the 'stable democracy' of Almond and Verbas book, in fact an older tradition of thought may be discerned. The common good assumed in *The Civic Culture*, along with the civic capacities that helped sustain it, was flavoured by the great tradition of eighteenth and nineteenth century American republicanism,[2] although tempered by Madisonian pluralism. In this respect too, Putnam's work signalled continuity, the author making a great point of referring explicitly to what he calls civic republicanism. This tradition, he argued, contains a still viable empirical argument which assigns an important role to the activity and dispositions of public spirited citizens, assumed to 'make democracy work'. This republican inspiration and its consequences is the theme of the present paper.

Many of Putnam's findings have now been questioned. Scepticism is often the fate of the truly original contribution, but the methodological, empirical, and broader theoretical points that have been raised against the book have been quite serious. Some commentators argued that the dismissal of socio-economic explanations was premature. But the majority of his critics, coming from political science, argue that Putnam's 'political' explana-

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2.   E.g. the central Tocqueville quote in Almond and Verba (1965:217).

tions of Italian civic culture in several ways are not political enough, for instance as regards the particular places in civil society where the book looks for civicness and as regards the very 'stuff' of civicness in the first place. I tend to agree with this criticism, much of which I draw upon in the following. However, and picking up a new thread in the Putnam commentary, I suggest that a useful way of conceptualising and systematising the critique of Putnam's account begins, not with diagnosing an overdose of spontaneous associationalism and *Democracy in America* but with realising that Putnam's claims to republican ancestry for his particular theoretical and empirical orchestration of civic community, social capital, and the place of both in Italian history, rest on a mistaken reading of that tradition. Particularly, his implicit image of civil society fails to tab the manner in which the republican construction of this concept in the great debates of the Enlightenment was political, state-focused, and conflict-accepting, and the way that the content and ambiguities of civic virtue or civility was thematised in the process.

Evidently, Putnam's objective was neither to present a correct account of this hotly contested tradition, nor *per se* to vindicate the causal claims of the tradition as a whole, and his endeavours should not be judged by his success or failure on either count. However, I contend that republican thought – at a certain level of generality no doubt - *does* indeed contain a set of valuable theoretical claims, importantly different to those of Putnam, *and* that the portrayal of a vigilant Italian civil society as a seedbed of civic community *would* have been greatly aided (and modified) had Putnam paid more attention to these old assumptions about politics, and to the work of Tocqueville in particular. The paper begins with a short exposition of Putnam's main theses (2). It then looks at the republican tradition to which Putnam refers, preliminarily pointing out a degree of convergence with its several dimensions, but also – under four different headings – the crucial points of divergence (3). These four 're-publican disputes' are then examined (4-7) and the discussion summarised (8).

2. Putnam's Italy

Let us recapitulate Putnam's *storia italiana*. In 1970 Italy commenced a process of institutional decentralisation. After decades of centralised control by state agencies via prefects, many important areas of public spending and policy were delegated to new regional governments whose legal and institutional structures were all similar. Putnam and his associates were at first primarily interested in how such institutional reform might shape political practices and institutional performance over time. However, as they followed this "unique experiment in institutional reform" and were alerted to apparently growing differences in the comparative success of different Italian regions, particularly between north and south, they eventually decided to investigate and, Putnam claims, confirm the hypothesis that successful institutional performance - 'working democracy' - depended on the prior existence of traditions and networks of civic engagement in each region.[3]

The book starts with a compelling account of variations in institutional performance measured by twelve indicators of the quality of *policy processes*, *policy pronouncements*, and *policy implementation*. With the indicators nicely clustering, and the relative degrees of regional success remaining stable throughout the period, Putnam constructs a map showing that "[a]lthough the correlation between latitude and institutional performance is not perfect, the northern regional governments as a group have been more successful than their southern counterparts". Such facts that throughout the South monies from Rome directed towards these purposes were not spent on the construction of day care centres and regional development, or that in Calabria, Campania, and Sardinia

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3.   Putnam (1993:3).

mailed inquiries never received a response, were part of a significant, general tendency. Moreover, the findings correlate impressively with the degree of (dis)satisfaction of ordinary citizens as well as councillors - Italians seem to know whether or not they are stuck with a poorly performing local government.[4]

After this, Putnam goes on to test two different explanations of these patterns. The strong correlation, which many would expect, between economic and industrial development and regional performance does indeed exist (r= .77). However, Putnam notes, much of this variation is attributable to the division of regions into two separate south and north quadrants with significant differences of performance *within* each of them that cannot be put down to economic development. Also, although in literature cited by Putnam "few generalisations are more firmly established than that effective democracy is correlated with economic modernisation", the direction of causality in the Italian data is not yet established, nor may one be certain that a third factor could not be involved. In fact, Putnam goes on to look for the third variable behind what he believes to be a spurious correlation between economic and industrial development and regional performance.

This third variable Putnam calls 'civic community'. Inspired by a "'republican' school of civic humanism", in particular Tocqueville but also Machiavelli and others, he constructs a "civic community index" designed to measure to what degree "social and political life" in the regions approximates the ideal of civic involvement which he associates with the tradition. The index uses as indicators density of sports clubs and cultural associations (i.e. those local and not-directly-political secondary associations which he - as we shall see controversially - thinks that Tocqueville had in mind in America), newspaper readership (also important to Tocqueville), turnout in national referenda on 'civic' issues, and (as a negative measure and sign of clientilism) the use of personalised preference voting. Between this index and institutional performance, Putnam finds an even stronger correlation (r= .92). Holding the civic index constant, the correlation between economic modernity and performance "entirely vanishes". Indeed, "economically advanced regions appear to have more successful regional governments merely because they are more civic".[5]

Putnam then fills out his thesis about the causal significance of civic community according to the characteristics he associates with republicanism. The significance of the civic community factor is strengthened by successful correlation with various measures of clientilism (negatively), political elite support for egalitarian ideals and readiness for compromise, clericalism/secularism (Catholicism, in Putnam's Italy, is uncivic), and a host of citizens' attitudes, including feelings of powerlessness, evaluation of honesty in politics, interpersonal trust, law-abidingness, and life-satisfaction.[6]

But Putnam does not stop here. He boldly advances a grand historical path dependency thesis according to which "social patterns plainly traceable from early medieval Italy to today turn out to be decisive in explaining why, on the verge of the twenty-first century, some communities are better able than others to manage collective

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4.   Putnam (1993:63-83). Indicators of *policy processes* are durability of governments, speed of budget processing, and quality of information. Regarding *policy pronouncements* regions are rated according to comprehensiveness, coherence, and creativeness of legislation, and according to the speed of introduction of new legislation in selected areas. *Policy Implementing* is measured by number of day care centres and family clinics, the sophistication of industrial policy in terms of the range of adopted measures, spending on agricultural regional development and on local health units, use of funds allocated to regional urban development, and, finally, street-level responsiveness to citizens' inquiries by mail or phone.

5.   As measured by "a factor score based on per capita income and gross regional product, the agricultural and industrial shares of the work force, and the agricultural and industrial share of value added, all in the period 1970-1977" (Putnam 1993:219).

6.   Putnam (1993:99-116).

life and sustain effective institutions". Putnam notes the distribution of two distinct systems of government and social order, one monarchic-feudal (instituted by the Normans!) primarily found in the South, the other popular-republican (primarily in the North, and most durably in the republican belt across north-central Italy from Venice across Tuscany to Genoa):

> In the North, feudal bonds of personal dependence were weakened; in the South they were strengthened. In the North, the people were citizens; in the South they were subjects (...) Collaboration, mutual assistance, civic obligation, and even trust ... were the distinguishing features in the North. The chief virtue in the South, by contrast, was the imposition of hierarchy and order on latent anarchy[7]

Dividing regions according to these patterns from before the Renaissance, Putnam finds that they correspond neatly to present civic traditions. Republican sentiments, apparently, survived long dark centuries following the eclipse of popular government and subsequent waves of foreign conquest and despotism. Finally, looking at the situation right after Italy's unification in 1870, Putnam paints a picture of stark contrast between *latifondo* rural economy, clientilism, and Mafia in the atomised South, and networks of neighbour help and other forms of civicness in the North. Getting more empirical again, he measures civicness in the period, using as indicators membership in mutual aid societies and co-operatives, strength of mass parties, turnout in free elections, and the longevity of local associations. Again, apparently, his results are impressive:

> One could have predicted the success or failure of regional government in Italy with extraordinary accuracy from patterns of civic engagement nearly a century earlier[8]

Moreover, socio-economic development (measured by agricultural and industrial share of the workforce and infant mortality) was not originally strongly correlated to civics - but gradually became so. And Putnam concludes his tale by claiming that the gradual alignment of civics and economics through this century has the former factor as its "magnet". Civic involvement 1860-1920 predicts socio-economic development in the 1970s better than do indicators of socio-economics from the early period: "economics does not predict civics, but civics predicts economics, better indeed than economics itself".[9]

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The early praise of Putnam[10] reflected his use of massive amounts of empirical data, with which he seemed to generate impressive correlations supporting his theory, and its combination with an eloquent historical analysis of 'civicness'. Later on, more thorough reviewers and critics have pointed to quite serious problems in Putnam's causal analysis and related historical claims, to which we now turn.

First, Putnam's historical account of ancient civic traditions does not hold water. Civic equality was a rather thinly spread and heavily idealised phenomenon: it was not so disassociated with clericalism as Putnam thinks, brief popular republics were superseded by oligarchies of merchants and noblemen like the Florentine Medici, and Putnam's civic map is highly inaccurate. Sabetti and Cohn have pointed to the existence, below alternating

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7.   Putnam (1993:121,130).
8.   Putnam (1993:150). The correlation is strong: r=.93.
9.   Putnam (1993:152-57).
10.   Laitin, reviewing Putnam in *American Political Science Review*, saw the book as "[a] [s]tunning [b]reakthrough" that will reverse the direction of what since The Civic Culture was a Lakatosian stagnating research program (Laitin 1995:171-72). LaPalombara called it "the finest example I know of how fruitfully ... comparative political research of the broadest philosophical and theoretical implications can be executed within a single country" (LaPalombara 1993).

viceroys and oligarchies, of widespread civicness in places like Apulia, Naples, and Sicily, and Sabetti scornfully notes that Machiavelli himself regarded three of Putnam's *civic* regions (the Papal States, Romagna, and Lombardy) as places where a republic could not possibly be established. Goldberg wonders what is so special about the Norman conquest (which allegedly put the South on such a wrong path), and why similar set backs did not happen in the other corners of Europe subjected to similar rule. More generally, many are unconvinced of the peculiar "big-bang explanation for civic community" (Laitin) by which late medieval experiences (and experiences of institutional innovation in the 1970s) were momentous and facilitating of path dependency in the North, whereas neither "the region's sixteenth century collapse ... its nineteenth-century conquest of the South ... its 1919-21 generation of fascism; or its 1980s corruption-fed economic growth" (Tarrow) should be introduced as causal factors of (un)civicness.[11]

But what of Putnam's main thesis - that civic soil, whatever its origin, nurtures political (and economic) performance? Goldberg and Mutti have pointed out that Putnam's impressive correlation coefficients are caused by the large inter-regional (North-South) differences. As regards religion, if intra-regional correlations are calculated for the North and South respectively, the strong negative correlation between clericalism and civic community disappears - all of the South is religious, and some of it relatively civic; all of the North is rather civic, and some of this civicness exists in quite strong Catholic communities. Worse for Putnam, correlations with indicators of more recent Italian history (the historical substance of which has also been disputed) also fall somewhat apart, particularly in the South where civics at the turn of the century only weakly predict current civics, and where the direction of causality between civics then and institutional performance now reverses![12]

Does Putnam's work rest entirely on sand? Probably not quite, although sights must be significantly lowered. Within-region (the North and South respectively) correlations between *current* civic community and institutional performance remain quite high (r=.53 in the North and r=.68 in the South). Also, in the North civic involvement indicators between 1860-1920 still retain reasonable predictive power on both current civic community and current institutional performance.[13] There *is* a civic 'something' - significantly more widespread in the North than in the South - that continues to account, along with other factors, for the fact that 'the South is different' - that government responsiveness and service is so poor in Calabria as compared to Tuscany. And there *was* a civic 'something' that the North had early on in the twentieth century, if hardly as a surviving treasure from the city states, and which has helped facilitate the region's present institutional performance.

