

ПОЛИТИКА И УПРАВЛЕНИЕ

POLITICAL CAPITAL CONCEPTUALIZATION: RECLAIMING THE HEART OF DEMOCRACY

Nikolay Nayden*

Abstract

The term 'political capital' has shown remarkable persistence in academic and popular literatures and covers aspects of politics otherwise inaccessible to mainstream political science. However, conceptual difficulties also persist along with the term's widespread usage. This article attempts to correct conceptual deficiencies for the term 'political capital' by examining its academic usage through (i) a qualitative content analysis of 750 Oxford Journals and SAGE Publications between 1890 and 2008; and (ii) analysis of prior attempts to conceptualize the term. The analysis concludes with an argument that (i) political capital is engendered in the relations between publics and politics, and (ii) rethinks the significance and meaning of political capital for contemporary political science.

КОНЦЕПТУАЛИЗАЦИЯ НА ПОЛИТИЧЕСКИЯ КАПИТАЛ: ВЪЗСТАНОВЯВАНЕ НА СЪРЦЕТО НА ДЕМОКРАЦИЯТА

Николай Найденов

Резюме

Терминът "политически капитал" проявява забележителна устойчивост в академичната и популярна литература, отразявайки такива аспекти от политическата реалност, които са трудно достъпни за основните понятия на политическата наука. Широката употреба, обаче, се разминава с концептуалната недостатъчност на този термин. Настоящата статия има за цел да запълни тази празнина като изследва: (а) употребата на термина "политически капитал" на страниците на всички (750) списания, издавани от Oxford Journals и SAGE Publications между 1890 и 2008 г. и (б) досегашните опити да се концептуализира този термин. Анализът завършва с извода, че политическият капитал се поражда в отношенията между публиката и политиката и оттук – че е необходимо преосмисляне на неговото място в концептуалния апарат на съвременната политическа наука.

INTRODUCTION

The concept of capital underpins analysis of the social world in modern times. Nowadays, it is impossible "to account for the structure and functioning of the social world unless one reintroduces capital in all its forms and not solely in the one form recognized by economic theory" (Bourdieu 1997, 46). The Oxford English Dictionary traces early economic use of the term 'capital' as far back as the first half of the 17th century. The first known use of the term 'political capital' in America occurs in 1842 (Safire 2008, 554). In the late 1850s, Lord Macaulay

already ascribes the term to “the jargon of our time” (Macaulay 2008, 206-7). An upward trend in use of the term 'political capital' throughout the 20th century was partly prepared for by use of another related term, ‘social capital,’ which appeared later (Hanifan 1916, 130) but was soon adopted enthusiastically by social scientists. A considerable part of more recent popular use of the term 'political capital' can be attributed to George W. Bush whose widely repeated words, “I earned capital in the campaign, political capital...”¹ turned this term into a buzzword in his administration (Suellentrop 2004). In the last year of Bush’s presidency, nearly half of almost 1 million internet sites containing the expression 'political capital,' are linked to his name. This remarkable sustainability of usage over time and increasing popularity of the term 'political capital' testify to its ability to reflect aspects of political reality which are either hidden or otherwise inaccessible for mainstream political science analyses.

Regardless of the plurality of ideas about political capital, its use and contextualization, however, there are no clear or logically consistent theses able to give impetus to the conceptualization of this term as a legitimate political concept. This term “is hardly found in any handbook or dictionary of political sciences” (Birner and Wittmer 2000, 4). Previous attempts to conceptualize political capital center on issues related to reducing poverty. Chronic Poverty Research Centre (2002) summarizes that political capital "is increasingly recognized as the missing dimension of the Sustainable Livelihoods framework, and as one potential remedy to the limited use of political analysis in studies of development and poverty." However, limiting the term ‘political capital’ to the needs of tackling poverty does not allow for universal validity and recognition. Not accidentally, the term ‘political capital’ provokes questions, just as the term ‘social capital does,’ as to whether it refers to “more of a cluster of concepts than a clearly specified model; and whether it can provide a “powerful solution to a diverse set of practical and theoretical problems or [is] rather a chaotic concept” (Booth and Richard 2007, 4; Smart 2008).

The discrepancy between use of the term ‘political capital’ to cover large areas of political reality, and resulting conceptual deficiencies, can be overcome only by developing the term as a specific, legitimate and key concept of political science. To that end, this article offers an analysis of prevailing uses of the term in academic periodicals and an attempt to redefine political capital for contemporary political science analysis.

I. THE TERM “POLITICAL CAPITAL” IN ACADEMIC PERIODICALS

1. Research Object

To study the whole of academic literature is an impossible task for any research group, regardless of available resources and time, due to an entire range of language, technical, financial, and conceptual reasons. To be feasible, the scope of this study should be narrowed as much as possible without damaging its representativeness. As a first step, this study is limited to academic journals as they more quickly cover recent trends in society and social sciences than monographs, edited volumes, or handbooks, and are more readily available online. The next step is selecting a representative sample of academic journals. This sample includes all of the

* Nikolay Nayden is Associate Professor of Political Science, Department of Political Science, Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski", 15, Tzar Osvoboditel Blvd., Sofia 1504, Bulgaria (nayden@sclg.uni-sofia.bg).

I am indebted to Kaloyan Haralampiev and Penka Ivanova for their timely research assistance. I also thank Jenell Scherbel for her professional editing.

¹ President’s Press Conference - November 4, 2004.

journals published by Oxford Journals and SAGE Publications. These two well-respected sources are representative of (i) academic production in the UK/Europe, and the USA as leading world research centers, (ii) dominant research trends from the middle of the 19th century up until now, and (iii) both university and liberal traditions in publishing academic journals. The study covers all 750 journals published by Oxford Journals and SAGE Publications between 1890 (when the term 'political capital' appears for the first time), and the end of June 2008, i.e. for a period of nearly 120 years.

In sum, 255 of these journals have published articles using the term 'political capital' at least once. This includes 70 journals with 312 articles from Oxford Journals and 185 journals with 658 articles from SAGE Publications. This comprehensive selection of papers published by Oxford Journals and SAGE Publications informs the claim for representativeness of this study regarding the global academic literature.

2. Research Model

Each of the 970 articles that use the term 'political capital' is considered as a single unit of analysis. Hereafter, all percentages are calculated according to the total number of these articles and, under "articles," we shall mean only articles where the term 'political capital' is used. Each paragraph which includes this term has been subject to a qualitative content analysis. All relevant aspects of the use of political capital have been encoded on the basis of the following groups of indicators: (i) the affiliation of the journal that uses the term to the basic types of sciences—political, social, humanitarian, and medical; (ii) positioning of the respective articles timewise, by decades; (iii) ideas about the meaning of political capital; (iv) ideas about the political subjects of political capital; (v) ideas about the social subjects of political capital; (vi) ideas about the sources of political capital; (vii) ideas about the usage of political capital and its effects; and, finally, (viii) words and phrases that verbalize actions with political capital.

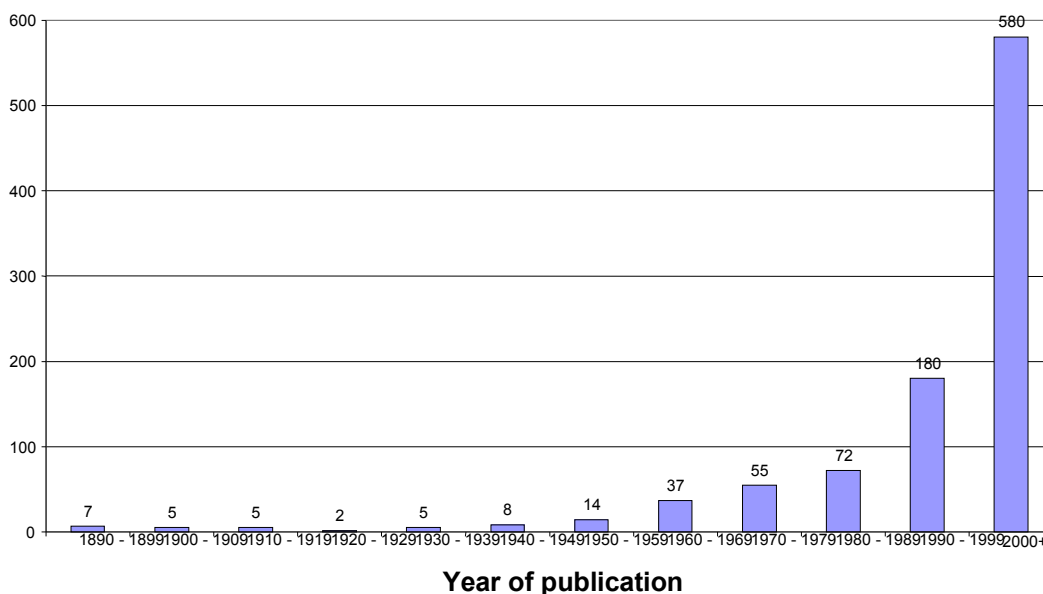
Since one article can have more than one indicator from the same group, the sum total of all the indicators of a group usually exceeds 100%. However, this provides a real picture of the sum total of ideas of scholars from a wide range of research spheres applying the term 'political capital.' Based on the distribution of indicators in each group, tables showing results have been constructed. Where the dispersion of these indicators is higher, the two-dimensional tables include only more representative indicators. Most relevant indicators are arranged into rank scales where the distinctive characteristics of these indicators strengthen or weaken.

3. Analysis of the results

a. Dynamics of the Use of the Term 'Political Capital'

The most common indicator for the dynamics of the usage of the term 'political capital' is the absolute number of articles. For a sharper outlining of trends, these articles are grouped by decades. Overall, the total number of publications increases over time. This trend becomes clearer after the 1940s, when arguments of military force gave way to political arguments. The circulation of the term 'political capital' culminates after 2000.

Figure 1



The increased number of articles using the concept of political capital may be due not only to an increased academic interest in the term and the promotion of its scientific use, but also to an increasing number of journals/issues. To neutralize the impact of this extensive factor, the number of all articles from one and the same decade is divided into an aggregate indicator, including the number of journals, multiplied by the number of years in which each of these journals was published. Thus, the real-time in which a journal is published is taken into consideration, as some journals appeared later on in a decade and others weren't published until its end.

Figure 2

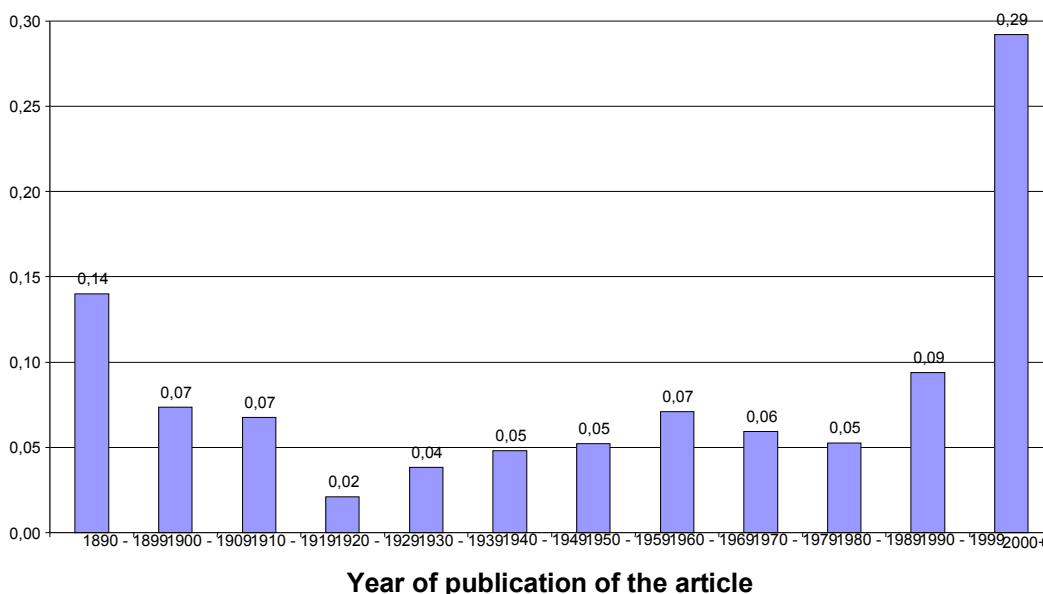


Figure 2 clearly indicates that there is no stable trend from the end of the 19th century until the end of the 20th. This means that, even though the number of scientific journals is increasing, new ones are not really much more interested in the term 'political capital' than the old ones. Only after the year 2000 does this ratio reach apparently higher levels in all the types of journals—political, social, humanitarian, and medical. The following results will elucidate that fact.

