



Making Democracy 1993

Work: Civic

Traditions in

Modern Italy

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Robert Putnam, with

Robert Leonardi and

Rafaella Y. Nanetti

Harvard political scientist Robert Putnam is well known for his contention, first presented in an article entitled “Bowling Alone,” that civic engagement in con-

temporary America is in decline. The intellectual foundation for his argument was this book, *Making Democracy Work*, based on research done by Putnam and his associates, not in the United States but in Italy, contrasting the social and political structures of the country’s northern and southern regions. An examination of the mechanics of successful democracy, the book has become in the twelve years since its publication a contemporary classic of political science.

Putnam argued that northern Italy had flourishing political institutions because of the complex web of informal and formal organizations that brought people together, fostered communications, and increased involvement in the community. He contrasted this with the comparative paucity of such social organizations in southern Italy, which had much weaker political institutions. Economic development did not explain the strength of political institutions; rather, it was the quality of civic life—voter turnout, newspaper readership, and membership in associations ranging from sports clubs to choral societies—that brought about the strength and efficacy of political institutions.

The book was hailed in the *New York Times Book Review* as a “rare classic in political science,” and in the *Nation* as the modern successor to Tocqueville’s classic *Democracy in America*. The *Economist* described it as a “great work of social science, worthy to rank alongside de Tocqueville, Pareto, and Weber.”

Read Making Democracy Work by Robert D. Putnam, Robert Leonardi, Raffaella Y. Nanetti with a free trial. Read unlimited* books and audiobooks on the web, iPad, iPhone and Android. Why do some democratic governments succeed and others fail? In a book that has received attention from policymakers and civic activists in America and around the world, Robert Putnam and his collaborators offer empirical evidence for the importance of "civic community" in developing successful institutions. Their focus is on a unique experiment begun in 1970 when Italy created new governments for each of its regions. Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy (. ISBN 9780691037387) is a 1993 book written by Robert D. Putnam (with Robert Leonardi and Raffaella Y. Nanetti). Published by Princeton University Press, the book's central thesis is that social capital is key to high institutional performance and the maintenance of democracy. The authors studied the performance of the twenty regional Italian governments since 1970, which were similar institutions but differed in their social, economic and Making Democracy Work is intended as a close study of politics in contrasting regions of Italy, with persuasive theoretical conclusions that bear on the development of democracy elsewhere. The author did not predict the revelations of general corruption in Italian politics, but any student of contemporary affairs would do well to read this difficult but immensely rewarding work. Loading More By Fritz Stern. Since its publication in 1993, Robert Putnam's Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy ,1 has generated more discussion and debate than any work of political science in recent years. For the compelling arguments it makes, the innovative methodology it employs and the exciting research agenda it initiates, it is a path breaking work which has already changed the way academics and policy-makers approach the relationship between politics and society. In northern Italy, where citizens participate actively in sports clubs, literary guilds, service groups and choral societies, regional governments are "efficient in their internal operation, creative in their policy initiatives and effective in implementing those initiatives