But all this of course causes important questions to remain. In the absence of long historical path dependencies, what made civicness come into the world in the North but not in the South? Granting that Putnam has a point about the causal significance of civicness or its absence (clientilism, social atomism), it is not clear what the causal mechanism is, exactly what the stuff itself is, and which processes help (re)generate it, thus aiding the virtuous circle. It is in fact not obvious that what Putnam calls social capital is in fact unequivocally *civic* or that it, or the mechanisms and associations on which he relies, can do all the good things he claims for a civic community, let alone a number of other good things a vigilant civil society must do. Before going into these matters let us look at the republican tradition of thought to which Putnam appeals.

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11.   Cohn (1994); Goldberg (1996:13); Laitin (1995:172-73); Sabetti (1996:25-26); Tarrow (1996:392-93).
12.   Goldberg (1996:8-10), Mutti (1995).
13.   Putnam (1993:98,150-51).

3. Putnam's Republicanism

In Putnam's reading of republicanism, it was the main insight of "Machiavelli and several of his contemporaries" that "whether free institutions succeeded or failed depended on the character of the citizens, or their 'civic virtue'". This tradition was challenged and "subsequently vanquished by Hobbes, Locke, and their liberal successors", with Madison's Humean employment of checks and balances as a deliberate attempt to *do without* virtuous citizens, making "democracy safe for the unvirtuous".

Outlining the tradition, Putnam refers to a relatively heterogeneous selection of political theorists and historians of ideas. Prominent among them is J.G.A.Pocock, whose *The Machiavellian Moment* is the established *locus classicus* of what the author, following Hans Baron, calls 'civic humanism' (a term also occasionally used by Putnam). However, Putnam's and Pocock's traditions in fact have somewhat different flavours. To Pocock, civic humanism, born in the ancient *polis* and classically conceptualised by Aristotle, was reinvented in the Renaissance in terms of a secular ideal of *human character* - i.e. one possessed by the 'truly manly man' or *vir virtutis* - with connotations of self-development, moral authenticity, dignity, and self-mastery all of which were values in themselves and indeed constituted the supreme reason that the temporal particularity and contingency of the republic became a political issue. The "civic humanist mode of discoursing about politics", to Pocock, entailed "the affirmation that *homo* is naturally a citizen and most fully himself when living in a *vivere civile*". Civic humanism existed "markedly discontinuous with", indeed in contrast to, Roman preoccupations with law, *ius*, and legal citizenship as the negative entitlement to personal holdings, conceptualised through the middle ages as *bourgeous*, and the eclipse of the tradition coincided with the melancholy recognition, in particular in America and in the Scottish Enlightenment, that moderns had to make do with a less noble and ennobling mode of politics, and accept that man, no longer an autonomous and mature creature, would be governed by caprice and fancy, forever destined to seek lower gratifications outside the realm of politics. Private property, to Pocock's civic humanists, was merely a necessary foundation for political independence and virtue. Material comforts and personal security were secondary, and the meaning of the republic, epitomised in the pathos of its foundation, was associated with maintaining the honour and self-knowledge that derived from a self-governing way of live.[14]

But these ideas, despite references to Pocock and his followers, are not really what Putnam has in mind. Republicanism, he insists, contains an important empirical argument, overlooked by modem political science, which may be *tested*: "this wide-ranging philosophical debate…contains the seeds for a theory of effective democratic governance", and Putnam's project becomes to "explore empirically whether the success of a democratic government depends on the degree to which its surroundings approximate the ideal of a 'civic community'".[15] Here, Putnam significantly appears to align himself with a new reading of the tradition, a revision of Pocock's earlier 'republican revisionism', pioneered above all by Quentin Skinner and Maurizio Viroli, which presents the core of republicanism as a more commonsensical, pragmatic, and *instrumental* argument. Over and above the dignity and pathos of political action, which may count for more or less in the motivations of different classes of people, i.e. the one, the few, and the many, what induces citizens (or alternatively what may legitimise their being thus induced) to do their duty for their *patria*, exhibit civic virtue in war, in public deliberation, or in political office, *is the interest each citizen has, and which he shares as a collective enterprise with his fellow citizens in a manner*

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14.   Pocock (1981:86-87;355-57). Pococks full development of the Aristotelian origins of the civic humanist discursive matrix is found in *Moment* (Pocock 1975:66-68). I discuss and criticise Pocock's conception of civic humanism in Mouritsen (2001).

that constitutes the social bond of the city, in securing the health of the republic. 'Health' here, above all, refers to what Viroli with Machiavelli calls *libertà commune* or common liberty, and whose principal *point* is summarised by Machiavelli's own words in the *Discorsi* as "enjoying what one has, freely and without incurring suspicion…the assurance that one's wife and children will be respected, the absence of fear for oneself", all these things part of "that common advantage…which results from a self-governing state".[16]

Although the tradition dated from before the invention of individualist notions of (natural) rights and their elaborate specification in the great declarations of the American and French revolutions, the core republican value of *libertas*, contrary to Pocock's view, was clearly a species of proto-liberal, 'negative' liberty. As also in Locke, Kant, Hume and most of the liberal tradition (but unlike in Hobbes, Bentham's utilitarianism, or the ideologists of *laissez faire* - all doctrines advocating or analysing what Philip Pettit has called 'the liberty of the heath'),[17] liberty, from its Roman and Renaissance origins, and even traceable to Greek thought,[18] was conceptually, theoretically, and empirically associated, on the one hand, with law, constitutionalism, and the security that derived from living in mutual dependence and respect for the laws with equals inside the walls of the city (being governed, as Aristotle had put it, by laws rather than men). On the other hand, and taking the concept in more 'positive' directions too, *libertas* was associated with such forms of self-government and political independence which secured the city and its liberty from the potentially fatal trespasses of foreign invaders as well as internal tyrants, kings, and power-seeking *signori*.

'Self-government', far from always associated with anything resembling modern democracy, let alone the direct participation of all citizens in decision-making, presupposed various forms and measures of civic virtue, all constantly threatened by psychological or systemic forces of corruption, both of whose exact natures were to vary significantly, along with the changing normative connotations of the core 'libertas' which virtue was aimed to secure, in the radically different circumstances of city state Italy, absolutist France, or the experiment of consolidating America's 'large republic' through federal means. In Trenchard and Gordon's influential *Cato's Letters,* published some time after the Glorious Revolution, to take a single example of republican rhetoric, "Publick Spirit" was required "to combat Force and Delusion;…to reconcile the true Interests of the Governed and Governors;…to expose Impostors, and to resist Oppressors;…to maintain the People in Liberty, Plenty, Ease, and Security." The two aspects of *libertas*, finally, were neatly summarised in *Agrippa's* typical (Anti-Federalist) intervention in the great National Debate in America: "Civil liberty consists in the consciousness of…security [in persons and property], and is best guarded by political liberty, which is the share that every citizen has in government"[19]

This is not the place to discuss the republican tradition in any degree of detail.[20] Suffice to note that the republican argument about exercise of civic virtue for the sake of common liberty may be broken down into four

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15.   Putnam (1993:87).
16.   *Discourses*, I,16 (Machiavelli [1531]1970).
17.   Most recently, Pettit (1997).
18.   Hansen (1991); Yack (1993).
19.   *Cato's Letters*, no. 35 (Trenchard and Gordon [1720-1723]1995); *Letters of Agrippa*, 4.6.30 (Agrippa [1773]1981).
20.   Such a discussion is found in Skinner (1986;1990;1992;1998) and Viroli (1988;1992). In my doctoral thesis, *The Fragility of Liberty: A Reconstruction of Republican Citizenship* (Mouritsen 2001)*,* I reconsider the entire historical tradition.

analytically distinct dimensions. First, it has to do with the installation, protection, or repair of the institutional and legal *artifice* of the republic, including the rights, liberties, and legal safeguards that make up the legal status of a person's citizenship, and the actual manner that this status is effectively 'materialised' (i.e. the conduct of police, tax-authorities, or the legal system towards citizens, the actual honouring of entitlements). Secondly, it has to do with the creation of the right quality of intersubjective *civic space*. This space refers, in a very broad sense, to those inter-personal relations, pressures, generated dispositions, and expectations which are necessary to make *libertas* more than a merely legal reality. Republicanism, here, contains a set of arguments about how beneficial dispositions in citizens to practice virtuous activities - both in their private and their public dealings - are the result of a 'public space', which is generated in turn by the public part of the virtues it helps produce. *Libertas*, here, is associated with the social and subjective phenomenon of being able to expect that one's liberty will be respected by others and by the state, and of knowing that one has to respect the rights of others in turn. Liberty is about feeling safe, about the *protection* yielded by social norms, social visibility, and potential censure. However, this intersubjective aspect of liberty receives importantly different emphases in the tradition, ranging from *social control* and *shaming,* to *trust, impartiality*, and (eventually) *tolerance*. Thirdly, the republican argument concerns what we may call *political autonomy*. This refers to the activity, inside the framework of *libertas* as private security and inviolability of person and possessions - eventually conceptualised, for instance by Sidney, Jefferson, and Paine in terms of the inalienable core of divinely bestowed rights which became the consensus of the Enlightenment - of establishing and legitimising through public deliberation and reasoned, empirically informed compromise, a pragmatic, working *concordia* on a particular constitutional content – which could and should reflect the changing and at any rate unforeseeable needs and aspirations of different generations or different localities. Fourthly, republicanism contains arguments about public activity as such co-operative ventures which are connected to common liberty directly (for instance fighting in wars), or indirectly (the reflectively mnemonic re-interpretation and narration of the republic's past), which are required to yield a sense of solidarity and *patriotism* - effective public spirit inside a politically bounded group - which again is required if citizens, beyond the call of either moral duty or naked collective interest (the latter subject to forgetfulness and free-riding), are to be motivated to protect their republic.