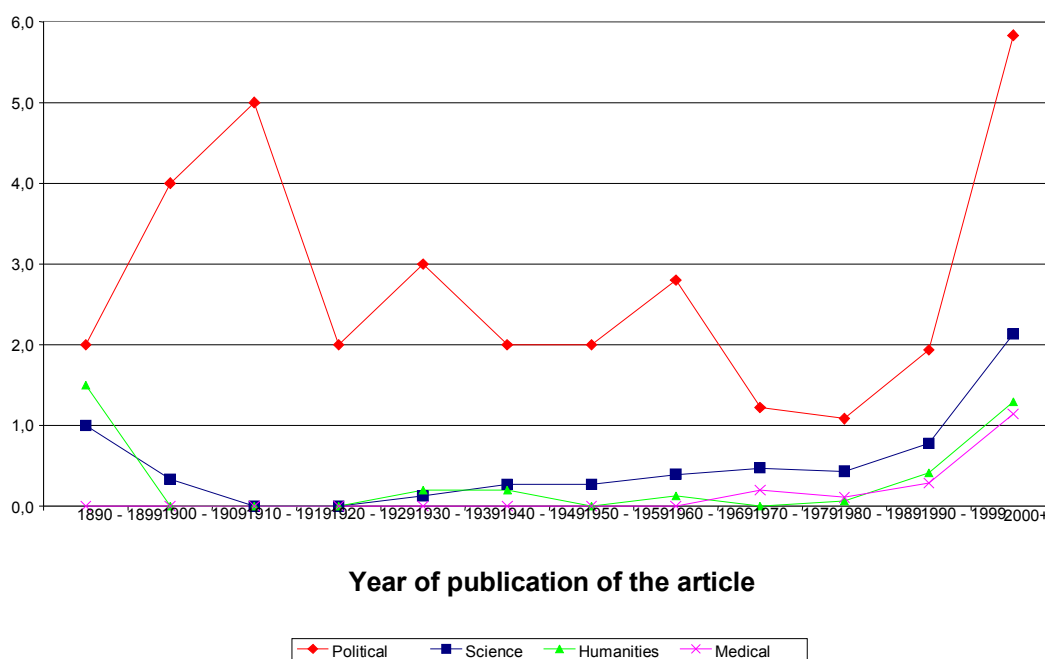
b. The Term 'Political Capital' in the Different Types of Sciences

In absolute numbers, most of the articles come from the social sciences (73.4%), followed by those from political sciences (20.6%), the humanities (3.7%), and medical sciences (2.3%). If, however, the total number of articles is divided by the total number of journals in each of these groups, the resulting quotient switches the ranked positions of political and social sciences i.e., political sciences (11.1), social sciences (3.5), humanities (2.1), and medical sciences (1.6).

Journals that use the term 'political capital' are predominantly concerned with different aspects of politics. Formally, some exceptions make it into historical journals, but their subjects naturally include political history. For example, the top five Oxford journals using the term 'political capital' include Parliamentary Affairs (50 articles), The English Historical Review (36), African Affairs (27), Publius: The Journal of Federalism (15), and Past and Present (12). Respectively, in top five of the SAGE journals included are: The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science (37), Political Research Quarterly (24), American Political Research (17), Comparative Political Studies (16), and Journal of Contemporary History (16).

The average number of articles in a journal of a given type of science varies considerably. The curve of the number of articles in political sciences is the most flexible of these, and is not unrelated to its sensitivity to major political changes and actions of a given time period. Social sciences, the humanities, and medical sciences lag far behind this number, and roughly repeat trends in Fig. 1, as shown in Fig. 3.

Figure 3



As seen from the graph, the average number of articles in political journals increases suddenly during the First World War, indirectly indicating that the power of arms did not entirely displace the power of political arguments. After a following drop in the 1920s, a slight increase in the use of the term arises in the 1930s, probably influenced by New Deal policies and pre-war tensions in Europe and worldwide. World War II does not appear to affect use of the term, as simply technical aspects of the war dominate political aspects, the most eloquent example of which is the alliance between the wealthiest country at the time and the first communist state, the U.S. and Russia. The following increase in interest in the term 'political capital' occurs during the troubled 1960s, when the cultural foundations of modern society are questioned and shaken. A serious decline in usage occurs and a bottom is reached during the 1980s. By default, erosion of the Iron Curtain and echoing political problems on many sides work to prevent automatic use of the term. Then, a steep rise in usage occurs suddenly in the year 2000. This requires special attention and explanation.

The main "suspect" for this sudden and almost euphoric rise in interest in the term 'political capital' after the year 2000 was U.S. President George W. Bush. By the end of his presidency, his name appears in almost the half the websites where the term 'political capital' is mentioned. Respectively, Bush's departure from office was followed by a correspondingly noticeable drop of the term's presence across the Internet. Clearly, this specific focus in the public speech of the former U.S. President catches the attention of the media and, hence, also penetrates academic debate. A correlation is confirmed indirectly since increased academic use of the term 'political capital' after 2000 was not followed by reconceptualization or clarification of its meaning; in other words, it did not crystallize into the germ of an effective political concept, and remained a kind of catch-all term, newly popularized but still relatively undefined.

c. Visualized Content of the Term 'Political Capital'

Throughout the period, the use of the term 'political capital' dominates the literature, but without clear indications of its meaning (in 95.7% of documented usage). In 4.1% of cases, the term is used simply as part of the title/text from another publication, showing its meaning is taken for granted by tacit consent. It is not difficult to guess what is confirmed by further results—namely, that this consent is due to its being used analogous with economic capital that makes the perception of the term 'political capital' clear by default.

In 3.9% of the cases, the term 'political capital' is given a general social meaning. In 2.1% of these cases, it is interpreted as a kind of social capital. The influence of the term 'social capital,' however, should not be overrated as, in many decades (1890-99; 1910-19; 1930-69 and 1980-99), there is no corroborative data for any social content of the term 'political capital.' In the remaining cases, where the content of the political capital is social by nature, it is associated variously with a possibility for influence (1%), social relations networks (0.6%), moral authority (0.1%) and education (0.1%).

Only 3.5% of all cases of usage researched give political capital its authentic meaning associated with public and political life. Emblematically, such content follows the 1980s, which raised issues of democratization of former socialist countries and resulting challenges for developed countries. The increased use of the term 'political capital' after 2000 did not result in a re/conceptualization of the term but, at a minimum, did create a favorable context for a search for its authentic public and political meanings. These authentic meanings include political power and influence (1%), political will (0.4%), democratic values and culture (0.4%), sense of community (0.3%), legitimacy (0.2%), etc.

d. Subjects of the Political Capital

(1) The indeterminacy of the term 'political capital' partly correlates with the nature of the subjects with which it has been associated. In 22.2% of the cases, no subject is mentioned or political capital is the subject of an influence. The deficit of clear subjects of political capital pervades the whole period between 1890 and 1950 and even between 1920 and 1929, when there is no subject at all.

(2) Similar to the content of this group are those cases where impersonal subjects of political capital are mentioned such as institutions, living areas, media and even cultural phenomena such as language, books, documents, etc. (3.6%). This category of subjects has emerged since the 1960s and exemplifies the beginning of an analytic attitude towards political capital, embodied in impersonal communities, their institutions and artifacts.

(3). The explicit mention of different categories of people as the subject of the political capital (14.1% of all cases) begins in the context of the new political world order defined by World War II. The culmination of this type of subject also occurs during the time since 2000, when it reaches the level of the non-subject use of the term. Categories of people as subjects of political capital include: social groups (4.7%), elite groups (2.6%), regional communities (2.1%), minority and disadvantaged groups (2.0%), single individuals and non-political leaders (1.5%), the people (1.1%), civil society (1%), and others.

(4) Naturally, the subjects of 'political capital' are mostly political. Though even private organizations and companies appear among the social subjects of political capital (6.2%) as a side effect of the transmission of meanings from economic to political, the inner distribution of political subjects is more evident, as follows:

(i) contemporary political figures (23.2%) including national political leaders (11.9%), staff/professionals in different institutions (10.1%), regional politicians (1.5%), and international political figures (0.2%);

(ii) governing and power institutions (22.7%), including governments (8.2%), countries (6.0%), different national institutions (4.0%), political opposition (2.0%), local government (1.6%), army (0.8%) and police (0.5%);

(iii) party subjects (9.7%) including political parties and unions (8.1%), supporters of parties (0.9%), party elites (0.2%) and party fractions (0.2%);

(iv) international political organizations: global (0.7%), European (0.5%), and terroristic (0.2%); and (v) medieval kings and nobles (0.9%).

Political parties emerged as subjects of political capital as early as the last decade of 19th century. Contemporary political figures are constantly presented among political subjects since the very beginning of the 20th century. Governing and other power-oriented institutions take their place among the subjects of political capital after World War II, probably not unrelated to profound political consequences of the war. As Sartori observes: "Up until the 1940s people knew what democracy was and either liked or rejected it; since then we all claim to like democracy but no longer know (understand, agree) what it is" (Sartori, 1987: 6).

e. Sources of Political Capital

Though ideas about "what is political capital" are infrequent throughout the literature, there is some idea of possible sources of political capital in almost half of all cases (47.8%).

(1) Various political actions which are symbolic in nature appear as a source of political capital in 37% of all case:

(i) Some of these actions are based on opposing types of identification—positive and negative. A political subject accumulates political capital through identification with positive public trends or effective governing models (8.7%), with prestigious cultural, ideological or religious traditions (total 8.4%), or from prestigious past events (0.5%). Political capital also accumulates when a subject identifies his/her opponents with unfavorable public tendencies and/or pressing difficulties (3.0%); or when distinguishing her/himself from those ideological, cultural or religious traditions negatively perceived by the public at large (3.5%).

(ii) Political and institutional maneuvers and relationships (7.8%) and specific political actions that expand political participation (0.2%) can also be interpreted as a symbolic source of political capital, as these raise positive political expectations.

(iii) Political capital, gained as a result of populist actions/moves, also has clear symbolic characterizations. The latter include the solving of selected problems with great public effect (3.2%) or disclosure of positively perceived aspects of private life (1.1%). It is remarkable that populism is recognized and appears as a source of political capital after the mid-1950s, when Western democracies began strengthening in the context of the cold war;

(iv) Finally, to this category of symbolic sources of political capital, we must add the manipulations of public opinion (2.4%) and the direct discrediting of political opponents (0.3%). These actions are symbolic in nature though their aims are pragmatic.

Altogether, these categories reveal that a primary source of the meaning of political capital lies within its deep symbolic nature. There is only one particular exception. No symbolic source of political capital appears during the decade 1920-29. A possible explanation for the absence of mention of these sources of political capital may lie in the general conceptual and intellectual confusion in the lack of order following WWI and the October Revolution (Vincent, 1990: 156-7). The next decade is noticeable for its persistent increase in the number of publications and the restoration of the relative weight of symbolic actions on the political stage.

(2) The next source of political capital—in positions occupied by a subject—is much weaker by comparison (5.5%). The most important position for a politician, his/her place in the heart of the people, is best represented (3.1%). Following are those positions belonging to some prestigious network of personal connections (1.0%) and the positions occupied in institutions, political parties and organizations (total 0.9%). The inner distributions among this category indicates that political capital is gained more easily by one with whom the people feel personally engaged or whose personality binds them together. Once again, the point is identification, but this time with an opposing symbolic signification” i.e., citizens' identification with the politician.

In sum, the personal engagement of the politician with citizens is more important than his formal position, even if the latter gives an opportunity for more tangible actions, including those which may benefit citizens.

(3) It is remarkable that socially beneficial actions of politicians, such as meeting fundamental citizens' needs, solving important particular issues or developing good strategies for solving societal problems, gain only 4.1% of cases. The reason for such a low percentage is paradoxical and shadows democratic processes. On the one hand, socially beneficial actions do not bring great dividends to politicians because people take for granted that these actions are politicians' responsibility by default and none of the social groups feels exclusively benefited from them. On the other hand, politicians do not bring large dividends to the citizens either, precisely because

they are not politically rewarding enough for politicians. As a result, politicians tend to search for shortcuts to the political success; meanwhile, citizens suspect and denounce them for this approach. Therefore, both sides mislead each other. In this way, instead of improving the correlation between politicians' behavior and citizens' votes, a political dysfunction is reproduced, leading to deceived political expectations, misuse of public resources, shortage of political transparency, and the deformation of public liability.

