Abstract

From the middle of the 1990’s, an abundant scientific literature has been developed concerning the concept of social capital. There exists a plurality of perspectives that decline this notion that goes from the resources that an individual can mobilize as consequence of his belonging to a group, to the reciprocity, the solidarity or the confidence between the members of a group and passing by the institutional and even cultural characteristics of a society. It is the reason why, the aim of this article is to analyze the originality and the failures of the theory of social capital of Robert Putnam. More precisely, if this author reveals the empirical entail of networks and norms, and the influence of associations and civic participation in the economic development and the social cohesion of a society, his theory is characterized by certain slides, the weakness of his principal thesis, the confusion and circularity of the concept of social capital, the ambiguity of the discourse and the rhetorical temptation; without forgetting his questionable use of certain indicators. Putnam tries to answer to these critiques realizing some adequacies of his theoretical approach and, especially, developing a wide campaign of communication to spread his ideas and to isolate these critiques.

Keywords

Social capital, theory, originality, failures, Robert Putnam.