Compare these ideas to Putnam's idealtypical 'civic community'. A civic community is characterised, according to Putnam, by a sense of *"civic engagement"*, understood as an orientation towards "shared benefits" which mixes self-interest with appreciation of the needs of the public, in Tocqueville's sense of 'self-interest rightly understood'. Republicanism, Putnam rightly recognises, is not at all altruism and selfless sacrifice. "*Political equality*" he associates with the "norms of reciprocity" and sense of responsibility to others which develops where citizens are neither patrons nor clients, where neither popular powerlessness or absolute power of leaders reigns. In a civic community, people are inclined to help one another, to respect and tolerate differences of opinion, yet be able to *trust* other citizens enough to be able to cooperate with them for shared benefits, although these individuals are different from oneself. Finally, the seedbeds of these public virtues Putnam envisages to be "embodied in, and reinforced by, distinctive social structures and practices". Following Tocqueville's famous analysis, and citing old evidence from Almond and Verba, these are expected to be found in "civic associations" which inculcate "skills of co-operation as well as a sense of shared responsibility for collective endeavours", and where individuals, particularly if the associations are "'cross-cutting' groups with diverse goals and members" will learn to trust one another, get into the habit of moderating their own views (as a result of "group

interaction and cross-pressures") and take into account the views of others, and abstain from opportunist defection". Although associations must be based on equality, the beneficial results "do not require that the manifest purpose of the association be political". Indeed, "a choral society or a bird-watching club can teach self-discipline and appreciation for the joys of successful collaboration".[21]

Putnam's discussion seems related to the first and second republican dimension, to some extent to the fourth, and not at all to the third. First, just as republican liberty was a tangible matter - not just having formal, legal rights but having these rights respected and made effective, Putnam's measures of 'performance' captures material outcomes and dimensions of government responsiveness which to a large extent make up the 'real value' of modern *libertas* as social citizenship including important quality-of-life collective goods: For instance, the Italian state allocated funds to universal day care, but this only ensued in actual services in the North. Putnam argues two distinct 'instrumental' points. First, securing such collective goods can be a matter of generating responsiveness from politicians and administrators, or what Putnam calls "effective democratic governance". Although citizens by participating in secondary associations enhance "'interest articulation' and 'interest aggregation'", Putnam does not speak much about direct civic action against local government, but seems to envisage a better working representative democracy where citizens are mature voters and newspaper readers, and would-be clientilist leaders are forced to act responsibly in turn, while themselves partaking in a political culture which both induces them to do so and facilitates internal trust in political and administrative life. He does mention that civic region "citizens feel empowered to engage in collective deliberation about public choices" which are then "translated into…public policies". However, and as the other instrumental aspect, "'deliberate concerted action'" and "effective social collaboration" are also connected to grass-root initiatives that solve local community problems by overcoming collective action restraints. Here, for instance social services work better when citizens support them and use them responsibly, and citizens are also likely to overcome their apathy and mutual distrust to take on local problems themselves.[22]

Secondly, the "[f]abrics of trust", sense of responsibility, and reciprocity which facilitate these collective goods are also important in themselves for civic life. Putnam notes as empirically correlated with his civic community index the absence or presence of feelings of "exploitation…powerlessness", and "alienation". In the less civic community "life is riskier and citizens are warier", having little "confidence in the law-abidingness of their fellow citizens", and people are "much more likely to insist that the authorities should impose greater law-and-order on their communities", thus adding to feelings of fear and insecurity and making society less "liberal", more reliant on "force".

Thirdly and finally, civic community produces a sense of solidarity, civic engagement and habitual identification with the (local) community from which citizens themselves benefit, and with its inhabitants with whom they co-operate for these mutual benefits, connected with "an appreciation of the joys of successful collaboration" – all much in the manner of Tocqueville's old argument of American civic spirit which started in the townships as "provincial patriotism" and which, while "mingled with personal interest" was transformed from "calculation" to "instinct", so that a citizen "[b]y dint of working for the good of his fellow citizens…in the end acquires a habit for serving them".[23] Putnam summarises the happy predicament of civic Italy like this:

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21.   Putnam (1993:86-91).
22.   Putnam (1993:88-91,115).
23.   Putnam (1993:89-90,109-16); *Democracy in America*, I:II,6; II:I I,4 (Tocqueville [1835;1840]1969).

> Some regions of Italy have many choral societies and soccer teams and bird-watching clubs and Rotary clubs. Most citizens in those regions read eagerly about community affairs in the daily press. They are engaged by public issues, but not by personalistic or patron-client politics. Inhabitants trust one another to act fairly and to obey the law. Leaders in these regions are relatively honest. They believe in popular government, and they are predisposed to compromise with their political adversaries. Both citizens and leaders here find equality congenial. Social and political networks are organized horizontally, not hierarchially. The community values solidarity, civic engagement, cooperation and honesty. Government works[24]

Putnam republican references, and his republican interpretation of Italian civicness, avoid both Pocock's civic humanism (whose historical importance has probably been exaggerated) and the neo-Hegelian embraces of the tradition by philosophical communitarians like Michael Sandel and Charles Taylor. But his modernisation attempt for purposes of political science research has a number of, to my mind, *unrepublican* biases which – rather more importantly – also happen to lead his analysis in unsatisfactory directions. His accounts of civic community, civicness, and collective goods are 'society-centred' in a number of ways which take them closer, respectively, to the functionalist systems analysis typical of the old civic culture literature, to the new sociological communitarianism of Amitai Etzioni, and finally to what we may call liberal idealism. I develop these claims below. Initially, and also pending further clarification, we may note that Putnam's civic vocabulary, while feeding from the austere universe of Renaissance city states (where political identification and civic virtue concerned the highest things, and were directed towards the single level of the fragile *res publica*), in the way that it is operationalised and employed for analysis drinks from the much later theoretical fountains of a relatively benign, voluntaristic, harmonious, and self-referring *civil society*.

Modern politics, Putnam rightly notes,[25] cannot be carried out in classical fashion. However, this recognition was also the subject-matter of the great debates that took place during the Enlightenment, where conservative liberals like Montesquieu, Hume, Madison, and Hamilton with varying degrees of hostility or sympathy sought to debunk the views and values of *the ancients* as unfit for a modern world of large, centralised, pluralist, impersonal, culturally refined, and commercialised nation states - but where obstinate new republicans like Jefferson, Ferguson, and above all Putnam's own great hero Tocqueville attempted to reformulate modern versions of the old doctrine which took into account these modern developments. These battles, to which brief references will be made in the following, were about the meaning and desirable content of the new society in the making. For the republicans in particular, they were about what was 'civil' in a 'civil society' which was conceptualised in turn as distinct from, yet also dependant upon and related to, the state and traditional politics.

To repeat, my point is not that Putnam fails to understand the republican tradition properly. I argue that a better, more reflective understanding of this tradition - *in particular the conceptualisation of a republican idea of civil society* - would have served him better as a context of discovery for useful hypotheses. Looked at in a very general way, Putnam's explanations probably contain a good deal of truth - it is hard to deny that he is on to a 'civic something' which worked in the North and failed to carry the day in the South. But underneath and beyond grand empirical correlations, some of which are less shaky than others, important civic mechanisms, sequences, and phenomena could be overlooked, causally misconstrued, or phenomenologically misrepresented. Indeed, had Putnam read his Tocqueville more thoroughly, he might have anticipated some of the criticisms to which his

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24.   Putnam (1993:115).
25.   Putnam (1993:88).

work was subjected. I shall take up four analytically distinct problems in Putnam's account. From a Tocquevillean vantage point they are four ways that Putnam's civil society is not civil or political *enough.*

First, Putnam's civil society is very voluntaristic. Apart from the unconvincing theory of republican origins that date from the first experiences of self-government in the Renaissance city states (the absence of which somehow constitutes a negative mental heritage that still precludes civic advances in the feudal, clientilistic South), Putnam's civicness is a grass-root phenomenon that emerges and grows naturally, eventually enabling political structures to function better. In traditional *liberal* fashion, civil society *comes first*, with private individuals voluntarily associating, civilising politics from below. Secondly, and closely related, Putnam's account is also society-centred – and again liberal rather than republican - in the sense that he fails to conceptualise civil society as *a society of citizens*, whose political orientations, activities, and sense of solidarity transcends the merely local and social, and is focused in (national) politics and political institutions proper. Thirdly, in the fashion of some of the new communitarian moralists, Putnam's very *phenomenology* of civicness or civic virtue, along with his account of the microprocesses of social capital, overlooks the central ambiguity of these concepts as they emerged in the great debates of the Enlightenment, in terms of the liberal contrast of 'polite' society and *doux commerce* to the dangerous and disruptive zeal of 'ancient virtue', and in terms of Tocqueville's dialectical restatement of the participatory civility of modern, democratic man. Finally, by contrast to the main body of republican writings, Putnam's account of civil society and the relation between civil society and the state is remarkably harmonious. Although he dismisses the association of civic community with consensuality, he writes the politics of (party)conflict out of civic community, ignoring that republicanism was never about the smooth 'functioning' of the state in a supportive society, but about citizens constantly defending a range of liberties against the state and the powerful, and about citizens disagreeing internally on what their liberty should consist of in the first place.

4. The Origin of Civil Society: Political Explanations

Putnam's account is fatally flawed by its idealistic grass-root voluntarism and neglect of macro factors. Indeed, his findings seem to fit better other, more political types of explanations. Tarrow asks how

> Putnam, who knows the history of Italian unification well, [could] have missed the penetration of southern Italian society by the northern state and the effect this had on the region's level of civic competence[26]

Putnam uses a model of historical development which conceives of "civic capacities as a native soil in which state structures grow rather than one shaped by the patterns of state building and strategy".[27] However, the South, from the Normans to unification was governed and exploited by colonial rulers via local noblemen, and suffering from failed land reforms and the nineteenth century development of neo-feudal *latifundism* which continued up into this century. Large numbers of Italian social scientists, whose work Putnam ignores,[28] have described the continuing – intended or unintended - effects of northern centralised modernisation on the South, where Rome ruled by prefects regarding the provinces as *terra di missione,* rigging elections, controlling admini-

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26.   Tarrow (1996:395).
27.   Sabetti (1996:28-29).
28.   Recently Trigilia (1992). Against Putnam, Bagnasco (1994); Goldberg (1996:15); Sabetti (1996:29-30); Tarrow (1996).

strations, and co-opting local elites into chains of patronage ending in Rome.[29] Oppressively uniform tax systems and customs union, the destruction of the fragile southern economy, forced conscription, heavy-handed centralisation, and cultural assimilation in the name of nation building, all helped destroy those local traditions of civic associationalism, some of which were associated with the Catholic Church, that actually existed.[30] They certainly assisted the development of those *Mafia* structures whose origins were no doubt earlier in this century, but which may hardly be traced as far back as Putnam wishes to go.