(4) Still negligible (total 0.7%) is the impact of the media and the internet on the accumulation of political capital.

In conclusion, political capital is awarded politicians primarily as a guarantee that politicians will fulfill their promises as representatives to their constituencies. Such a guarantee is comparable to a "quality certificate" for a political subject "issued" by the general public based on the identification of this subject with nationally unifying traditions, glorious historical events, positive developments, dominant public opinion, etc.

f. The Use of Political Capital

Indicators for the total effect of the use of political capital could be found in 44% of the articles. This effect may be divided in three main groups:

(1) As an expression of accumulated political energy, political capital has the power to rearrange social, political and institutional layers of society. In 16.1% of cases, accumulated political capital is used to activate social, political and institutional resources, as well as being used for political maneuvering and balancing. Therefore, political capital can go into different directions, as shown by the next indicators.

(2) In 16.3% of cases, the effect of rearranging these political and other layers is positive. Some general dimensions of positive change include increasing of community's possibilities (5.3%) and perspective investment (4.0%). In the remainder of cases, the use of political capital associates with clear political goals such as carrying out reforms and adoption of new legislation (4.2%), taking important unpopular decisions (0.7%), gaining legitimacy (0.7%), constructing identities (0.3%), expanding political participation (0.1%), and resolving specific political issues (0.1%). Finally, if a country is eroded by corruption, even "obeying the law" requires spending political capital (0.1%).

Behind this variegated picture of the sources of political capital, a thorough analysis reveals that the power of political capital derives from and belongs most originally to the general public, such that its expenditure by those occupying political position is naturally expected to be in the interests of the general public.

(3) The weaker the dependence of politicians on the general public, the bigger the discrepancy between the interests of both sides. In this context, the use of political capital can also have a negative effect. There are some consecutive stages in this direction.

The boundary between positive and negative use of political capital is shaped by the cases when political capital is used neutrally, i.e., when it is used to maintain the status quo (1.4%). The use of political capital has a negative effect in 12% of the cases. In some, this results in unintentionally wrong political moves (4.2%) or in dispelling citizen's political illusions (0.4%). However, political capital can be used quite intentionally against the interest of the general public

by hindering beneficial policies (1.1%); manipulating public opinion (0.9%); reducing political participation (0.2%); or deepening inequality and injustice (0.1%). Especially discrediting are the cases when people and their interests are openly ignored (0.7%). A most selfish use of political capital may be when it is employed to further the career of politicians (2.0%) or is intended otherwise for their profit (2.4%). In these cases, political capital accumulated as a result of previous political cycles turns against subsequent contemporaries and may be neutralized only by their energy.

Generally, we can distinguish three consecutive fields in the use of political capital: (i) enhancing the capacities of a community through whose agency political capital has been accumulated; (ii) placing a community under the control of political subjects through political manipulation or by reducing or ignoring the community's interests; and (iii) "cashing in on" the energies of accumulated political capital by politicians. The last field of action opens opportunities for gaining political capital by new political players, who own the proper political purity to begin from the first field of action.

g. Verbalization of the Actions with Political Capital

Actions and processes associated with political capital are often accompanied by verbal expressions regarding those same actions. Therefore, it is important to look at trends in related verbal expressions. Information about these expressions can be found in 63.8% of the articles. The related verbal expressions can be divided into two groups—the first concerns changes in political capital itself (43.4%); the second, changes in the disposal of political capital (20.4%).

Dominant among verbal tools describing changes in political capital are those associated with its acquisition (32.5%). If we add those expressions concerning its increase, we see that attention centers on the ascending development of political capital. The rest of the cases include expressions regarding the transformation (2%) and reduction (3.4%) of already gained political capital. Obviously, the question "Where does political capital come from?" is significantly more interesting than the question "Where does political capital go when it disappears?"

Words and expressions that characterize the disposition of political capital are divided into five groups. These represent several possible actions with the political capital: ownership (1.4%), involvement in the goal setting of a political subject (2.5%), investment (7.3%), use in a manner similar to the gambling (9.3%), absence (1.1%). Over three quarters of all words and expressions that characterize political capital use the term in a way also typical for the use of "capital" for most profitable and/or frivolous financial operations.

Therefore, the disposition of political capital is characterized predominantly by the employment of economic and, especially, gambling-related terms. This tendency is partly due to the widespread idea of politics as a kind of profitable game, where chance plays an important role. As a result, the verbalization of political capital tends to consider it in isolation from the process of its accumulation. It is uncommon to meet an interpretation of political capital as a kind of credit, given by the public to its political representatives under certain conditions and, therefore, under obligation to be spent according to these conditions. On the contrary, political capital is represented predominantly as a personal means for gaining the expected private benefits, i.e. as an opportunity politicians can benefit from in accordance with their political views, private priorities and even personality characteristics.

In this context, it is worth mentioning a telling difference between gambling versus appropriate investment of political capital. In the former, there is a slight opportunity for huge benefits and a probability of wasting all of the available capital. In the latter, the use of political capital is not tantamount to spending but is rather a way of saving and/or accumulation.

h. Main Interdependencies

(1) Two-dimensional distributions

(i) It is logical to assume that where the subject of the political capital is not defined, it is more likely that its nature is undefined as well, insofar as both indicators may point to a larger conceptual ambiguity. The relation between these indicators, however, turns out to be much more complicated.

In 15.3% of the articles where the subject of political capital is not specified, there are indications for the nature of the term 'political capital.' Surprisingly, in articles where the subject of political is specified as 'social,' indications about the nature of the term 'political capital' appear in only 5.1% of cases. Even more surprisingly, when the subjects of the political capital are political, indications about its nature can be found in only 4% of the articles. Obviously, the vision of the subject of political capital and the vision of the nature of political capital overlap, which makes clarification of this nature unnecessary. When the subject of political capital is political rather than social, it may be that the political nature of the subject by itself makes the nature of its capital self-evident.

(ii) When the sources of political capital are real political actions and factors, such as public opinion, the media, etc., then there are no indications of the nature of political capital. Visions of its nature appear only when sources of political capital are pointed out as symbolic actions consisting in identification with positive social trends and prestigious cultural traditions, as well as with political maneuvers and undertakings that expand political participation. These include 4.8% of the cases regarding the sources of political capital and less than 1% of all cases (articles examined). In the background of the small proportion of articles that shed some light on the nature of political capital, this percentage still suggests that this nature is symbolic and that, in times of social equilibrium, this symbolic nature is less likely to be generated by actions targeting a direct change in the real world. While, in times of significant social change, even practical actions have, per se, tremendous symbolic meanings.

(iii) The vision of the nature of political capital shows a certain correlation with the purpose of its use. When political capital serves to mobilize public and political resources, when it is qualified as a "perspective investment" and, even when it leads to unintentional political mistakes, there are indications of its nature (8.7% of these cases and 1.8% of all cases).

(iv) The vision of the nature of political capital moderately correlates with a vision of the effect of its application (Cramer: 0.378). An opinion on the nature of political capital is expressed in 10.4% of the cases, which envisage a specific effect of its application (1.2% of all cases). This application includes the use of political capital to manipulate public opinion for progress in political careers, for personal profit, or to gain legitimacy. Evidently, understanding the specific effects of the usage of political capital entails some understanding of its nature and vice versa.

(v) Only ten of all papers that verbalize the actions with political capital have a vision of its nature. And nine of them describe this nature in terms of accumulation or investment. Probably, the processes of accumulation/investment of political capital (compared to the other options such

as goal setting, possession or lack of political capital) correlate with a more analytical attitude towards it.

(2) Rank correlation

When the subjects of political capital are different groups of people, the larger the group, the narrower and more negative are the purposes of using political capital (Spearman: -0.378). Obviously, depersonalization of subjects of political capital more readily associates with negative public purposes and vice versa. When the subjects of political capital are a few people or even single persons, these purposes may be easier to describe in positive terms.

Just opposite is the dependency between the political subjects of political capital and effects of its use. The larger the scope of these subjects (ranked from individual public/political figures towards political parties, governing institutions, and international organizations), the larger and the more positive is the effect of their political capital (Spearman: 0.338). A plausible explanation is that larger political subjects involve more and different people who control each other and increase the probability of a publicly positive usage of political capital. And personalization of political subjects tends to associate with more selfish usage of political capital and, ultimately, with personal gains.

II. THE CONCEPTUALIZATION OF POLITICAL CAPITAL IN ACADEMIC PUBLICATIONS

1. Approaches to Political Capital

Everything by which a subject can influence the political process could be called 'political capital.' The effectiveness of each of these kinds of political capital varies according to the position of its holders and an extant political context. Hence, a great diversity of viewpoints about exactly what political capital is, and what its sources are, obtains in the literature. These are symptomatic of an early stage in the conceptualization of the term 'political capital,' as can be seen from the wide variety of explicit and implicit approaches.

a. Situational Approach

This approach emphasizes the importance of different situations in engendering political capital. In his *History of England*, Lord Macaulay uses the term 'political capital' to qualify the attempts of Sir Edward Seymour to magnify "a brawl between two dissolute youths... into an attack on the liberties of the nation, an attempt to introduce a military tyranny" (Macaulay 2008, 206-7). This early use of the term (not later than 1859) defines political capital as a political exaggeration of a single case with the purpose of obtaining private gains.

In 1875, *The Nation* weekly magazine comments (under the title, "*Political 'Capital'*") that actions by the Governor of New York against a group of corrupt contractors and politicians ("the Canal Ring") were motivated by the desire to improve his own prospects in the forthcoming U.S. presidential elections. Thus, even actions by a politician which have positive connotations, formally, may be interpreted critically through the suspicion that the real motivation is to manipulate electoral behavior.

In 1902, *The New York Times* enriches the scope of the situational approach by claiming that “when politicians seek political capital from accusations that their opponents are unfaithful to the principle of the merit system,” the result is “an investment for the improvement of the service and of politics.” That is, even the selfish accusations of opponents can entail a positive political effect.

Yet another aspect of the use of a situational approach occurs when *The New York Times* conveys in a 1918 subtitle that Germany is “trying in several ways to make political capital out of the action of the American and British Governments in seizing Dutch shipping.” In this case, one country profits by the political side effects of certain initiatives by its enemies. The hidden counterargument is that Germany, by exploiting the actions of the U.S. and British governments, is unfairly trying to accumulate more political capital than it alone could create by itself.

The situational approach to political capital does not lie solely in the past. Contemporary political processes have turned profitable contextualization of selected initiatives into a kind of art. This political art includes the ability to: (i) choose the most politically rewarding context, since an extraordinary context can easily give and take enormous political power. A most telling example is the huge political capital, credited to George W. Bush in the wake of 9/11, and its subsequent evaporation in the aftermath of the Iraq war; (ii) design politically favorable events regarding the actual context. For instance, in 2001 the Bush administration produced “twenty-six positive discretionary events and only one negative event; recall the tax cuts, major education reform, an arms control deal with Russia, and military success in Afghanistan” (Schier 2009, 10); (iii) profit from the favorable side effects of opponents' activities; (iv) denounce political opponents' moves aimed at profiting from a larger context that remains invisible to the public at large. Just one common example: Introducing new education legislation “in an extremely tight fiscal policy climate” can be interpreted as a way to provide political capital for the members of Congress (Florio 1982, 19)”; and, finally to (v) neutralize opponents' counterattacks aimed at deciphering one's own approach to situational profits.

The idea to draw political dividends from the mistakes of opponents presupposes (i) the presence of a common political space which keeps alive the principles of the early bourgeois public sphere, and (ii) the interdependence of activities of all participants that shape this political space. In this context, the actions/positions of each participant facilitate or impede the effectiveness of the actions/positions of the other participants. In order to maximize the profit from this interdependence, each of the political rivals addresses the general public by offering selected analysis of the actions of political opponents, manipulating public opinion about these actions, and inciting political opponents to keep making political errors.