There is little doubt that clientilism, distrust, and atomised social structures exist in the South, nor that this is experience negatively by southerners. Also, a large literature before Putnam[31] points to the connection between such factors as "amoral familism" and political and economic underdevelopment, the empirical core of his causal account of the current situation of the *Mezzogiorno*. But to regard this lack of civility as essentially home-grown is probably a mistake.

If Putnam ignores centre-periphery explanations of developments in the South - focusing on the lack of civic traditions and in fact overstating their absence before unification - he also fails to see the origin of northern civicness in a popular politics of mass parties and social movements. The mutual help societies, co-operatives, and other civic associations which, to Putnam, constitute the soil of northern unionisation and strong parties were deliberately created by progressive socialist *and* Catholic parties mobilising, to a large extent, from above. And the tradition of civic participation (early unionisation, participation in elections, newspaper reading) is strongest in places like the Po Valley where popular mobilisation was most effective.[32] *Behind* the civic networks, which plausibly help increase the quality of politics in the North, were large, nation-based, and party-centred social movements. In the words, again, of Tarrow,

> the impressive correlations that Putnam displays…which he interprets as evidence of a causal link between past civic competence and present regional performance, can also be interpreted as a correlation between progressive politics then and now and between progressive political traditions and civic capacity (…) [E]lectorates were deliberately mobilised…and civic competence was deliberately developed as a symbol of the left-wing parties' governing capacity

A more sinister and decidedly uncivic effect (and to some extent a motivational cause) of northern mass mobilisation was the concerted effort to restrict in-migration of superfluous southern labour.

Putnam's claims about regional civic traditions and practices need to be scaled down. Civic community in the North is neither centuries old nor a culturally *sui generis* outcome of local traditions of Co-operation, but in stead significantly shaped by political parties and movements. Civic community in the South has had few possibilities of developing or surviving under processes of northern policies of *trasformismo*. Considering the contemporary Italian political scene, further qualifications suggest themselves. Explosions of *Tangentopoli* scandals make northern politics look rather less civic in the first place. On the other hand, the chronic absence of southern civicness may be exaggerated. For instance, recent civic activities in the South - broad citizens' movements directed towards the regional political levels of Palermo and Rome, not bird watching societies - even to the extent

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29. Tarrow (1996:394).
30. Galasso (1979:342); Sabetti (1996:31-32); Trigilia (1992).
31. Classically Banfield (1958), but cp. Pizzorno (1966).
32. Tarrow (1996:391) notes that Putnam's civic index correlates strongly with the communist vote (cp. Putnam 1993:119). Bagnasco (1994:97-98) also points to the significance "del governo di uno specifico partito, ovvero dell'effetto di una specifica cultura politica, o della forma di uno specifico sistema politico locale".

of defying Sicilian Mafia codes of *omertá*, have slightly raised hopes for the new political situation that has arisen with the destruction of the power monopoly of the Christian Democrats and, with it, the disappearance of some of the structural properties and protections of political clientilism and even Mafia dominance.[33] More generally, Putnam's celebration of the North[34] obscures the comparative *uncivicness* of Italy as a whole[35] - particularly the absence of respect for law and lawful government and alienation from traditional representative party politics - which has been recently highlighted with the national hangover leading to the 'second republic' and to the large support for redeeming patriotic figures like di Pietro and *i magistrati* as well as 'new' politicians with a technocratic or academic background.

That Putnam should cite the republican tradition on his view of the emergence of a civil society is odd. It is true that Tocqueville made much of the fact, as does Putnam,[36] that associations must be voluntary in order to mobilise individuals to concerted action, and in order to educate them in the civic virtues. These beneficial effects flowed from non-political ("the intellectual and moral") associations as well as from those political associations proper which Tocqueville called "great free schools", and in which "large numbers see, speak, listen and stimulate each other to carry out all sorts of undertakings in common". However, it is a mistake to assume that Tocqueville regarded these voluntary associations as causually primary in the development of American civility. The habit of association around "little business concerns" certainly helped citizens "acquire a capacity to pursue great aims in common". However, "the art of political association", although these associations were "only one small part", in fact "improves this technique for civil purposes". Political association proper - in turn facilitated by the American tradition of local self-government - was the first cause of something that would not otherwise easily emerge. Thus, "politics spread a general habit and taste for association. A whole crowd of people who might otherwise have lived on their own are taught both to want to combine and how to do so", indeed to do so in associations that are "extensive", and which "draws a lot of people at the same time out of their own circle; however much differences in age, intelligence, or wealth may naturally keep them apart". According to Tocqueville, the "common interest of civil life seldom naturally induce great numbers to act together. A great deal of artifice is required to produce such a result".[37]

Tocqueville's distinguished between political associations and political parties, although his manner of doing so was less than clear. However, although he clearly disliked the petty party politics of the contemporary scene of Jacksonian America (an "evil inherent in free government"), he also distinguished between such "small", relatively narrow single-interest organisations, and on the other hand the "great" national parties with more principled political projects, which were instrumental in great national transformations. More generally, Tocqueville, alert to the importance of America's earlier revolutionary history, was typical of the constant republican preoccupation with *political foundation*. Such foundation was never in the tradition conceptualised as the pinnacle of a gradual, developmental process (as in some of the liberal progress ideas and stadial theses of the Enlightenment), but always as the outcome of an individual exertion of will and virtue by a single great law-giver (Machiavelli, Rousseau) or, later on, of the concerted action of a people (Jefferson, Paine), both determined to build the politi-

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33.   Ramella (1995).
34.   The book was printed as the *Mani Puliti* campaigns started.
35.   Bagnasco (1994:101-2). Classically, Almond and Verba (1963:308-10).
36.   Putnam (1993:91).
37.   *Democracy* II:II, 5-7 (Tocqueville [1840]1969).

cal artifice as a particular and fragile insertion into secular time. Republics were constructed, laws instituted, for pre-political chaos and license then to recede.[38]

5. The Political Constitution of Civil Society

The remarks above take us directly into the second, closely related, problem with Putnam's account. Not only does he not recognise that civicness as a matter of historical origins was shaped by macro politics, including state building, social movements, and parties. He also does not appreciate the extent to which civil society has to be conceptualised as *constituted,* in terms of the civicness that individuals should possess, not merely by social and co-operative capacities as such, but by the transcending and universalising ethos of broader political identifications and roles - in short, by *citizenship*.

In this light as well, Putnam's republican appeals are misleading - in a manner reflected in his empirical analysis. To start with, it is true that the civil society concept has been used for all sorts of purposes and remains ambiguous.[39] But throughout the majority of its embodiments, as noted by Kumar, it was "firmly anchored" in a tradition which

> imposed civic responsibility on the individual ... [and] created an identity that went beyond the merely private to commit the individual to concerns that were of a thoroughly public and political character

Kumar somewhat overstates the inherent civicness of civil society that was inherent in the conceptions of sceptics like Hume or Hamilton. However, while civil society - to liberals like Locke, Montesquieu, Kant, or Hegel, or to the writers of the Scottish Enlightenment - was a term to describe the vast development of economic and social life of increasingly autonomous, 'private' citizens, who should be left alone by the sovereign state, it was clearly still a *society of citizens*. As conceptions arose which progressively weakened the civic content of citizenship, civil society was still constituted in a dialectical relationship with the state, whose potential despotism it functioned to contain, at the same time that the state was the origin of the citizen roles which made civil society *civil*, all providing that the state was kept "the right kind of state - the republican, constitutional or democratic kind".[40]

What was special in the various proto-liberal and liberal conceptions of civil society which were developed in response to the rise of commercialism and popular sovereignty, and as a critique of the classical republican tradition, were a number of ideas of how citizens of large states who were busy with their new economic pursuits could not be expected to exercise much civic virtue (too much virtuous *zeal* being at any rate dangerous). One response - that of Hume and Madison - was sceptical of the degree to which citizens were capable of transcending their narrow prejudice and interests at all, and found the solution in the competition and mutual check of groups in an 'enlarged realm', a properly designed system of constitutional checks and balances serving as arbiter, and tapping, at least in Madison, the residual element of public concern for a general interest.[41] Here, the civic identification with the state was viewed as a matter of habitual allegiance, based on private interest in security.

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38.   *Democracy* I:II,2 (Tocqueville [1835]1969).
39.   For historical accounts and critiques of the concept, see Bobbio (1988); Keane (1988a: 31-68; 1988b); Kumar (1993).
40.   Kumar (1994:129-30), cp. Alexander (1991:168-71).
41.   *Federalist # 10, 51* (Madison, Hamilton, and Jay [1787-88]1987); *That politics may be reduced to a science; Idea of a perfect commonwealth* (Hume [1741;1752]1994).

Another response, associated with Locke, Mill, and recently discussed by Nancy Rosenblum and Steven Macedo, envisaged that an 'elective' civil society (Rosenblum) of voluntary, increasingly reflective private association around a plurality of political and cultural ends would generate and support a shared political culture of tolerance and legality, with principles of justice and right as the proper mode of organisation in a plural society. In addition, in Mill as well as in the (British) Hegelians, the problem of political identification and solidarity was solved by an appeal to an overarching *national* identity which required a high degree of cultural and linguistic homogeneity.[42]

Turning to the republican reconstruction of the civil society category, Tocqueville, by contrast, remained sceptical of the degree to which privatised, enterprising, modern citizens were capable of generating or retaining s ufficient patriotic allegiance, unless their propensity to do so were somehow supported. Tocqueville's solution was the development of a constitutional patriotism which was to be nurtured by participation in political self-government, fed by the civic memories (in America) of the great accomplishments of the revolution, and embedded in a constantly reaffirmed, general political culture which regarded the rights of man as a sacred principle. It is striking that Putnam, in his appeal to Tocqueville's republicanism, overlooks the latter's *reflective patriotism*. Tocqueville's point here was that patriotism arose from a rational appreciation of the connection between political co-operation for important mutual ends and one's own liberty and welfare, *and* that this appreciation had to bridge the potential divide between the local and the national. Thus, ideally, American public spirit was "a summing up of provincial patriotism. Every citizen of the United States may be said to transfer the concern inspired in him by his little republic into his love of the common fatherland".[43] Putnam also fails to see that Tocqueville's reflective civility, emerging from local segments of civil society, was still created by *political* associations, i.e. movements directed towards authoritative changes in society at large.[44]

Unlike Tocqueville, Putnam has next to nothing to say about *state or nation-centred* citizenship, either in terms of patriotic allegiance (which regionally divided Italy lacks),[45] or in terms of civic opposition towards and protection against malevolent manifestations of the (Italian) state. Nor, unlike the republican tradition, does he reflect on a politically organised, state-focused civil society as constitutive of a 'working' democracy in the first place. Putnam's neglect of these matters, again, may arise from the fact that he tends to view civil society almost as a natural entity, which spreads its 'networks' as roots from below, fuelled by the spontaneous actions of the multitude who, by acting and associating in unconstrained manners for all sorts of purposes, constantly generate civility. In this respect Putnam's work also resembles some of the more rosy, peculiarly unpolitical theories of civil society from before and around the revolutions in Eastern Europe, which could believe that "the right direc-

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42.   *A Letter Concerning Toleration* (Locke [1689]1990); *On Liberty* (Mill [1859]1972); Macedo (1990); Rosenblum (1994). For nineteenth century liberal appeal to integrative nationalism, see Kymlicka (1995:50-57).
43.   *Democracy*, I:I,8 (Tocqueville [1835]1969).
44.   Tocqueville did not have in mind any nineteenth century equivalents of bowling, bird watching, or soccer. Although he pointed to "intellectual and moral associations" as equally important alongside "political and industrial associations" (*Democracy*, II:II,5, [1840]1969, cited in Putnam 1993:90,221), in the same chapter of *Democracy* it is evident that he had in mind private associations that had a politically directed purpose. Using as his example a movement of individuals who, "frightened by the progress of drunkenness around them, wanted to support sobriety by their patronage", Tocqueville notes that "[a]s soon as several Americans have conceived a sentiment or an idea that they want to produce before the world, they seek each other out, and when found, they unite. Thenceforth they are no longer isolated individuals, but a power conspicuous from the distance whose actions serve as an example".
45.   Panebianco (1991); Rusconi (1991a; 1991b); Scoppola (1991).

tion to move is ... the fullest expansion of civil society - identified with the realm of freedom - and the greatest possible contraction of the state ... identified with the sphere of coercion".[46] The difference, of course, is that these authors wanted to rescue an autonomous, self-organising realm from the state, as an unpolluted and self-limiting *parallel polis* (only eventually to use it to *oppose* the state); whereas Putnam wants this realm to be able to carry the state (or at least local government institutions) as its blooming flower.[47]

As we know, Eastern European civil society soon turned out to be seedbeds of social and national conflict; it was soon discovered that not so much the right size as the right sort of state was the main problem, that even capitalist markets came in more or less civic variants; and generally that the revolutions had to be what Habermas called *rectifying*[48] - attempts, not to embark on a 'third road', but to institute the civil, political, and legal institutions that these countries had lost between the wars or never enjoyed at all. In order to become 'civil,' imbued with the habits of cross-class and cross-cultural co-operation, trust, and reciprocity, which are required for local institutions, the relation between citizens and politicians, and even the construction of an infrastructure of capitalist enterprise, a society has to be integrated by the means of a state.

In light of Putnam's peculiar resistance towards macro-political explanations of northern success in Italy, and in light of Eastern European experiences too, the lesson that suggests itself is that most of what is civil about civil society is an artificial, political creation. It is worth noting the observations of empirically minded social scientists who concern themselves with political explanations of democratisation processes in Eastern Europe and the Third World. Here the problem of civil society in emerging democracies is to *create* it rather than to facilitate its 'liberation'. In the wake of one-party despotisms and command economies it is certainly important to facilitate the growth of voluntary associations and stimulate local business initiatives. But the main task in making society *civil* is the institutional reform of the state. A democratic political culture in the broadest sense has to be created: In well known political systems language, channels must be created for the peaceful and ordered articulation and representation of interest, for the resolution of socio-economic or identitary political conflicts, for the recruitment and education of political leaders, for the dissemination of political information, and for the generation of political identification - all oriented towards, or going out from, the state. New democracies are likely to contain disruptive potentials of violence, ethnic hatred, and frustrated social aspirations. Habitual loyalty to the state, legality in private and financial dealings, and democratic norms in politics all have to be created. Difficult as it is, the first condition of a civil society is a civil state:[49]

> What role organised groups in civil society will play…depends crucially on the larger political setting. As Michael Walzer puts it, 'there is no escape from power and coercion, no possibility of choosing, like the old anarchists, civil society alone.' What Walzer calls 'the paradox of the civil society argument' is that a democratic civil society seems to require a strong and responsive state

46.   Kumar (1993:389). On the use of the concept in Eastern Europe, see Arato (1981; 1991) and Keane (1988:191-212). G.M. Tamás, linking the follies of intellectualism with what he saw as a broader social trend recently noted that "[t]he uprising against the rational utopia in Eastern Europe has become ... an attempt to create a society without the state". This "flight from politics", fed on political alienation and a remaining "peasant feeling of the remoteness of the imperial court [which] has been intensified by the Pyrrhonic, sceptical, and expressivist-emotivist ideology of our age" leads to the rebirth of an anarchic "myth of civil society [as] ... a noncoercive political order". In this way "Eastern Europe - *und morgen die ganze Welt* - has reinvented communism" (Tamás 1994:215-19).
47.   A distinction between *integrationist and oppositional* conceptions of civil society may be extracted from a discussion by Foley & Edwards (1996:39ff).
48.   Habermas (1996).
49.   Diamond (1994:7,15).

such strength and responsiveness is secured by the right type of reinforcing civil society, both "depend on the prior achievement of both democracy and a strong state."[50] The point is that there must be (reasonably just) laws before people can learn to respect them, national institutions before national solidarity can develop, and real rights of citizenship and state responsiveness before most individuals seriously will start to identify themselves as citizens.

Moreover, while the world has recently seen some broad popular revolutions (most revolutions are not), those that result in the creation of civil societies and civil states are the ones that first succeed in generating broad social and political forces with democratic state-building potential: In the words of Foley & Edwards, what Putnam misses is "the political variable"

> At a minimum, this 'political variable' must include both the political associations that play important roles in any society and the work of political compromise, restraint, and accommodation necessary for reconciling competing interests in a peaceful and more or less orderly way. More generally, the political variable includes the prevailing 'political settlement' that governs who plays, the rules of the game, and acceptable outcomes[51]

This is how things get started - in Putnam's Italy after the unification and later after the Second World War, and recently in Eastern Europe. Some countries find it much harder to take the first step than others. Thus, ten years ago we witnessed the difference between 'velvet revolutions' where relatively recent democratic experience and western oriented elites made constitutional beginnings comparatively smooth and created (enough) citizens overnight - and on the other hand 'stolen revolutions' that quickly reinstalled new unaccountable oligarchies, and mobilised mobs rather than citizens.

6. Civicness: Social Capital, Social Control, Trust, and Tolerance

My third problem with Putnam concerns his conception of civicness as social capital. Again, Putnam's ideas has a potential bearing on the republican fragility of liberty argument, which was outlined above. Institutions require forms of civic support, but this support, over and above the actual forms of citizens' activity to which he refers, is itself facilitated by a set of civic dispositions, in particular learning to *trust* and generating *norms of reciprocity*, both of them outcomes of the existence of *civic networks*, which in turn is reinforced by the former two. This is a model of civic space, i.e. of what, in our republican terms, teaches and induces individuals to be good citizens in their public roles as well as in their private capacities. Moreover, apart from being an independent variable of republican *libertas*, the civic space is also part of this concept itself - the independent liberty value of an inter-subjective sense of feeling safe and of enjoying public tolerance.

However, as Putnam moves from general enumeration of a number of good things that may be associated with civic community, the operational content of his civicness does not fit the bill. In particular, he employs an inflated notion of *social capital* which he sees as the motor of the broader ideal of civic community as a virtuous, self-perpetuating equilibrium. According to Putnam,

> Norms of generalised reciprocity and networks of civic engagement encourage social trust and co-operation because they reduce incentives to defect, reduce uncertainty, and provide models for future cooperation ... Stocks of social capital, such as trust, norms, and networks, tend to be self-

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50. Foley & Edwards (1996:48), citing Michael Walzer.
51. Foley & Edwards (1996:48).

reinforcing and cumulative. Virtuous circles result in social equilibria with high levels of coopera-
tion, trust, reciprocity, civic engagement, and collective well-being[52]

Trust, clearly, is the central component in social capital. It is a product of past success of networks and associa-
tion, and it helps generate itself, provides a sense of collective efficacy, and produces socially desirable institu-
tional outcomes . But apart from trust, Putnam also loosely associates social capital with a broader sense of social
duty, solidarity, and "public-spiritedness". And along with trust he speaks of the development of norms of gener-
alised reciprocity which is associated with being "respectful" and "tolerant of [one's] opponent", also when peo-
ple "differ on matters of substance". The common denominator of Putnam's "civic community", and particularly
of his use of Tocqueville, seems to be that trust as a general individual and systems resource becomes linked to
cross-social or cross-cultural competences. Trust becomes a readiness to solve problems with, and also to *accept*
in the first place, a diversity of different others, all of whom are recognised as fellow citizens with whom it is
possible to "interact as equals", not least because of one's learning to connect one's own narrow interest with the
larger interest of the whole in the Tocquevillean manner of a self-interest rightly understood.[53]

However, this is where an important ambiguity enters Putnam's account. On the one hand, he clearly wants
civicness to involve a kind of interpersonal trust and habitual reciprocity which is culturally overarching and dif-
ference-accepting. Trust and tolerance should be two sides to the same coin. On the other hand, trust is treated as
an unambiguous and one-dimensional phenomenon, basically a rational choice concept without culturalist con-
notations. Putnam does not reflect on whether there might be different kinds of 'trust'. Secondly, as already
noted, he believes civic competences to be particularly aided by 'overarching' associations. But in the empirical
analysis this aspect is played down: as the associations to which he refers are not the most appropriate ones in
this regard.