This explains why the situational approach finds a warm reception in racial, ethnic, and religious identity politics and why political parties/leaders strategies readily include the setbacks of their opponents. Drawing dividends from the political mistakes of the opponents is a shortcut to an unmerited favorable political image. The more flimsy the policies a political subject offers, the more pressing its need for dividends from the mistakes of political opponents. And, therefore, the more vigorous are their efforts to present opponents' actions as mistakes. Overall, this portrait reveals two main actors associated with political capital—citizens as voters and politicians as positions holders in official institutions and organizations.

b. Institutional Approach

According to this approach, institutional positions are, in fact, the political capital of their holders. At one time, people used the phrase 'political capital' to refer to the "seat of government" (Suellentrop 2004). McLeod (2003, 4) even identifies political as institutional capital. From this point of view, the American president's political capital includes "the executive power of appointment, budget preparation, and issuance of executive orders; legislative power of the veto, pocket veto, and delivery of the annual State of the Union address; and judicial powers of appointments and pardons" as well as his "duties as chief diplomat, negotiator of treaties and executive agreements, appointer of military and diplomatic officials, and commander-in-chief of the armed forces" (Schier 2009, 4). In addition, political capital in communist China includes party membership, cadre status, military occupation (Raymo and Xie 2000, 2, 21) and, especially, the trust of the Communist Party (Liu 2003, 824). In return, 84% of the earnings premiums for party members result from the political capital they have acquired (*ibid.*, 832).

Actually, what is important is not "the seat of government" per se but the ability it gives to influence government (Mahon and McGowan 1996, 55, In: Shaffer and Hillman. 2000, 176), (Blumentritt and Rehbein 2008, 258). This influence includes things such as "access to policy-makers, knowledge of the public policy arenas in which the firm operates, and expertise in crafting effective strategies" (Mahon and McGowan, *ibid.*). The long list of perspectives on political capital seen through the lens of political institutions, exemplifies diverse ways of exerting political influence.

Institutional definitions of political capital center on different aspects of decision making as a key point in relations between governing institutions and their objects, including: (i) the access to decision-making (Rakodi 1999, 318; Knight 2006, 2) which combines both the opportunity to participate in and exert influence on decision making; (ii) the ability "to engage in political decision-making" (Healey et al. 1999) or "to influence government policy" (Shaffer and Hillman 2000, 176); (iii) the valid criterion or the scope "which individuals and/or groups have to exert influence on decision-making" (Devas 2002, 208); and (iv) the means "to influence policy making" (Bernosky de Flores 2010, 208).

However, all of these definitions are limited to formal aspects of political capital and raise a multitude of open-ended questions: If political capital is a kind of "access," how can it be operationalized? Is the person allowed such access the principal decision-maker or an extraneous person who simply influences the principal's decisions? If political capital is a kind of "ability," how can it be distinguished from a historical, political, or procedural point of view? If political capital is something that can be spent, what is it exactly? What is its "exchange value" for decision makers and for the general public? Finally, how does the process of accumulation of political capital gain public recognition?

This picture becomes even more complicated if we include the informal processes of decision-making (Devas 2002, 208). For instance, the American president's informal power is a function of the "political capital" that presidents accrue and deplete as they operate in office, including party support for the president in Congress, public approval of the President's ability to conduct his job, the President's electoral margin, and patronage appointments (Light 1983, 15; in Schier 2009, 5). This suggests that the political capital of a president is amassed informally through the particular uses of the office's formal powers as ascribed by the Constitution of the United States. Furthermore, the informal use of formal powers is not necessarily legal. Baumann and Sinha provide abundant examples of the illicit use of political capital in India "in the relations among

village elites, local officials and elected representatives, and between them and 'outsiders' such as contractors” (Baumann and Sinha 2001, 1).

Some definitions of political capital elide the subject or the object of decision making, as well as contextual meanings or expected results. For instance, political capital refers only to the legitimate distribution of rights and power (Baumann and Sinha 2001, 1) or to “the ability to vote on (or veto) legislation” (Frozen North. 2005). Other definitions identify political capital with the ability “to compel a vote or favor in the political arena as a result of a previously extended favor which debt is thus repaid” (Urban dictionary 2006). This explains why personal relationships and political ties with the president can be perceived “as a barometer for ministers’ political capital in cabinet politics” (Lee et al. 2010, 82S). Generally, “the more advanced the process of institutionalization of political capital is, the more the winning of 'hearts and minds' tends to become subordinated to the winning of jobs” (Bourdieu 1991, 197). This tendency crowns a bureaucratic view of political capital, which treats citizens as consumers and their voice as “a consumer voice,” which “creates a disingenuous climate for political capital” (Turner 1999, 18-19).

c. Public Support Approach

Schugurensky criticizes the “arbitrary division between a selected group of active political actors, and a massive group of passive supporters whose only political role is to grant or withdraw trust to the former” (Schugurensky 2000, 5). Instead, he offers an alternative definition of political capital which includes “the capacity to influence political decisions” by all citizens, not only by politicians (ibid.). Many researchers share the view that citizens’ support counterbalances the influence of political institutions. “Now the most common usage of “political capital” applies to the power that popularity confers on a politician,” summarizes Suellentrop (2004). For example, when the American president doesn't control the Congress, this is “the goodwill of the people” that “gives weight to his requests” (Allexperts 2008).

The influence of citizens on political institutions is versatile. Hence, the question of how to systemize the lines and means of this influence is an important one. Booth and Richard (2007, 17; 1998, 787) distinguish three basic ways for the accumulation of political capital by citizenry: elections, campaigns (supportive or protest), and contacts with public officials. This represents “overall political participation, support for fundamental democratic norms, and support for extant democratic institutions” (Richard and Booth 2008, 1).

Schugurensky organizes the factors that enhance or inhibit the capacity to influence government decision making in five dimensions: knowledge, skills, attitudes, closeness to power, and personal resources (Schugurensky 2000, 6-10). This mixture of channels and attitudes, however, is more difficult to systematize.

Sørensen and Torfing summarize the channels and attitudes between citizens and institutions in three elements: endowment (what citizens have), empowerment (what citizens can do) and political identity (what citizens are) (Sørensen and Torfing 2003, 624-5). This approach tries to facilitate the research by reducing the qualities of political system and civil society to the qualities of participants but oversimplifies the interaction between citizens and institutions.

Finally, everything which concerns political capital affects the reputation of a political actor. Hence, there arises the view that political capital is “a public figure's favorable image among the populace and among other important factors in or out of the government” or “the perception of a

politician's power” (Wikipedia 2010). When a politician pushes an issue hard and wins due to the support of an institution, he/she earns political capital because “that increases his or her perceived power” (Frozen North. 2005) i.e., power in the eyes of the general public. This view shows what is most precious about a public support approach.

d. Networks Approach

The political capital approach based on interpersonal networks aims at compensating for the persisting “lack of influence by disadvantaged groups” (Rakodi 1999, 334). From this point of view, political capital is defined as “the organisational forms, relationships and processes specifically developed by the poor to increase their capacity to escape from poverty” (McLeod 2003, 4). The idea is that the poor must develop their political capital in order to gain larger access to decision making in local/national governmental system. The poor, however, are not among those who professionally make these decisions. Besides, other social groups, including economic and political elites, also have their own political capital. Political capital is a universalistic relation and tool, and thus cannot benefit only the poor without also activating the political capital of the other groups. This particular usage, no matter how important it is, cannot represent all possible types of usages, necessary for conceptualizing political capital. I.e., a concept can win global recognition only as the result of global contextualization.

Political capital also includes networks of political relationships of community/neighborhood based organizations. Local organizations can inspire higher level networks of political capital, conceived as the ability of a whole community “to negotiate, set the terms of that negotiation, define what the neighborhood will look like, and control resources that affect the ability for this place to become a productive economic and social location” (Turner 1999, 16).

Network political capital can be reduced to interpersonal relations even at the community level. Interpersonal relations include interaction and comparison. Interaction brings into comparison the qualities (whatever they may be) of participants. In this processes of comparison, some important ratios between these qualities spring up—bigger, stronger, cleverer, richer, more powerful, most precious, etc. In a larger societal or broader historical sense, some of these ratios have been institutionalized by law or religion; others have been fixed by ethical principles or traditions. The aggregate of these ratios in a society results in what we call “social relations.” Social relations frame the starting positions of forthcoming interactions, influence expected results and, in doing so, make them more predictable. Highly ideological and religious relations can completely predetermine the ritual character of interactions in relevant areas and, respectively, determine the symbolic character of the final results.

Basically, interactions only activate and make visible extant social relations. There are, however, some possible personal, illegal or irregular interactions, which are unimportant or inaccessible to dominant social relations. In these particular areas, interpersonal interactions renew extant and/or generate new social relations. Interpersonal set of relations, defined imprecisely as ‘social capital,’ is one of the side products of this uniquely narrow area, where interpersonal interactions forge new kinds of social reality.

Some of those new relations are positive for public policies and others are not. Many authors agree that "social capital can also be associated with negative outcomes" (Project report. 2005, 11) but these outcomes are usually ascribed to local authorities and not to the highest political

levels. This is partly due to the luck of a theoretically sound vision of the causes and effects which predicate policy and administration as 'public.'

There are two basic criteria for the constitution of a policy as 'public.' Firstly, a policy is 'public' when it is based on political mechanisms which treat citizens as autonomous and anonymous bearers of general rights and duties. By contrast, a policy which favors selected citizens/officials breaches this requirement by definition. The same sort of breach includes any policy promoted by politicians on the basis of their personal networks. Where political systems and decision-making "are informal and personalized, then practitioners need to engage with 'the politics of the veranda' as well as the 'politics of the air-conditioner'" (Hickey 2005, 79). Secondly, a policy is 'public' when it is based on resources created by other public policies and especially by this same policy. Such a policy is sustainable, responsible and makes public management more predictable. This is most reliable guarantee for the sustainable livelihoods of the poor and also for the prospects of politicians themselves. In fact, institutional uncertainty is what often makes politicians look after their own prospects by developing such influential networks of interpersonal relations.

Many practitioners and theoreticians of public policy tend to exceed established public limits by striving at all cost for the desired positive effect. In this rush, all possible resources are mobilized—personal connections/networks, opportunities of the social climate, priorities of the day, etc. However, this distorts making policy in a public manner and leaves public interests at the mercy of fate. For instance, in 2001, when the former Bulgarian monarch returned to the country, many people voted for him believing that his "European connections" would allow him to "straighten things out." His government, however, showed that modern political problems cannot be solved via interpersonal relations alone. A policy cannot be "public" if its success is due merely to the private resources/connections of the officials involved. And it will be purely by chance if this same policy is successfully led by other officials.

This is also the case with policy that progresses due to the concurrence of certain circumstances. Successful efforts in public policy can easily be wasted under the fleeting conditions of the social and/or political climate. A temporary state of the economy, politics, citizens' attitudes, entertainments, etc. can favor one public policy while injuring another, regardless of their internal consistencies. For instance, an economic upsurge could buttress policy which has not contributed to it, while an economic crisis can hamper a prospective policy. This disrupts the natural relations between causes and effects of policy making and gives an accidental or even gambling character to the success or failure of a particular public policy. The latter also opens a window for the entry of impudent, unscrupulous, and merely pragmatic public officers. In general, this style of policy making limits other public policies and/or transfers global negatives to them.

e. Educational Approach

This approach presupposes that some personal abilities/skills have particular weight in political processes. For instance, a strong presidential reputation is often due to rhetorical, coalitional, bargaining, managerial, and heresthetic skills (Schier 2009, 14-15). In Communist China, relevant characteristics include such "as having belief in and being trusted by a certain political party" (Liu 2003, 823-4). The second presumption is that such abilities/skills can be developed purposefully by means of education and that the political capital vested in power-oriented actors is predominantly due to such education. In this sense, "education generates

political capital that can be used to produce and reproduce relationships of power that enable the state to reach its objectives” (McGinn & Street 1984, 323).

This emphasis on the role of education shifts attention to “the process of political learning; the ways in which ideas, identities and collective self-awareness that constitute valuable political resources in one context can be reframed to suit other contexts” (Moore 2003, 276, in Hickey 2009, 144). As this is a long-term process, to obtain tangible results in the foreseeable future, a temporary solution is preferred which consists in enrolling already better-prepared people in the prevailing educational process. For instance, the recruitment of politically experienced members into the European Parliament (Abdullah 2007) has no alternatives as a means of increasing the political capital of this institution.

f. Comprehensive Approach

In all cases, amassing political capital by ruling political institutions has been supported by the explicit or tacit approval of the public at large. López specifies that “on any given issue,” politicians have to weigh the interests of constituents against those of: the interest groups from which they draw electoral support; the party leadership; the media that supplies positive/negative coverage; and their own ideological positions (López 2002, 220).