The ambiguity may be highlighted by reflecting on an old theoretical distinction, between the cultural ho-
mogeneity and social control associated with traditional rural communities and on the other hand the heterogene-
ous cosmopolitanism traditionally associated with urbanism. Michael Walzer, in this connection, has associated
the republican tradition with acceptance of liberal *un*civility, thus suggesting a necessary trade-off between the
dangerous and intolerant collectivism of the unruly mob or the close-knit society and the peaceful pluralism of
(modern, atomised) privatism and liberal individualism. Here, if civility means political activity, a price has to be
paid in terms of loss of pluralism and tolerance.[54] Walzer makes a very old and traditionally liberal point against
republicanism here. Much of the early liberal critique of republicanism, i.e. by Montesquieu or Hume, exactly
presumed that civic virtue could be positively dangerous and disrupting. Patriotic citizens were ready to make
sacrifices for others, but they were also likely to be fanatic and intolerant, this - at least to Hume - was the most
dangerous threat to civil liberty, and its most effective remedy was to be sought in the beneficially cooling effects
of *doux commerce*.[55] From this perspective the most tolerant, reflective, *polite* citizen, was the individual who

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52.   Putnam (1993:177).
53.   Putnam (1993:87-91).
54.   "The citizen receives, so to speak, inconsistent instructions. Patriotism, civility, toleration, and political
activism pull him in different directions. The first and the last require a kind of zeal - that is, they require both
passion and conviction - and they make for excitement and tumult in public life (...) Civility and tolerance serve
to reduce the tension, but they do so by undercutting the commitment. They encourage people to view their inter-
ests as fragmented, diverse and private; they make for quiet and passive citizens" (Walzer 1980:67).
55.   *Spirit of the Laws*, XX,1 (Montesquieu [1748]1989); *Of Parties in General* and *Of the Rise and Progress*

had learnt to tame his passions with the discipline of the market contract, who had desublimated his disrupting ideals in luxurious consumption, and who had been exposed to social diversity through the 'traffic' of trade with its neutral medium of money.

The question is if this trade-off must be predicated by public activity *tout court*. Walzer certainly misreads the republican tradition by failing to appreciate the possible association of individualism with public activity, at least in writers like Jefferson, Tocqueville, and, in a more contemporary vein, Hannah Arendt. Tocqueville, in particular, is again the classical reference for a modern republican *Aufhebung*. On the one hand, he shared the liberal fear of fanaticism and one-eyed political *zeal* - associated by Hume with the *religious* 'enthusiasm' of his age. On the other hand, Tocqueville presented a novel analysis which associated a new and dangerous form of such zeal with the social conformism which was likely to develop exactly in the privatised and commercialised mass society that some of the Humean apologists in America approvingly witnessed developing. The remedy and source of a new democratic, reflective, tolerant, and impartial form of civic virtue, according to Tocqueville, was of course the great 'school' of local self-government and associational life.

Giving Tocqueville a rest, consider instead the historical evidence brought forward by Richard Sennett to the effect that the reverse relationship of Walzer's may obtain. According to Sennett's famous analysis of the decline of urban civility, the association of pluralism and diversity with *retreat* from politics - or rather public life more broadly - is a recent phenomenon that only appears with the cultural invention of privacy and intimacy in the nineteenth and twentieth century. Sennett's sweeping thesis, for which he adduces literary, architectural, and historical evidence, is that urban life before 'the fall of public man' was *theatrical*, facilitated by a deliberately artificial social space:

> By the time the word 'public' had taken on its modern meaning ... it meant not only a region of social life located apart from the realm of family and close friends, but also that this public realm of acquaintances and strangers included a relatively wide diversity of people (...) A cosmopolite, in the French usage recorded in 1738, is a man who moves comfortably in diversity; he is comfortable in situations which have no links or parallels to what is familiar to him (...) The line drawn between public and private was essentially one on which the claims of civility - epitomised by cosmopolitan, public behaviour - were balanced against the claims of nature - epitomised by the family (...) Behaving with strangers in an emotionally satisfying way and yet remaining aloof from them was seen by the mid-18th Century as the means by which the human animal was transformed into a social being[56]

Let us now look closer at the way that this unresolved ambiguity of civicness is manifested in Putnam's work. Putnam is in fact occasionally aware of the contrast. Thus the trust and social cohesion he is looking for is not the one which "once was in Salem, Massachusetts".[57] But mostly, he simply seems to assume that 'traditional' communities, like those in the mountains of Calabria, are characterised by hierarchy, exploitation, and the absence of social trust and co-operation *tout court* ("The least civic areas of Italy are precisely the traditional southern villages"). I certainly do not mean to question Putnam's point that there is more overarching, urban civicness in the North than in the South of Italy. Only, it might be that Putnam overestimates the degree of such civicness (also in the North), because he fails to conceptualise and investigate the existence of more than a single type of trust and co-operative capacity. Also, and related, the places that he envisages to produce his favoured form of civicness may not be the right ones - the causal dynamics and origins of overarching trust, solidarity, and co-operation may

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of the Arts and Sciences (Hume [1741;1742]1994). For a classical treatment, see Hirschman (1981).
56.   Sennett (1986:17,18); cp. Arendt (1958).
57.   Cp. Gutman (1985:319).

be wrongly specified. Generally, not associational activity itself or the 'skills' it produces, but activities in associations of the right kind and for the right purposes make society civil.[58]

Putnam, we have noted, speaks of both trust, solidarity, and tolerance as elements of the social capital that associationalism will breed. Saving Putnam's notion of trust, what should we say to the sweeping appeal to Tocqueville ("feelings and ideas are renewed, the heart enlarged, and the understanding developed only by the reciprocal action of men one upon another")[59] and to the claim that associationalism of the sort he measures breeds broadness of mind, overarching solidarity, and willingness to consider compromises and mutual interest? Each of these points are of course entirely empirical questions, but Putnam clearly does not test relevant hypotheses directly at his ecological level of research, where associationalism is at any rate only one out of his four civic community indicators. Worse, he hardly begins to consider theoretically where to look:

First, solidarity may be more or less inclusive and difference accepting, or more or less tied to a bounded group. And people may be reflective and tolerant of different groups without being particularly willing to make sacrifices. Tolerance and solidarity are clearly not the same phenomena. Putnam, however, obviously has in mind a broad, inclusive (indeed a *tolerant*) solidarity. Thus, in the article on America's declining social capital, *Bowling Alone*, he speaks of several different groups. Here, "fraternal" groups like the *Lions* and the *Elks*, the parent-teacher associations, and certainly the Boy Scouts and Red Cross (the decline of all of which Putnam laments) seem to belong to a different league than the soccer club, the choral society, or the bowling league, despite the "occasional…civic conversations over beer and pizza that solo bowlers forgo". And both political parties and the local branches of some ideal advocacy groups (national environmental organisations) would seem to be a great deal more directly aimed at, and thus reminding of, duty towards the general interest than the bird watchers. One would hypothesise a distinction between associations with more shared and public goals and those directed towards strictly in-group benefits, and expect that the former constitutes the *civic* solidarity that a national community requires. Solidarity is not, or certainly not always, a generalisable frame of mind or "taste for collective benefits" which can be lifted out of a narrow context and applied to a broader one.[60]

Berman has recently argued that Weimar Germany exemplifies a case where "civil society activity serve[d] to fragment rather than unite society", because the numerous voluntary "choral societies and bird-watching groups", despite their horizontal organisations simply expressed and even were used as instruments to deepen the party divisions of the period, with Catholics, socialists, Protestants, and eventually nazists joining their separate clubs, forming 'little republics' of exclusive solidarity, where dissatisfaction with the political system could be and was expressed.[61] Although Italy is not Weimar, the case is not without parallels. What is lacking in Italy is arguably the type of solidarity and willingness to be together which is needed for a *nation* to exist - as evidenced in the extreme localism of Italian political life, and in the regional chauvinism of the *Lega*-phenomenon.

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58.   Putnam (1993:112-14).
59.   *Democracy*, II:II,5 (Tocqueville [1840]1969) cited in Putnam (1993:90).
60.   Putnam (1995a:67-70), cp. also Putman (1995c). Putnam has been noted to neglect a number of new and growing, potentially civic groups, including various support groups and student community service organisations (Riessman and Banks 1996). And very disturbing at least to Putnam's original Italian case, recent individual survey data indicates that "simple membership in one voluntary association", except when for purposes of political action, has no effect on a number of measures of civicness, as opposed to "highly mobilised" membership in more than one association". *And* party membership has a highly disproportional effect inside this pattern (Maraffi 1998:17).
61.   Berman (1997:565-66).

In the same vein, it is unsubstantiated and intuitively implausible that Putnam's associations are necessarily particularly productive of *tolerance*. Tocqueville may well have been right that reflective distancing and impartiality is created where men act reciprocally 'one upon another'. There is in fact a substantial literature on political tolerance.[62] In American and British studies, the generation of tolerance is clearly correlated with education, age, and urbanism,[63] and similar findings have been made in the context of tolerance of immigrants and refugees elsewhere.[64] Expression of tolerance is also associated with knowledge (cognitive prejudice), political saliency and issue attention,[65] and perception of threat.[66] But tolerance is also finally associated, according to several studies, with political activity. Of particular importance, to McClosky & Brill, is "membership in voluntary organisations (especially organisations concerned with *public affairs*), and degree of participation in civic and political life".[67]

In this connection, as with the generation of broader solidarities, Putnam may well have a point in favouring associations that are socially "bridging":[68] It is plausible that tolerance of social diversity and willingness to cope with conflicting viewpoints requires both to be present in a group in the first place.[69] But whether this is in fact the case in Putnam's associations - inter-ethnic, cross-class bowling? - is questionable. Could it not be furthered by participation in religious associations? (Although the religion which Tocqueville favoured was ecumenical and Protestant).Closely related to this, one could argue that improvements in impartiality and tolerance is likely eventually to require that interests and prejudices are *tested*: What Alan Wolfe has called "moral passage"[70] pre-

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62.   The problem with these studies for our purposes is that many are primarily aimed at measuring tolerance and changes over time, rather than the specific causes of such changes, and much of the debate has concerned the proper operationalization of tolerance, e.g. as acceptance of a set of specified groups as opposed to acceptance of 'least liked groups' (McClosky & Brill 1983; Stouffer 1955; Sullivan, Piereson & Marcus 1979; Wilson 1994). While some commentators claim that "substantial numbers of the general [American] public now support a variety of forms of tolerance consistently; and do so, not for reasons peculiar to each, but rather on principle" (Sniderman, Tetlock, Glaser, Green & Hout 1989), it may still be the case that, at the level of actual behaviour "many Americans, though endorsing civil liberties in the abstract, reject them in their concrete application" (McClosky & Brill 1983: 417).
63.   McClosky & Brill (1983); Wilson (1991).
64.   Togeby (1997:83f).
65.   Togeby (1997).
66.   Most obviously and significantly in places like Rumania and Bulgaria (McIntosh, MacIver, Abele, Nolle 1995). In a Western European context, see Duch & Gibson (1992:256-57). The absence of a threat is of course closely related to trust.
67.   McClosky & Brill (1983:418, italics added). Verba, Schlozman & Brady (1995:501) find that toleration increases (along with many other things) with political activity, although they admit that their analysis "cannot establish whether … tolerance [is a] cause … or consequence … of activity". However they "surmise that they are both". Finally, in Yugoslavia a study found that "[p]articipation in a civic or workplace organization increases tolerance" (Hodson, Sekulic & Massey 1994:1550).
68.   Putnam (1995b:665).
69.   In Ex-Yugoslavia, evidence was found that tolerance decreased "monotonically with declining diversity through the six most diverse republics" lending strong support to the "central tenet of modernisation theory that argues that diversity and increased intergroup contact lead to greater tolerance" (Hodson, Seculic & Massey 1994:1548). Studies of inter-cultural tolerance between Western immigrants and local populations suggest that, by and large, there is just as much or more intolerance and prejudice in communities where there are few or no conspicuous looking foreigners or where experience with living together with them is only recent (Togeby 1997:86). See also Nunn, Crocket & Williams (1978). Duch & Gibson (1992:241) found evidence that "individuals are more likely to learn tolerance in a setting in which they are forced to deal with diverse ideologies and broadly based political conflict than they are to learn tolerance in a homogeneous and non-conflictual community".
70.   Wolfe (1992:320).

sumably requires association, indeed confrontation, around substantial issues (consider the difference between debating the content of local education curricula vs. electing a cashier in the soccer club). Such things as the Latin American women's network organisation *Conscienca*, which works in schools and local communities in 14 countries to develop interactive problem-solving skills and tolerance, comes to mind before Putnam's examples.[71]

As regards Putnam's more narrow treatment of *trust*, our suspicion is raised already with Putnam's apparent belief that trust in the ranks of the *Michigan militia*[72] is the same social fact as trust in a voluntary civil rights association. Trust, to Putnam, is about expecting "that others will probably follow the rules. Know that others will, *you* are more likely to go along, too, thus fulfilling *their* expectations". Trust enhances ability to "pursue shared objectives", aids "coordination" and "allow[s] dilemmas of collective action to be resolved". It is produced as a social and individual resource by the other two components of Putnam's social capital construction:

> networks of civic engagement foster sturdy norms of generalised reciprocity and encourage the emergence of social trust. Such networks facilitate coordination and communication [and] amplify reputations (...) [I]ncentives for opportunism are reduced. At the same time, networks of civic engagement embody past success at collaboration[73]

However, as we take a closer look, there is no trace in this *operationalisation* of trust of Putnam's stated broader concern with civic equality and public spiritedness, which thus begins to appear as a postulate. Indeed

> [w]ho benefits from these connections, norms, and trust - the individual, the wider community, or some faction within the community - must be determined empirically, not definitionally[74]

Looking at trust in this way may look like a step forward in analytical clarity. However, it again requires Putnam to explain how trust, emerging from the networks that he analyses, is able to do the things that he apparently also wants it to do. A first problem is Putnam's employment of trust as a generalised moral resource that can be saved and transmitted over time. In light of his own definition of trust,[75] it makes little sense to expect *traditions* of trust to survive across the centuries. Whether trust is about the application of heuristic rules facilitating unreflective cooperation, the projection of one's own willingness to be trustworthy, or something else, it appears to be a rational sentiment which is reinforced by trusting and trustworthy actions on behalf of others, and - for lack of either - easily eroded. Not traditions, but specific "experiences a particular set of individuals has with another set of individuals or with the state" are more plausible starting points of trust. We do not necessarily learn to trust 'people', as much as particular types of people - for instance 'people like us'. Also, while people in the North of Italy are no doubt more trustful of each other than those of the South, and although they are more satisfied with

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71.   de Martini & Pinedo (1992:138-46). Theoretically, see also Walker (1995:119- Wolfe 20) and Goodin (1992:153-559).
72.   "A recent review in the *New York Times* of Fukoyama's Trust cited Putnam's work and noted that Timothy McVeigh and other co-conspirators in the Oklahoma City bombing were members of a bowling league; this is a case where it may have been better to bowl alone" (Levi 1996:52; cp. Putnam, 1995a:70). The title of a less than favorable recent review article on Putnam was *Kicking in Groups* (Lemann 1996).
73.   Putnam (1993:111; 1995a:67; 1995b:665).
74.   Putnam (1995b:664-65).
75.   As well as those of the growing literature on the subject, most of which treats trust as a rationality concept, in a rational choice sense of rationality, rather than a moral sense. See Barber (1988); Dunn (1993a); Fukuyama (1995); Gambetta (1988); Hardin (1993); Levi (1996).

the performance of their local governments, it is hard to accept, given Italy's recent history and as Putnam seems to imply, that even the Italians in the North *trust* their politicians in any serious way.[76]

Secondly, we may speculate about the causal efficacy of Putnam's favoured generators of social capital. Trust is certainly a likely resource for making local policies work or for creating collective benefits at the micro-level of civil society. This resource is likely, in part, to be a function of successful cooperation about actual benefits involving substantial social costs of defection, and by the broadness of social integration of a group. But while grass-root organisation to overcome suspicions and incentives to cheat no doubt has a place here,[77]it seems plausible that non-egalitarian networks such as churches and extended families may be as effective in facilitating trust, in many respects, as sports clubs and cultural associations.[78]

Putnam intends trust as a generalised social resource which, while generated in an association, may be mobilised in other contexts too, both as a good in itself and as a means towards general collective goods, such as law-abidingness and respect for contract. But again it seems likely that this requires the simultaneous development of micro-trust in many settings, and political - associational and institutional - mechanisms linking these together. As testified by the history of political parties in northern Italy, the development of societal trust is likely to be facilitated by broad social coalitions and movements mobilising and integrating civil society.[79] Moreover, Putnam's society-centredness causes him to use an overly voluntaristic conception of trust. Overarching, *civic* trust, while subject to a set of fragile logics of auto-reinforcement,[80] is likely to depend on political instalment of good institutions, including law enforcement.

Despite some later, superficial modifications, Putnam has an overly romantic conception of the way that trust, developed in small groups may constitute a positive social resource. To the extent that trust is (mis)conceptualised as a matter of social *control*[81]- incentive structures to avoid *shaming* - it is particularly difficult to see how it could become generalised as societal trust. Moreover, to the extent trust is generated in small and local groups, the benefit of collective confidence in the future actions of others may come at the price of unfortunate forms of normative conformity, conservatism, and disincentives to social mobility.[82] Again, the trust of the brotherhood (and its *mis*trust of surrounding society) will have to be conceptualised and investigated rather differently than the trust of the broad, society-building social movement, such as communist and Catholic mobilisations of labour in Italy.

Putnam's social capital in fact often comes close to such ideas of social control and group conformity. Despite his mentioning of tolerance and pluralism, he fails to thematise what are the right *kinds* of intersubjective relations, and in what way their civility or uncivility is not just a matter of the use to which they are put. There are obvious - empirical and analytical - differences between the kind of trust that thrives on recognition of social or

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76.   Levi (1996:48).
77.   A perceptive study in a third world context, also cited by Putnam, is Hirschman (1984).
78.   They have been in (Southern) Italy, according to several commentators, e.g. Sabetti (1996). See also Levi (1996:52).
79.   It is possible that those individuals who 'learn' trust organising food *sagre* for the local Tuscan soccer club go on to be dedicated members of the local branch of the PDS. But Putnam's design does not show that one comes before the other, and strictly speaking the risk of committing an ecological correlation error prevents him from saying that the *sagre* organisers and the party members are the same.
80.   Gambetta (1988).
81.   Putnam (1993:168,176).
82.   Levi (1996:51-52); Portes & Landolt (1996).

cultural sameness and identitary security, on localism, on obvious and shared interests (singing or playing foot-ball), and on absence of moral challenge or 'passage' - and on the other hand a type of political trust that facili-tates and evolves from larger societal projects and from exposure to, and learning to cope with, political and cul-tural diversity. Most importantly: there is no future in an analysis of civicness that treats this concept completely formally, in isolation from the types of substantial goals and projects that are pursued or affirmed by one asso-ciation or the other. The type of 'social capital' that makes *a democracy* work must embody democratic values: *democratic* trust, tolerance, and solidarity. According to Berman, again,

> the most seemingly harmless and 'civil' organisations can, under certain circumstances, be turned to an-tidemocratic purposes. The Nazis, for example, were able to use choral societies and bird-watching clubs in their infiltration and eventual take-over of German society[83]

7. Political Conflict and Civil Society

My final quarrel with Putnam's conception, and with what I see as his misreading of the republican tradition, is about his neglect of social conflict as an integrated part of civil society and civicness. Putnam's conception of civil society is not just voluntarist and peculiarly 'natural' in its conception. It also has connotations of a peculiar pacific functionalism. Society and state is basically conceptualised as a functioning - or malfunctioning - whole. Social capital becomes a systems resource which is generated in specific networks of civil society, and which the (local) state feeds upon, delivering its goods to society in turn. The absence of an oppositional perspective on civil society in Putnam's work is conspicuous. There is no trace of a more radical idea of society as a means of protection from, and opposition against, the potentially malevolent state. As noted by several commentators,[84] Putnam never provides an account of *democratic* political performance - but only of government *efficiency*. This, of course, reminds the reader of the tortuous attempts by the functionalist systems analyses of the sixties to de-velop value neutral concepts that could measure the 'capacities' of diverse, but increasingly 'differentiated' and 'modern' political systems, e.g. in terms of their abilities to produce and distribute valuable outputs such as health, education, infrastructure, and security.[85] Putnam's indicators thus do indeed measure elements of *libertas* that are in everybody's interest, but he does not trace the relation between trust and activity in secondary associa-tions and such matters as democratic responsiveness to the specific and controversial demands of citizens, in-cluding such that involve conflict with important corporate interests, or such that involve the protection or politi-cal entrenchment of civil or political rights, for instance of vulnerable minorities. The absence is all the more striking in view of Italy's poor record on both. In republican terms, Putnam fails to appreciate that modern *liber-tas* as a critical concept refers to more than a smoothly running (welfare) state.

Neglect of potential conflict between (local) segments of civil society and the state is also evident in the voluntaristic conception of the relationship which was noted above. Not unlike the new communitarian move-ment in the United States, and with equally conservative implications, Putnam occasionally appears to assume that community problems from neighbourhood crime to poor education facilities are simple plus-sum scenarios to be solved by concerted action from below. Good local solutions and local administrations that deliver are possi-ble once local communities pull themselves up by their bootstraps and begin to prosper. The anatomy of the community failures which concern the likes of Etzioni and Galston in America is often, of course, different.

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83. Berman (1997:567).
84. Laitin (1995:173); Tarrow (1996:396).