Magno offers a kaleidoscopic picture of political capital that includes certain skills and knowledge related to politics that one gains through an educational process: networks which can be vertical (“up” to policy-makers) and horizontal (“across” other citizen groups); and action (Magno 2008, 122). Schier (2009, 15) offers an all-encompassing definition focused on the societal constitution of political power:

A chief executive is more powerful if the national constitution assigns him important specific powers, if the office is directly elected by the people, if the executive enjoys a secure tenure in office, if he controls many appointments, and if his office is extensively staffed and is able to control or influence actions of civil servants.

These are aspects of a comprehensive approach which tends to include under political capital even the actions of power and politics themselves. It is a pivotal question: If ‘political capital’ is simply another name for political power, does it make sense to employ it as a separate concept at all? If not the same, then where do important or significant differences lie? The first question is rhetorical. The second one, however, deserves real attention.

Power, political institutions, and other related political factors, function as capital when they address a forthcoming political, social, or natural event. Every new political challenge, even the smallest or most traditional, provides an occasion for rebuilding/reproducing prevailing political structures. From this point of view, the extant political/power institutions enter into these interactions with the same status of a political tool as anger of the poor, money of the rich, ideas of scientists, faith of the religious, paper of a journalist, and so on. Another question remains regarding which of these factors might predetermine the final result of political/power mobilization.

2. Overall Pattern of Political Capital

a. Nature of Political Capital

(1) Hickey distinguishes two conceptual approaches to political capital—one instrumental (associated with North American political science); the other relational (associated with European post-structural theory) (Hickey 2009, 143). Though the instrumental approach seems ‘dominant,’ its emphasis on resource mobilization looks like a round of blind man’s bluff without the global horizons of a relational approach. The latter sees social reality as “an ensemble of invisible relations... which constitute a space of positions external to each other” (Bourdieu 1989, 15-16). A dynamic “field of power” (Bourdieu), built by the relations between all of the power-oriented actors, determines the effectiveness of different resources. Any political resource is a web of relations, the weight of which is given by the entire field of power. Therefore, political capital has both a relational and a relative nature with a clear role in any concrete case.

(2) The relational mode of thinking includes the idea of a process. As a set of relations, political capital is doomed to be in a permanent state of flux consisting of both accumulation (of labor, time, and funds) and appropriation of the accumulated social energy “in the form of reified or living labor” (Bourdieu 1997, 46; Piazza-Georgi 2002, 462). Political capital results from certain social/political processes, functions as a process and dies away as part of other processes. Processual nature of political capital can be rationalized only by connecting it with what happens in society and politics. Otherwise, political capital remains an elusive concept.

(3) The relational nature of political capital gives it a symbolic character that can encompass social positions, political values, ideas, moral norms, pragmatic goals, etc. Political capital is intangible not simply because it arises from and is only observable in social behavior, as Booth et al. claim (1998, p. xxii), but rather because symbolic power is, by definition, intangible. One can touch and measure the money, arms, computers, etc. of a political movement but nobody can touch the reputation of this same movement, its ideas or their role in political processes. Hickey criticizes the reduction of “popular political agency into atomized forms of manoeuvring” which disregards the role of grievance, ideology, collective goals, and culture in social movements and collective actions (Hickey 2009, 143-4). Political capital cannot be reduced to a “complex aggregation of many material and non-material components” (Casey 2008, 10). The power of political capital is a symbolic one and makes “visible and explicit social divisions that are implicit” (Bourdieu 1989, 23). This power is possessed by those “who have obtained sufficient recognition to be in a position to impose recognition” and results from “a long process of institutionalization, at the end of which a representative is instituted” (ibid.).

(4) Formally, all types of capital “function on three levels, individual, collective and institutional” (Casey 2008, 10). This division is schematic and simplistic. Even on the individual level, political capital has a collective character. Individual participants bring their own political capital (contacts, members, and political debts) to a group (Gruger 1994, 21). Besides, political capital, like social capital, is an aggregate of a network “of mutual acquaintance and recognition . . . which provides each of its members with the backing of the collectivity-owned capital” (Bourdieu 1997, 50). As a result, the access of less influential participants to their own resources can be restricted while participants with substantial shares can begin to use all resources as their own. Further, individually owned political capital is not simply collective but is also social in nature. The global political field, shaped by dominant political structures, values, dependencies, party profiles, etc., determines the political importance of individual political resources, the rank

of their use, the feasibility of individual political goals, and everything which make individuals feel part of the same political world.

b. Structure of Political Capital

(1) Elements of political capital

Any material, ideal, or political element can function as a political resource depending upon the context or place and time, as well as upon a change in people's political position. Dahl (1995) treats money, police, privileges, weapons, status, etc. as political resources able to compensate for a deficit of legitimacy and authority. For March and Olsen (1995; In Agger and Löfgren 2008, 158), political resources are only one of "broad types of capabilities relevant to governance."

This conceptualization of "political resources" is, however, redundant since the other three capabilities are also, in fact, political resources—"rights and authorities," "political competencies," and "organizing capacities" (ibid.). Szücs and Strömberg (2006, 293) distinguish three key components of political capital—horizontal networks, core democratic values, and local-global relations. Richard and Booth (2008, 2) distinguish four sets of effects that shape political capital: Resources (Sex, Age, Education, Wealth); Experiences (Crime victimization, Corruption victimization), Social Capital (Trust, Civil society), Sociopolitical context (Community, Economy, Political history). I.e., a limited portion of individual qualities are recognized as "resources" while the other sets are also "resources" for the same or other purposes. Blumentritt and Rehbein (2008, 244) reduce the components of political capital to (i) the relationship network that facilitates and/or impedes political resources and (ii) the content of political resources.

It is, however, unclear why political capital remains outside of political resources even when it only determines the effectiveness and the content of the other resources. In all these cases, the meaning of political capital/resources closely follows the specific research aims of the author. Hence, the diversity of generic terms for each of these classifications—capabilities, things, components, and set of effects.

In this context, the attempts of Casey to propose an "objective means of identification and measurement" of political capital (2008, 1-2) deserve special attention:

(i) He postulates that seven primary capital species—institutional, human, social, economic, cultural, symbolic, and moral—provide resources for political capital (ibid., 11). There are, however, empirical criteria to add other types of capital: public, demographic, religious, communicative, aesthetic, emotional, etc. Besides, all these types of capital can be rearranged in yet other ways. Which of these "empirical" reasons would attain significance depends on the concepts and perceptions of the researcher.

(ii) Casey raises the problem of the interaction between these types of capital. He repeats the course of Baumann and Sinha (2001, 3) who assert that political capital can be built up by drawing on the other five capital assets—financial, physical, human, social, and natural. Casey conceives political capital as an exchange among political resources from his seven capital types (Casey 2008, 15). The implicit conclusion is that every type of capital can be reduced to the mobilization of elements of other types of capital. This interpretation, however, eliminates any significant difference among all types of capital. Their elements can take part in the accumulation

of each of them only in the frame of its *differentia specifica*, a move which has been stigmatized by Casey as a “pure ideal type” (ibid., 17).

(iii) In order to measure political capital “objectively,” Casey tries to present political capital as something “less ideal, and more empirically-based” (ibid.) and offers special index measurements. To test this “objectivity,” It will be sufficient to analyze just one of these measurements—namely, “political experience.” Political experience is defined by two criteria—participation in institutions and elections (ibid., 16), but they cannot cover all the aspects of political experience.

Possessing only one of the indicators of political experience does not, by itself, mean that the respondent/candidate is politically unqualified (‘not able’). A person can remain outside of institutional life and election campaigns for objective and/or flagrant political reasons and, precisely thereby, be in an impartial position for wiser political conclusions than through a simple, wholehearted devotion to political turmoil. Besides, if an element of each capital species can be productive in building all the other types, why it is not possible to ascribe political experience to any of the seven capital species? The problem of measurement is an empirical one but theory is needed to say which of the observable indicators are relevant. As Hegel puts it, “which determinations are brought out depends on what each person just finds in his own immediate, contingent idea” (Hegel 2002, 74-5). And this immediately puts an end to the “empirical virtuousness” of knowledge.

(2) States of political capital

Tönnies differentiates three “aggregate states” of public opinion—gaseous, fluid, and solid (Splichal and Hardt 2000, 137-138). Much later, Bourdieu differentiates three states of cultural capital: (i) embodied (the “long-lasting dispositions of the mind and body”), (ii) objectified (cultural goods - pictures, books, dictionaries, instruments, machines, etc.), and (iii) institutionalized (Bourdieu 1997, 47). These parallel classifications of Tönnies and Bourdieu inspire the following differentiation of three states of political capital: (i) 'Gaseous state' refers to an opinion exemplified by a certain body i.e., "embodied capital"; (ii) A 'fluid state' of political capital appears when opinions about politicians, organizations, and institutions begin to strive for public expression. 'Fluid' political capital originates from and serves permanent interactions between politicians and publics. This state of political capital finds expression in political speeches, slogans, programs, discussions, theories, and so on; (iii) 'Solid' is political capital which begins to crystallize in certain institutions. Although this classification as based on only three possible states simplifies political capital, it is complex enough to warn against generalizations based on a particular state of political capital.

(3) Types of political capital

Some typologies in the literature emphasize different elements and functions of political capital. Birner and Wittmer distinguish two types of political capital: (i) *instrumental*, which denominates “the private perspective,” i.e., the resources which an individual or a group can use “to influence policy formation processes and realize outcomes” (2000, 6). [As sources of such resources, Thoday (2005, J3) specifies education, money, status and social capital.]; and, (ii) *structural*, which denominates “the public perspective”, i.e. “the structural variables of the political system” which condition the accumulation and effectiveness of instrumental political capital (Birner and Wittmer 2000, 6).

Remarkably, structural political capital is not confined to positive features such as democratic political institutions, political openness, civil rights, but also includes “perverse political capital” as, for example, when connected with institutions of repression (ibid.). The “informal institutions of governance” play a similar role in Thoday's structural political capital (2005, J3).

Later on in their work, Birner and Wittmer present structural political capital as characterized by (i) common variables, such as political party system, electoral system, freedom of press, (ii) specific variables, such as possibilities to politicize forestry or watershed issues nationwide, and (iii) variables presenting the “perverse political capital” (e.g., “money politics,” vote buying).

Most of these variables are repeated by the variables which represent instrumental capital—lobbying political and administrative decision makers, electoral leverage, access to the press, and international resources that can be used in national political process (Birner and Wittmer 2000, 20). All of these variables, however, give the impression of an open-ended list. It is not always possible to distinguish which variables belong to which type of political capital. What is, for instance, ‘freedom of press’ or ‘the influence of lobbyism’ (structural capital) without ‘access to press’ or ‘lobbying by’ political and administrative decision makers (instrumental capital)? These observations confirm that individual and public perspectives are two sides of the same coin and the line between them is relative.

The “key dimensions and variables of political capital”, offered by Hickey (2005, 73), elicit similar conclusions. Based on Birner and Wittner (2000: 20, 24), Booth and Richard (1998), and Baumann (2000), these variables seem more comprehensive but, nevertheless, some important variables such as the “political party system” or “electoral leverage” are missing. And, again, the impression of an open-ended list of variables persists. This is due to the fear of transcending the limits of one’s own research tasks and the lack of generally acknowledged limits in political theory.

Finally, it is worth mentioning López's promising division between two interdependent forms of political capital—reputational (based on institutional position) and representative (based on public support). Reputational capital determines the legislator's "standing with voters and other unorganized interests” such as “his political party affiliation, voting record, campaign platform, and name recognition” (López 2002, 211, 214). Representative capital is “the vector of parliamentary rights and legislator attributes that determines productivity in influencing a policy” such as committee assignments, seniority within those committees, logrolling and lobbying contacts, law-making acumen, and political wiles (ibid.).

c. Generating Political Capital

The generation of new political capital is important in order to explain how some politically neutral persons, initiatives, events, and ideas attain political significance and how political responsibility, culture, and ability for political renewal of a society accumulates. It is, however, easier to conceive of the generation of political capital from scratch in theory, rather than in practice, where each political story has a political prehistory. Political activities of individuals and groups from the present and past are linked within political capital. For instance, “people who don't hold political office (lobbyists, for example) can earn political capital through trading with politicians” (Frozen North 2005). This trade, however, is preceded by a long-lasting history of political institutions and the development of lobbying as a mediator between these institutions and the private sector.