There is often only so much that a local community can do alone, especially if it is populated with people of few resources, such as the inner city poor. Bottom-up responses to failing state services are likely to exhibit a segregating logic and to produce as much frustration and political alienation as civicness. Generally, the new communitarianism, to which Putnam's work is increasingly associated, tends to ignore that the resolution of local problems typically requires that broader infrastructural, organisational, or institutional constraints are centrally addressed first, that this often involves difficult political decisions that challenge established priorities, privileges, and distributions, and that often none of this takes place before local grievances are effectively organised politically.[86]

Secondly, and in a manner that unites his perspective with some of the more rosy Eastern European formulations,[87] Putnam does not concern himself with conflict *in* society. He does note that civil society does not presuppose anything like a political consensus and that none of his performance indicators were either positively or negatively associated with various measures of political conflict.[88] However, he fails to appreciate that conflict is an integral *part* of civil society, in the sense that it may produce positively beneficial results, and that learning to live with it and to navigate its parameters is an all-important civic skill. In light of this, Putnam's use of the republican tradition is again peculiarly biased. Just as the oppositional perspective is part and parcel of particularly British and American republicanism, from Sidney to the Anti-Federalists, a long tradition which has Machiavelli's analysis of *tumulti* as its classical reference emphasises the way that political conflict between segments of citizens with different interests and viewpoints is simply always the stable background of politics, that such conflict may serve to keep citizens vigilant and attentive to their own interests as well as those of others, and that a good republic is the one that manages to *civilise* conflicts, preventing them, through compromise and appeals to shared interests, from generating into unpolitical struggles over patronage and privilige.[89]

Thus, overemphasising Tocqueville's aristocratic fear of unruly democratic associations, Putnam's effective governance perspective leads him to exclude political parties along with new social movements, as these - particularly parties in the South - are perceived to embody a narrow group interest perspective. However, Putnam does stress the importance of socially and politically cross-cutting associations. Only, once political associations are excluded, these are difficult to come by. As succinctly put by Foley & Edwards:

> Implicit in [Putnam's] account ... is the fear that if ... associations follow too closely the pattern of divisive political solidarities, they may well sharpen social cleavages and actually undermine the capacity for effective governance. Consequently, he appears reluctant to count among his 'civil associations' any that advance a cause, pursue policy change as their central vocation, or provoke conflict (...) Putnam ... seems to want it both ways. He clearly wants an activated and engaged populace, and he argues that the socialization performed by civil associations is vital to [this]. Yet ... only those associations qualify that invoke a civic transcendency whose spirit claims to 'rise above' the divisiveness of protracted sociopolitical conflict[90]

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85.   For instance Pye (1966:31-48).
86.   Berman (1997:570-71). The neo-communitarian wave include, e.g. Etzioni (1995;1997) and Sunstein (1993). Galston, Etzioni's co-formulator of the communitarian platform program, has associated himself explicitly with Putnam's ideas (Galston 1996).
87.   E.g. Frentzel-Zagorska (1990)
88.   Putnam (1993:116)
89.   The classical reference is Machiavelli's treatment in *Discorsi*, I,2-5 (Machiavelli [1531]1970). Montesquieu's treatment in *The Spirit of the Laws*, XIX,27 (1748) and Jefferson's in several of his letters (E.g. to William Short, January 3, 1793, *Papers* (25:14-17) (Jefferson 1950) are other famous xamples.
90.   Foley & Edwards (1996:46).

Putnam's move takes politics out of civil society, along with an important part of *civility*, by failing to appreciate the role of political conflict. We already noted the evidence from the northern Italian context, ignored by Putnam, that competing political movements and parties promoted democratisation in the region. In terms of republican ancestry, Putnam ignores the other side of Tocqueville, i.e. the advocacy of political associations as a precondition for a free *society*. Modernising Machiavelli's famous invention in *Discorsi* and developing Montesquieu's insights into the beneficial consequences of political competition for the favours of the restlessly unloyal modern citizen, Tocqueville saw the development of the propensity to cross-group cooperation, what we may perhaps call a distinctly political trust, as the outcome of *political* association (this in turn inspiring cooperation and civility in all forms of civil associations, including economic enterprise - *not* the other way round).[91] Civil society (as Putnam himself grants) by its very nature is characterised by political conflicts between different projects, values, and interests. The point is that resolving such conflicts requires compromises and civilised political bargaining. The lack of a political variable is again evident in Putnam's perspective: If political conflicts go all the way down in a civil society, it is difficult to imagine that a civic culture appropriately characterised by reasoned debate, acceptance of political adversity, and readiness for compromise could develop in local, non-political groups of the kind that Putnam has in mind. Although Italy's political parties, particularly in the South, may not have been the best schools of civic spirit in this regard, the fragmented political scene of the country still suggests that such schools are necessary.

Albert Hirschman, citing Simmel and more recent commentators like Coser, Dahrendorf, Dubiel, and, of course, Machiavelli, speaks up against "Gemeinschaftsschwärmerei" and notes how, in today's Europe

> [c]onflicts arise from newly emerging inequalities and sectoral or regional declines. In societies with freedom of speech and association, concerns about those matters tend to mobilise…demands for corrective action and reform, demands that are based *both on self-interest and on genuine concern for the common good*, or to use a distinction due to Jon Elster, on *both arguing and bargaining*. The secret and vitality of pluralist market society and of its ability to renew itself may lie in this conjunction and in the successive eruption of problems and crisis. The society thus produces a *steady diet of conflicts* that ... the society learns to manage[92]

While the republican tradition is itself ambiguous on the question of conflict,[93] Putnam, I submit, aligns himself with the wrong side. In 1974, Michael Walzer made a good point about conflictual civility in politics, a concept that soon got lost in the communitarian vocabulary:

> there is a kind of sharing that is possible even with conflict and perhaps only with it. In the arena, rival politicians have to speak about the common good, even if they simultaneously advance sectional interests. Citizens learn to ask, in addition to their private questions, what the common good really is. In the course of sustained political activity enemies become familiar antagonists[94]

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91.   E.g. Tocqueville, *Democracy*, II:II,7. More generally, Tocqueville did not regard civil society as a quiet and harmonious place. Again, he placed himself squarely in the republican tradition of accepting a measure of moderate *tumulti*, for instance in his suggestive description of the sight that met the foreigner who came to America: "No sooner do you set foot on American soil than you find yourself in a sort of tumult; a confused clamor rises on every side, and a thousand voices are heard at once, each expressing some local requirement" (*Democracy*, II:II,7, Tocqueville [1840]1969)
92.   Hirschman (1994:203,212, italics in original).
93.   Machiavelli's, Jefferson's, or Tocqueville's acceptance of political tumults may be contrasted to Harrington's or Rousseau's positions.
94.   The 1974 essay "Civility and Civic Virtue in Contemporary America" cited from Walzer (1980:71). Walzer, however, fails to appreciate the republican ancestry of this view. Cp. also Bernard Crick's (1982:24), "diverse groups hold together, firstly, because they have a common interest in sheer survival and, secondly, because they practice politics ... The moral consensus of a free state is not something mysteriously prior to or above poli-

8. Conclusion

The republican tradition is an important searchlight for empirical political science. The values and ideals embodied in Tocqueville and other figures - the good citizen, the idea of a pragmatic 'self-interest properly understood', the conception of civic virtue and patriotism - remain appealing. They do so, at least in part, because they are intrinsically connected to empirical arguments and generalisations about the causal preconditions of the realisation of great historical values, such as equal, substantial citizenship and freedom from fear and intolerance in a well-ordered and secure political community. This is no doubt the reason for their resilience in changing embodiments through the centuries. Just as they were implicit in Almond and Verba, Putnam wants them to guide his research, but he borrows their pathos in a way that Almond and Verba did not do directly: If the republican conception of citizenship, *libertas*, and virtue in *civil society* were sound in any way, what could be more important for political science than to investigate how this might be? What are the virtues required for modern liberal democracy, more or less widely defined, to 'work', and what are the social and institutional preconditions for these virtues to develop in the first place? These research questions are all the more important because the searchlight they express is constantly challenged by others, in ways that archtypically mirror Hume's, Madison's, and Hamilton's critique of classical republicanism. Might it not be that the first and main mover of democratic development and liberal institutions is (capitalist) economic development? Could it be the case, as Almond and Verba also appeared to believe, if to a lesser degree than some proponents of 'functional apathy' of the sixties, that only relatively moderate *exercise* of civic virtue were required, and that a requisite (low) level were in part maintained by a degree of passive acquiescence, even the existence of *myths* of citizenship and democratic equality?[95] Is the most peaceful and democracy-supporting civil society populated by fiercely competing interest groups, or does such pluralism (as believed by American pluralists such as Truman and Dahl)[96] require some sort of 'civic' background culture? Finally, is a restless and actively critical populace necessarily part of the problem rather than the solution, as maintained by the proponents of effective political leadership and order through 'institutionalisation' (as maintained by Huntington or Sartori)?[97]

Unfortunately, Putnam's book does not ask the right civic questions. In fact, as regards the very conceptualisation of civic virtue, civic competence, and civic orientation as predicates of democratic *citizens*, his approach is in some respects a step in the wrong direction, when compared to *The Civic Culture*. We have noted how Putnam's vision of civil society is peculiarly pacific, functionalist, and self-propelling. Civic community and good citizenship grows spontaneously from below where there is civic soil. It does not require to be focused by (national) political institutions and channels, in order to exhibit the overarching sense of solidarity, trust, and tolerance to which he pays lip service in passing. The associational cradles of civility are remarkably unpolitical and undemanding, and there is hardly a trace, when it comes to empirical analysis, of the republican notion of civicness as a willingness and ability to address political conflict. But Putnam has not adequately established that *his* causes produce all the beneficial results he claims for them, or that the results that are in fact produced have exactly these causes.

This paper does not deny the differences in political culture between the North and South of Italy. It also does not belittle the capacities Italians of Tuscany and Reggio-Emilia may well have for socialising with strang-

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tics: it is the activity (the civilising activity) of politics itself".
95.   Almond and Verba (1963:346f).
96.   Truman (1953:512-17); Dahl (1963:91-92).

ers in that fashion of urban civility which still intuitively strikes the visitor, and which may have been lost elsewhere. Nor does it deny the famous vitality of civil societies that have learned to 'arrange' working solutions to collective problems *in the absence* of well-functioning public institutions (including, *contra* Putnam's rosy image of Northern Italy, some local government institutions). However, pending empirical investigations, I am inclined to think that what the Italians need is not more bird-watching and soccer but a civicness which is directed towards the level of the state, which pushes to reinvigorate fossilised political institutions, fights corruption, improves national solidarity, and seeks to improve the quality of political parties or forms new social movements to these ends. Solidarity does not come in much more exclusive and intolerant forms than amongst the *tifosi* brotherhood of Florence's *Fiorentina*, and it is difficult to imagine any connection per se between such forums and activities and, say, the increase of respect for law and the improvements in climates of political debate and cooperation which Italian society as a whole so badly needs. A pessimistic scenario[98] might even be that Putnam's voluntary associational life in civil societies of Italy or elsewhere, in the absence of concerted efforts by good citizens and progressive political elites to improve the quality of political institutions and national political life directly, could pick up and multiply the ensuing alienation and frustration.

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97.   Huntington (1968); Sartori (1987).
98.   Berman (1997:569-72).

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