When the question is about accumulation of political capital based on already accumulated political capital, this process includes both the generation of new political capital and the distribution of already accumulated political capital, regardless of the awareness or lack of awareness of this process by participants. Even members of US Congress have different ideas about where the political capital of the American president comes from—whether from the margin of electoral victory, the public approval of legislative successes, the risks he takes in office, the solidarity between a president and his political party, and/or “minor things such as courtesy calls to members of Congress” (Vater 2001, 166).

In fact, the views on the different sources of political capital follow from the different approaches to political capital:

(1) Feldmann applies the situational approach to comment on why the White House promotes the image of a president who wants more dialogue and consultation as a way to restore his political capital, as when Bush heads into his “sixth year in office, with his store of *political capital* running low and next fall's midterm elections looming large” (Feldmann 2006).

(2) The institutional approach informs the recommendation of Gruger to include “former antagonists in a consensus-building process” in order to create “additional political capital for the group.” The reason is that the consensus-building process may “look like the best game” and that this will better induce “the former sceptics” and “crucial external actors” to join the group or, at least, to take it seriously (Gruger 1994, 22). By the same token, trading political capital can increase the total political capital for both sides (Frozen North 2005).

(3) Political capital, accumulated through the support of the public, outlines the mainstream growth of political capital. That is why a president elected by a bare majority, like Bush, is well-advised to engage in a give-and-take to build coalitions and to listen to voices outside his inner circle of loyal supporters (*Editorial/Opinion*. 2005). Another suggestion is to regain part of *people's support* by recasting “the debate between left and right” (Neal 2005). Groups “can harness the political resources of the public-at-large to their own” by educating and appealing to the general public (Gruger 1994, 22). Whatever the selected means, the final aim should be to refresh the sense of political representation.

(4) The role of social networks in generating political capital is embedded in the thesis of Booth and Richard (2007, 8) that “political capital may arise from social capital.” They comment on how the social context shapes political capital: “smaller and more intimate communities . . . contribute to higher levels of within-system mobilization and institutional support, while larger cities contribute to protest, and support for confrontation” (*ibid.*, 23, 27). The mechanisms of these dependencies, however, remain an elusive issue and could be explained from different theoretical bases.

(5) Education as a source of political capital should be understood largely as a learning process based on schools and universities, social and political practices, and the political legacy of the past (embodied and objectified state of political capital). Schools and universities generate political capital as institutions which “officially determine and guarantee rank” and provide a means of relevant “cultural transmission” (Bourdieu 1989, 21; 2000, 13, 23). Political legacy as an effective source of capital has two basic aspects—the legacy of one's own actions and the legacy of somebody else's actions. For instance, the political capital of former President Bush

stemmed partly from political like-mindedness between himself and Reagan (Dennis et al., 2006, 347).

(6) López treats reputational and representative capital as equally important but, in fact, reputational capital simply mediates and serves the increase of representative capital: “the legislator-entrepreneur constantly seeks out opportunities to invest reputational capital toward the production of representative capital, which in turn will increase reputational capital again, all in order to provide net transfers and win reelection” (López 2002, 219). Voting closer to constituents’ preferences is a kind of bid for a consolation prize when there are no prospects of increasing representative capital from such voting (Ibid., 212, 225). Such instrumental logic most likely determines much of the legislator’s behavior in practice. The greatest problem is not how to better measure this behavior but how this behavior fits within democratic principles. It remains unclear whether a legislator can be something other than an “entrepreneur” and, if so, how the interdependence between representative and reputational capital could then be described.

Many other authors avoid such conceptual difficulties by putting together different sources of political capital more eclectically. This finds explicit expression in Wikipedia (2010): “A politician gains political capital by virtue of his or her position, and also by pursuing popular policies, achieving success with initiatives, performing favors for other politicians, etc.”

d. Spending Political Capital

Generating and spending political capital are interrelated and relative concepts. In some aspects they differ while in others, they overlap. Many consider the spending of political capital in general terms, as a way to preserve it (Wikipedia 2010; Hold Fast 2009; Frozen North 2005). In dozens of interviews during the 2000 campaign, then President Bush pointed out as his father’s political error, not cashing in his chips after the Gulf War because political capital “must be quickly turned into tangible achievements or else it becomes worthless”² (USA Today 2002).

Preservation of political capital, however, can mean different things, and the last and least important is keeping the capital unchanged. Often a politician accumulates political capital by spending previously accumulated capital, i.e., spending is a type of investment. This leads Suellentrop (2004) to retort to Bush’s intention to spend his political capital: “You don’t spend capital. You invest it.” This criticism itself is not immune to its own critics. Even when you invest capital, you can also spend it. Such are the cases when a politician fails to promote unpopular policies (Wikipedia 2010; Vater 2001, 166; Frozen North 2005) or solve dangerous problems. From the point of view of the people, these complicated and conflicting processes look simple: “When the people get tired of supporting the President and his plans, it is said that he ‘spent’ his Political Capital” (Allexperts 2008). This indigenous attitude hints at how political capital functions in practice.

² This family legacy reveals the deepest psychological ground of Bush’s obsession with the idea of capital.

3. Usage of Political Capital

a. Measuring Political Capital

The practical use of political capital has two aspects: *objective*, regarding the role of political capital in political processes and *subjective*, regarding the comprehension of the role of political capital by practitioners and theoreticians of politics. The contention that there is not "any objective use of a subjective measure like 'political capital' " (Hold Fast 2009) completely confuses causes with consequences. This misleading impression is due to the elusive relational and symbolic nature of political capital which makes it difficult to measure by single one-dimensional measures such as money, number of votes, time in power, and so on.

More complicated is the approach of Casey where different kind of resources can serve as political capital in the field of a political market (Casey 2008, 15). It is not clear, however, how best to define an element prior to, or outside of, its respective market and a market prior to, or outside of, the profile of the elements involved in it. This vicious circle illustrates perfectly the difficulties in measuring political capital. Casey tries to facilitate political capital measurement by dividing this task into the traditional three levels—individual, collective and institutional capital (Casey 2008, 10). This division however, elides the problem of the interdependencies between these levels.

Kennedy's criteria for success include: (i) power and control "vested in community members"; the number of people who have moved "from being an object of planning to being a subject"; (ii) ability of people involved in the planning process to replicate their achievements in other situations" and, (iii) "movement towards realizing values of equity and inclusion" (Kennedy, 1996). These criteria could also be treated as indicators for building political capital (Turner 1999, 21-22). Similar ideas underpin Sørensen and Torfing's suggestion to measure political capital by "the level of endowment, empowerment and the nature of the political identities of the citizens" (Sørensen and Torfing 2003, 625). All these attempts reveal important aspects of political capital of citizens but do not elucidate the political capital of groups, organizations and institutions.

For more than a decade, Booth and Richard (1998, 2007, 2008) have developed a detailed scale of variables for measuring political capital. These variables cover two major areas—political participation and political attitudes towards democratic norms and national institutions (Richard and Booth 2008, 5-6). That is, these variables try to exhaust the manifestations of political capital by encompassing both positive and negative aspects of political behavior and attitudes. This comprehensive approach generates, nevertheless, some weak points. There are no clear criteria as to how the offered variables might exhaust the above-mentioned areas. There is also no sense of different possible mechanisms of accumulation of political capital in democratic and non-democratic settings. It is not clear who or what exactly accumulates political capital—citizens or institutions. For instance, when Cavanaugh (2000, 23) appeals to "health care for all, forgiveness of foreign debts, food for the world, assistance for those who cannot afford a home of their own..." under the title, "Christian Political Capital," there is no indication of who exactly would accumulate this capital—the beneficent and/or benefactors. The answers to all these questions cannot come directly from the accumulation of political capital in practice. This task requires the "filter" of a theoretically sound model of political process.

b. Reducing Poverty and Other Related Problems

(1) State of the problem

The policy of reducing poverty is the only area of currently systematic conceptualization and application of 'political capital.' At the end of the 1990s, Rakodi concludes that "access to political capital is rarely addressed as an integral part of poverty reduction policy" (Rakodi 1999, 334). In 2002, political capital is already recognized as "one potential remedy to the limited use of political analysis in studies of development and poverty" (Chronic Poverty Research Centre 2002) along with "the organisational forms, relationships and processes specifically developed by the poor to increase their capacity to escape from poverty" (McLeod 2003, 4).

Bauman differentiates analytical and practical arguments in favor of including political capital in the sustainable livelihoods (SL) framework. From an analytical point of view, political capital: (i) helps the poor to access their rights as politically defended claims and assets; (ii) allows them to identify the constraints which "place the State in a weak position, with regards to the implementation of new policies and the protection and enforcement of rights"; (iii) makes transparent "political negotiation over rights"; (iv) facilitates understanding of the real impact of structures and processes on sustainable livelihoods; (v) favors "a comparison between policies in different political settlements"; and (vi) contributes to understanding transition costs in changing institutions. From a practical point of view, political capital: (i) does not allow 'politics and power' to be left as exogenous to the SL framework; and (ii) theoretically links the findings from the analysis "into some projects in real-time" (Baumann 2000, 21-23).

Additionally, political capital is used to: (i) analyse "powerlessness at several levels that are important for understanding poverty" (Booth et al. 1998, xxii); (ii) link individuals/groups to power structures "outside the locality" (Baumann 2000, 20); (iii) provide influence for gaining access to entitlements available through policies, institutions and processes, or to deny others access to them (Baumann and Sinha 2001, 3); (iv) convey "demands to government and shapes the attitudinal constraints within which a regime must operate" (Booth and Richard 2007, 27); and (v) provide "psychological strength and confidence to work, which can enable to improve livelihoods" (Timalsina 2007, 85).

(2) Defects of a political capital approach to reducing poverty

Although benevolent, attempts to reduce poverty by using the concept of political capital are questionable:

(i) The large potential and range or reach of political capital as a concept contradicts its reduction to merely a tool/concept for eliminating poverty. This paradox yields split views on from where a solution should come. For Kennedy (1996), a group can "empower itself by increasing its ability to achieve its own interests", i.e. the solution is in the hand of the needy. For Baumann (2000, 20), "if politics is recognized as 'playing a fundamental role' in causing poverty, then it cannot be left out of a framework that has as its objective an understanding of poverty" i.e. the solution should come "from above". Each of these opinions holds a part of the truth but together they do not hold the whole truth because many fundamental factors are not included.

(ii) An extreme predilection for comprehensiveness often results in attempts to classify all of the assets that can improve the situation of the poor. Madell groups these assets into seven types of capital—human, social, political, economic, financial, physical, and natural (Madell 2007, 4). The problem is that some of these assets (pre)determine the effectiveness of others. For instance,

political capital makes many of the other types of assets work and, in this sense, the other assets likewise turn into "political capital".

(iii) The biggest practical question regards whether the problems of the poor can be solved by systematizing the resources/factors that are seen only on an individual level and from an everyday life perspective. In a restricted sense, an individual can really gain some political advantages with economic importance only if she/he mobilizes every segment of her/his personal capabilities, relatives, connections, etc. The overall problems of the poor, however, are not individual and cannot be solved individually.

A networks approach to political capital offers a solution to the problem of poverty within the existing social disparities and, as a result, indicates that positive effects as a whole cannot exceed some limited improvements on an individual level. For the same reason, legal empowerment as a conceptual and operational tool in poverty eradication (Banik 2009) can play only a subsidiary role as a trigger for larger political mechanisms. Attempts to reduce poverty by mobilizing these resources, if honest, may appear to try to reach unattainable goals. The best these attempts can do is to improve some aspect in a single case and to begin again from scratch in the next case. Besides, all these efforts remain more or less beyond public control. As a result, "more voluntaristic approaches . . . dominate discussions of political agency amongst poor people" (Hickey 2009, 146).

The problems of the poor stem from basic parameters of society which determine the lower economic, political, cultural, and/or educational status of the poor. In this context, it is much more effective if the poor lean toward efforts to improve their situation which equalize them with other social groups. For instance, all people are equal as citizens, voters, bearers of human rights, etc. To profit better from such universal "memberships," however, the poor have to act as a group (traditionally led by political parties, movements, trade-unions or other organizations) when appealing for policies to treat everyone fairly in distributing relief funds, in providing access to the services of the state, etc.

(iv) The concept of political capital as an auspicious mechanism for tackling poverty in developing countries relies mainly on the development of interpersonal networks among the poor themselves. From a micro-perspective, these networks have a certain potential, which is to provide a sustainable livelihood by constituting the poor as a group and facilitating their contacts with political and administrative authorities. For instance, political capital helps such groups "to forge sustainable agreements" (Gruger 1994, 4). From a macro-perspective, however, this potential is limited and cannot be 'sustainable.' It is naive to say that some people are rich and others are poor because the former have succeeded earlier in building prospective networks while the latter have not.

Interpersonal networks affect only the final redistribution of the global results of production and distribution of wealth. Not by chance, the social effect of these relations is ambiguous. Political capital's networks easily transform into clientelism. For instance, in Jamaica, political capital "is primarily a patron-client relationship and individuals are helped rather than the communities" (Knight 2006, 3). What is worse, clientelism has often been "the only effective means of giving a democratic voice" to the demands of the poor or other people excluded from equal citizenship (Mushtaq Khan, 1998:16). This creates a context for factional competition which "invariably produces unequal results with the spoils being far greater for those at the top of the factional pyramid than for the mass of clients at the bottom" (ibid.). In sum, clientelism enables propertied classes to legitimate their political dominance (Szeftel 2000, 435).

Maximizing social capital “may not always be beneficial” (Project report 2005,12). It is without theoretical grounding to treat social capital “as an almost unmitigated public good” and corruption as “a completely unmitigated public bad” (Smart and Hsu 2008, 167, 185). Instead, an effective understanding of these phenomena “requires us to remember the continuity between the two” and “demands us to be conscious” when prognosticating the longer-term effects of social capital and corruption (ibid., 186). Informal networks, however, easily transform into political capital, “which leads to the fragmentation and demobilization of informal occupational interests in favour of the machinations of more powerful political forces” (Meagher 2006, 27). Sørensen and Torfing (2003, 631-2) mention that network politics entails both an access and an exclusion problem which can both benefit and threaten democracy.

(3) Political capital of the rich

The idea that mobilization of political capital of the poor is their salutary road misses that this mobilization changes the balance of power in society and provokes a relevant counterreaction of the other groups. Generally, the people “must themselves be able to generate and use sufficient political capital if they are to access and convert other capital assets—especially natural capital—to pursue livelihood strategies” (Baumann and Sinha 2001, 3). This ability predetermines the effectiveness of political capital of lower status groups “as a way to resist their exclusion and to influence the political arena” (Magno 2008, 122-3). Additionally, the effectiveness of political capital depends on traditions in legal and illegal activities, sets of legitimate ways for political participation, admissible levels of network politics, political capital that all groups can mobilize based on their economic resources, etc. There is also differential access to political assets between urban and rural areas as, for instance, in Nepal (Timalsina 2007, 84).

Hickey reasonably qualifies as “rather voluntaristic” the understanding that “all individuals and groups might be able to obtain the same levels of assets and outcomes from a similar range of strategic activities” (Hickey 2009, 148). Schugurensky notices that the unequal distribution of political capital depends upon the context of “broader structures of domination and interlocking oppressions” and cannot ignore the role of class, gender, race and other inequalities (2000, 10). Network power is greater for the following: “the better educated; those in paid employment; those in higher status occupations; those who are active in voluntary associations; those with a spouse or a partner; those with children; those in mid-life; men; and native-born individuals” (Project report 2005, 11). Moreover, upper status groups tend to inherit political capital “through certain types and high levels of education, social networks, economic strength, etc.” (Magno 2008, 122). Finally, the state machine as a whole has regularly been used by incumbent politicians against the political capital of protesting peoples.

The levels of political capital and the powerful networks that can mobilize the rich are among the first factors that bring in question the expected positive effect of the political capital of the poor. To compare the potentials of political capital of the poor/poorer with that of the rich/richer), we have to consider the scale and nature of resources the two groups possess, some basic parameters of the political order, their educational status, etc. Besides, the better-off groups and individuals are stronger in exercising illicit political power which “diminishes the associational activity by the poor” and keeps them “in a relationship of subservience” (Baumann and Sinha 2001, 3-4). Therefore, the lasting salutary road for the poor is to keep to their democratic rights and democratic tools which help to protect them. Respectively, the effective conceptualization and

usage of political capital is, essentially, a (re)conceptualization of democracy and its mechanisms.

(4) Democratic anchorage

The above-mentioned arguments testify to a dormant opposition between academic approaches to understanding political capital and democratic mechanisms. Governance networks: (i) do not ensure “an equal distribution of influence among the network participants”; (ii) do seriously limit transparency in the decision making process due to their “informal and mutable character”; (iii) distribute influence “according to the ability of the individual actors to convince other actors in the governance network that they possess indispensable resources”; (iv) are dominated by “people who have central positions in local organizations” which increases the gap between members and leaders in the organizations; and (v) aggravate “the lack of equality in the public participation patterns.” In sum, “those who already have a considerable amount of political capital increase it even further by virtue of their participation in governance networks” (Sørensen and Torfing 2003, 632-3). Those who are excluded from the networks “are not given the same potential to develop their resources and capacities.” (Ibid., 633)

In this context, Sørensen and Torfing offer to improve the democratic performance of governance networks by enhancing their anchorage “in elected politicians, the membership basis of the participating groups and organizations, a territorially defined citizenry and a democratic grammar of conduct” (Sørensen and Torfing 2005, 196, 201). In the same vein, Hickey recommends “closer links with unions, political parties, and social and popular movements. Movements that link local action with national level lobbying are well positioned to make the links between instrumental and structural political capital” (Hickey 2005, 79).

CONCLUSION

The conflict between the sustainable use of the term “political capital” and its conceptual indeterminacy finds expression in the lack of significant trends towards the understanding of its most important aspects. Since the 1930s, characteristics which qualify the nature of political capital have been occurring more frequently. However, the offered content analysis shows that the understanding of the essence of political capital and its usages take different directions. As a result, political capital is often interpreted in isolation from the processes of its accumulation; certain aspects of political capital can more easily be extracted and opposed to other isolated aspects depending on the practical needs. It serves often as a loose conceptual cover for various research priorities, which tends to relieve the researcher of any “needless” theoretical burden. This explains why ‘political capital’ as an entry is not found in many handbooks or dictionaries of political sciences (Birner and Wittmer 2000, 4). Empirical arguments, however, freed from the ‘burden’ of ‘ideal’ concepts, are not more than rungs of a ladder left up in the air.

An auspicious conceptualization of the term ‘political capital’ cannot succeed if it remains limited by the problems and needs of reducing poverty in developing countries. These efforts not only artificially narrow the scope of political capital but rely themselves on artificial presumptions, such as that (i) public policy is the main tool for improving economic prosperity of a group; (ii) the rich rely only on the official power mechanisms; and that (iii) the poor make up for the missing wealth by building influential (informal) networks.

Public policy can transmogrify economic status of a group only in a totalitarian system where political power is “the primordial principle of differentiation” (Bourdieu 1998, 16). The political capital of the poor cannot compensate for the more influential and more extensive political capital which mobilizes the rich and the well-appointed or positioned. What is worse, such a rivalry in building political networks would only open a Pandora’s box, i.e. of the usage of public and non-public, legal and illegal, common and personal resources in all possible ways. As a result, the rich would build even more and more powerful networks.

Besides, a positive effect can last only so long as the people involved do not include politicians and officials who tend to personalize their duties and functions. The desired political effect depends upon the moral choices of the people involved. The analysis here exposes the danger that political capital can be used for personal gains once political subjects have established full control over its potential/resources. This fact derives inspiration from and supports the widespread idea that politics is a profitable game where chance plays a significant role. Thus, political capital is not perceived as an expected, credited return, but, rather, like an opportunity politicians may use at their discretion and which is often described in gambling terms. This negative effect of political capital is higher when the political subjects of political capital involve less people. An increased number of people limits the possibility of misusing and/or abusing the political capital and strengthens the positive expectations of society.

Ironically, the political capital approach aims to compensate for a democratic deficit by using the same means (personalization of public duties and functions) which usually creates a democratic deficit. The poor commit political suicide if they ignore the official democratic mechanisms. Hence, the attempts to neutralize the negative aspects of political capital networks and to improve the prospects for reducing poverty and similar problems of lower status groups, by anchoring political capital in the larger democratic context, institutions, subjects and goals. Unfortunately, the feasibility of a complete harmony between the networks governance and democratic governance is questionable. Democratic anchoring cannot avoid a fundamental incompatibility between network governance, based on (inter)personal relations and the principles of democracy, including impersonality, neutrality, and impartiality of public duties and functions. Hence, the positive effects of a political capital approach within democracy are limited in scope and of short duration.

However, behind this amorphous picture this research identifies the real germ for a future conceptualization of the term 'political capital' which includes those aspects most related to the symbolic nature of political capital. Not by chance, when the sources of political capital are listed as real actions and factors, this symbolic nature is less apparent. And vice versa, the dominant sources of political capital are various actions with symbolic dimensions, dominated by the identification of its subject with favorable public trends, generally accepted traditions, inspiring historical events, etc. All of these bear a positive charge to the public and, on the other hand, distinguish this subject from the existing negative ideological, cultural or religious traditions. In turn, the political capital of opponents can be "drained" by identifying the opponent with negative social trends, events, etc. The origin of political capital gained through institutional and other types of maneuvers that evoke expectations for positive practical results, or which expand political participation, is also symbolic, as is capital gained through populist moves positively accepted by the public.

Symbolic nature of political capital meets the positive expectations of the general public related to its political involvement, perspectives, etc. The guarantees to the public that political subjects

can give in return for political capital credits include personal engagements in citizens' problems (the institutional position held is not per se such a guarantee) and identification with events, traditions, etc. which unify the community as a whole. Therefore, political capital derives directly or indirectly from the general public. Actually, it represents that very energy of the people given to politicians for their explicit and implicit promises to be their real representatives. In this context, the use of political capital towards the interests of the general public is more than expected; it is mandated.

Historically, democratization has largely opened access to political process and made it possible to speak of 'political capital' of each social group, including the poor. In this sense, democracy not only "needs a population with a high level of political capital" (Sørensen and Torfing 2003, 623) but tends to endow the whole population with such capital. This does not mean that the poor have the same political capital as the rich, but, rather, that democratic process permanently generates political capital which has been distributed and redistributed between social groups. This generative aspect of political capital outlines the parameters of a possible and necessary conceptualization of the term "political capital" which suits the very nature and scope of modern democracy. Such a comprehensive conceptualization of the term 'political capital' presumes and is the final result of the relationship between political representatives and their publics and is generically connected with democratic mechanisms.

This conclusion conforms to the results of content analysis which outline three major fields of the use of political capital: (i) extending the capabilities of community, (ii) strengthening control over community, and (iii) making considerable private gains. These fields are in permanent rotation in political history. The selfish use of political capital in the third field prepares involuntarily the preconditions for accumulation of new political capital by new or renewed political players, i.e., is the necessary precondition for transferring the main actions of political capital again within the first field listed above. Thus, the truth about the nature, the origin and the use of political capital is hidden in the interdependencies between politicians and their publics/constituencies.

Therefore, political capital is not an abstract concept yet "to be contextualized" (Schugurensky 2000, 5). It is a genuine concept that can be applied both specifically and broadly to clarify a diverse range of areas and meanings: (i) the permanent merging into one another between different kinds of political resources, (ii) the uses and abuses of these resources, (iii) the common denominator of democratic practices, and (iv) the role of democratic politics in society. In this manner, as a concept indicating democratic relationships and resources, political capital could deserve its place among the legitimate concepts of democratic theory.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Abdullah, Yuvaci. 2007. [National Level Determinants of 'Political Capital' in the European Parliament](#). *Conference Papers*. Northeastern Political Science Association, 1.

Agger, Annika and Karl Löfgren. 2008. Democratic Assessment of Collaborative Planning Processes. *Planning Theory*, Vol 7(2): 145–164.

Allexperts. 2008. Question and answer service on the net: <http://en.allexperts.com/q/Current-Events-U-3152/2008/4/political-capital.htm>. Accessed on 1 November, 2010 at 12.04 PM.

Banik, Dan. 2009. Legal Empowerment as a Conceptual and Operational Tool in Poverty Eradication. *Hague Journal on the Rule of Law*, 1: 117–131.

Baumann, Pari and Subir Sinha. 2001. Linking Development with Democratic Processes in India: Political Capital and Sustainable Livelihoods Analysis. *Natural Resource Perspectives*. Number 68, June, 1-4.

Baumann, Pari. 2000. Sustainable Livelihoods and Political Capital: Arguments and Evidence from Decentralisation and Natural Resource Management in India. October. *Working Paper 136*. London: Overseas Development Institute.

Bernosky de Flores, Catherine H. 2010. A Conceptual Framework for the Study of Social Capital in New Destination Immigrant Communities. *Journal of Transcultural Nursing* 21(3), 205-211.

Birner, Regina and Heidi Wittmer. 2010. Converting Social Capital into Political Capital: How do local communities gain political influence? A theoretical approach and empirical evidence from Thailand and Columbia. Paper submitted to the *8th Biennial Conference of the International Association for the Study of Common Property (IASCP)*, 1-29.

Blumentritt, Tim, Kathleen Rehbein. 2008. The Political Capital of Foreign Subsidiaries: An Exploratory Model. *Business & Society*. Volume 47 Number 2, June, 242-263.

Booth, David Jeremy Holland, Jesko Hentschel, Peter Lanjouw, Alicia Herbert. 1998. Participation and Combined Methods in African Poverty Assessment: Renewing the Agenda. Report commissioned by the UK Department for International Development for the Working Group on Poverty and Social Policy, Special Program of Assistance for Africa. February.

Booth, John A., and Patricia Bayer Richard. 2007. Social and Political Capital in Latin American Democracies. In *Midwest Political Science Association*. Chicago, IL.

Booth, John A. and Patricia Bayer Richard. 1998. Civil Society, Political Capital, and Democratization in Central America. *The Journal of Politics*. Vol. 60, No. 3 (August), 780-800.

Bourdieu, Pierre. 1998. *Practical Reason: on the Theory of Action*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Bourdieu, Pierre. 1997. The Forms of Capital. In [A. H. Halsey](#), [Hugh Lauder](#), [Phillip Brown](#), [Amy Stuart](#) (eds.) *Education: Culture, Economy, and Society*. Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 46-58.

Bourdieu, Pierre. 1991. Political Representation: Elements for a Theory of the Political Field. In *Language and Symbolic Power*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 171-202.

Bourdieu, Pierre. 1989. Social Space and Symbolic Power. *Sociological Theory*, Vol. 7, No. 1 (Spring, 1989), 14-25.

Casey, Kimberly L. 2008. Defining Political Capital: A Reconsideration of Bourdieu's Interconvertibility Theory. *Critique: a Worldwide Student Journal of Politics*. Available at: <http://lilt.ilstu.edu/critique/archives-%20coding/spring%202008.htm>.

Chronic Poverty Research Centre. 2002. Political Capital. Manchester: Available at: <http://www.chronicpoverty.org/page/toolbox-political-capital>. Last visited on 3 November, 2010, 19.36 h.

Dennis, Michael R. Karen Ridder, and Adrienne D. Kunkel. 2006. Grief, Glory, and Political Capital in the Capitol: Presidents Eulogizing Presidents. *Death Studies*. 30, 325-49.

Devas, Nick. 2002. Urban Livelihoods – Issues for Urban Governance and Management. In Rakodi C., Lloyd-Jones T. (eds.). *Urban Livelihoods: A People-Centred Approach to Reducing Poverty*. London; Sterling, VA: Earthscan Publications.

Editorial/Opinion. 2005. A year of setbacks costs Bush his political capital. USA Today. November 04.

Feldmann, Linda. 2006. **To Shore Up Political Capital, Bush Reaches Out to Democrats**, *Christian Science Monitor*. Vol. 98, Issue 35.

Florio, David H. 1982. Education's New Political Capital. *Educational Researcher*, Vol. 11, No. 10 (December), 19-20.

Frozen North. 2005. Political Capital: <http://www.frozenorth.org/C492329050/E1041295304/index.html>. Accessed on 1 November, 2010 at 00.52 AM.

Gruger, Kudith. 1994. Coordinating Growth Management through Consensus-Building: Incentives and the Generation of Social, Intellectual, and Political Capital. *Working Paper 617*. University of California at Berkeley: Institute of Urban and Regional Development.

Hanifan L. J. 1916. New Possibilities in Education. *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol. 67, (Sep., 1916), 130-8.

Healey et al.. 1999. Institutionslist Analysis, Communicative Planning and Shaping Places. *Journal of Planning Education and Research*, 19 (2), 111-21.

Hegel, G. W. F. 2002. *Science of Logic*. London: Routledge. pp. 74-5.

Hickey, Sam. 2009. The return of politics in development studies (II): capturing the political? *Progress in Development Studies*, 9, 2, 141-52.

Hickey, Sam. 2005. Political Capital, Poverty and Livelihoods in Africa: The Politics of Influencing Policy. In Nelson, N. and S. Jones (eds.) **Practitioners and Poverty Alleviation: Influencing Urban Poverty Policy**. London: IT Publications, 71-84.

Hold Fast (a blog by Matt Browner Hamlin).2009. On Political Capital: <http://holdfastblog.com/2009/02/09/on-political-capital/>. Accessed on 1 November, 2010 at 01.14 AM.

Kavanaugh, John F. 2000. Christian Political Capital: 'When you have a party, invite the poor'. *America*. 26 August, 23.

Kennedy, Marie.1996. Transformative Community Planning: Empowerment through Community Development. Paper prepared for the 1996 Planners Network Conference, "Renewing Hope, Restoring Vision: Progressive Planning in Our Communities." Available at: <http://www.plannersnetwork.org/publications/combased.htm>

Knight, Pauline. 2006. Increasing Social and Political Capital: In Low-Income Communities. National Housing Trust 30th Anniversary Conference, Kingston, Jamaica.

Lee, Sam Youl, M. Jae Moon, and Sung Deuk Hahm. 2010. Dual Faces of Ministerial Leadership in South Korea: Does Political Responsiveness or Administrative Responsibility Enhance Perceived Ministerial Performance? *Administration & Society*. 42(1S), 77S–101S.

Light, Paul C. 1983. *The President's Agenda: Domestic Policy Choice from Kennedy to Carter*. Baltimor, Mariland: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Liu, Zhiqiang. 2003. Impact and Determinants of Investment in Human and Political Capital in China. *Economic Development and Cultural Change*. Vol. 51, No. 4 (Jul.), pp. 823-849.

López, E. J. 2002. The Legislator as Political Entrepreneur: Investment in Political Capital. *The Review of Austrian Economics*, 15:2/3, 211–28.

Macaulay, T. B. 2008. *The History of England from the Accession of James II*. Vol. V. Bibliobazaar, LLC. P.

Madell C. 2007. *Achieving Sustainable Livelihoods in Townships through Economic and Spatial Investment*. RSA National Treasury: Training for Township Renewal Initiative. Mowbray: MCA. October.

Magno, Cathryn. 2008. Refuge from crisis: Refugee women build political capital. *Globalisation, Societies and Education*. Vol. 6, No. 2, June, 119–30.

Mahon, J. and R. McGowan. 1996. Industry as a Player in the Political and Social Arena: Defining the Competitive Environment. Quorum, Westport, CT.

March, G. J. and Olsen, J. P. 1995. *Democratic Governance*. New York: Free Press.

McGinn, Noel & Susan Street. 1984. Has Mexican Education Generated Human or Political Capital? *Comparative Education*. Volume 20, No. 3, 323-38.

McLeod, Ruth. 2003. Guidelines for the Revision of Regulations for Urban Upgrading: Insights from the Federation Process. Pate prepared for the Regulatory Guidelines for Urban Upgrading Project Workshop, 22nd/23rd September.

Meagher, Kate. 2006. Social Capital, Social Liabilities, and Political Capital: Social Networks and Informal Manufacturing in Nigeria. *African Affairs*. Volume 105, Number 421, 553-82.

Nation. 1875. [Political "Capital"](#). Vol. 21 Issue 536, 224-5.

Neal, T. M. 2005. Political Capital Running on Low. *Washingtonpost.com*. October 7:
<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2005/10/06/AR2005100600571.html>

New York Times. 1918. Germans Courting Favor of Holland: Striving to Make Political Capital Out of Our Seizure of Dutch Ships. April 20.

New York Times. 1902. „Political capital”. July 15.

Piazza-Georgi, Barbara. 2002. The Role of Human and Social Capital in Growth: Extending Our Understanding. *Cambridge Journal of Economics*, 26, 461-79.

Project report. 2005. *Social Capital as a Public Policy Tool*. Canada: Policy Research Initiative. September.

Rakodi, Carole. 1999. A Capital Assets Framework for Analysing Household Livelihood Strategies: Implications for Policy. *Development Policy Review* Vol. 17, 315-42.

Raymo, James M. and Yu Xie. 2000. Income of the Urban Elderly in Postreform China: Political Capital, Human Capital, and the State. *Social Science Research* 29, 1-24.

Richard, Patricia Bayer and John A. Booth. 2008. Violence and Democratic Political Capital in Latin America and the Caribbean. Prepared for presentation at the *International Studies Association meeting*, San Francisco, March 29.

Safire, William. 2008. *Safire's Political Dictionary*. Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press.

Sartori, Giovanni. 1987. *The Theory of Democracy Revisited: Part I, The Contemporary Debate*. Chatham, NJ: Chatham House.

Schugurensky, Daniel. 2000. Citizenship Learning and Democratic Engagement: Political Capital Revisited. Paper presented at the *41st Annual Adult Education Research Conference*. Vancouver: AERC, June 2-4.

Shaffer, Brian and Amy J. Hillman. 2000. The Development of Business-Government Strategies by Diversified Firms. *Strategic Management Journal*, Vol. 21, No. 2 (February), 175-90.

Smart, Alan and Carolyn L. Hsu. 2008. Corruption of Social Capital? Tact and the Performance of *Guanxi* in Market Socialist China. In: Monique Nuijten and Gerhard Anders (eds.). *Corruption and the Secret of Law: a Legal Anthropological Perspective*. Farnham: Ashgate.

Smart, Alan. 2008. Social Capital. *Anthropologica*. Jul 1.
at: http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_7457/is_200807/ai_n32304813/

Schier, Steven E. 2009. *Panorama of a Presidency: How George W. Bush Acquired and Spent His Political Capital*. Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe.

Sørensen, E. and Torfing, J. 2005. The Democratic Anchorage of Governance Networks. *Scandinavian Political Studies*, 28 (3), 195-218.

Sørensen, Eva and Jacob Torfing. 2002. Network Politics, Political Capital, and Democracy. *International Journal of Public Administration*. Vol. 26, No. 6, 609–34.

Suellentrop C. 2004. America's New Political Capital: President Bush Infects Washington With His Favorite Buzzword. *Slate*. Posted on 30 November at: <http://www.slate.com/id/2110256/>.

Szeftel, M. 2000: Clientelism, Corruption and Catastrophe. *Review of African Political Economy* 27(85), 427–41.

Szücs, Stefan and Lars Strömberg. 2006. Political Capital and How It Grows. In: Stefan Szücs, Lars Strömberg (eds.). *Local Elites, Political Capital and Democratic Development: Governing Leaders in Seven European Countries*. Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften.

Timalsina, K. P. 2007. *Rural Urban Migration and Livelihood in the Informal Sector: A Study of Street Vendors of Kathmandu Metropolitan City, Nepal*. Master of Philosophy Thesis in Development Studies. Trondheim: Norwegian University of Science and Technology;

Thoday, Katharine. 2005. Political Capacity and Its Effects on Natural Resource Management. Natural Resources Systems Programme: Annex J of the Final Technical Report of project. School of Agricultural and Forest Sciences, University of Wales.

Turner, Robyne S. 1999. Entrepreneurial Neighborhood Initiatives: Political Capital in Community Development. *Economic Development Quarterly*. 13; 15.

Urban dictionary. 2006. <http://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=political%20capital>. Accessed on 1 November, 2010 at 11.56 A.M.

USA Today. 2002. ***Bush's Tax Cut Could End up Hurting His Political Capital***. 21 August.

Vather, D. 2001. Political Capital Is Bush's Most Precious Commodity on Hill. *CQ Weekly*. J 20.

Vincent, Joan. 1990. *Anthropology and Politics: Visions, Traditions, and Trends*. Tucson: University of Arizona Press.

Wikipedia. 2010. Political capital: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Political_capital. Accessed on 30 October, 2010, at 19.42.