

Social Capital and Natural Disasters:

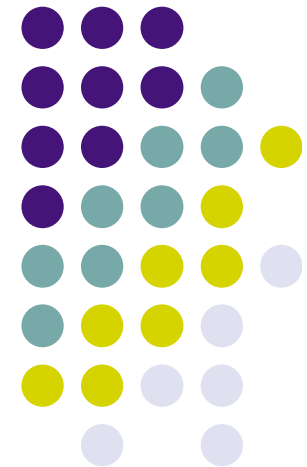
A Study in Western China

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Social Capital: the missing link?

- Recovery from disasters: Focus of *social science* studies on natural disasters
- Core questions:
 - Why did some affected communities/households recover quicker and better than others?
- Based on empirical data, this paper intends to show that
 - ...
 - Social capital plays an important role in people's recovery from disasters
 - Different levels and aspects of social capital influence the recovery in different ways
 - Thus; we need further studies on the relationship between social capital and recovery from natural disasters

What is Social Capital?

- Social Capital: A social structural resource
 - Micro-level social capital
 - *Resources embedded in personal networks, which enables actors to acquire more external social resources*
 - *Helps people to obtain information, knowledge and social support, thus is helpful for people to achieve higher social-economic status*
 - Macro-level social capital
 - *Features of social organization, such as networks, norms, and trust, that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit*
 - *Plays a crucial role in promoting economic performance, making democracy work, alleviating poverty and ensuring sustainable development*
- Research questions
 - What is the role of social capital in recovery from disasters? How does it work?
 - A comprehensive analytical framework consists of both micro and macro level social capital
 - The “institutional vacuum” in China during the period of social transition

Data



- This paper uses a sub-set of the data: including only people who lived in sample communities that experiences natural disaster during last year

- Monitoring the Social and Economic Development of Western China
- Conducted by NRCSTD and Fafo
- The survey covers:
 - 11 provinces in western China
 - 2,772 communities
 - 44,000 households
 - 167,000 person
- Multi- modules

● Demography	Education
● Labor force and migration	Health
● Housing and Infrastructure	Agriculture
● Household economy	
● Social network and social capital	
● Information about the community	

Research variables

- Dependent variables

- Formal and informal support (from government, NGO, etc, or from relatives, friends)
- Psychological health
- Self-estimation of the household's economic status
- Changes in the economic situation over the last year

- Independent variables

- Micro-level social capital
 - *Network size*
 - *Network density*
 - *Embedded resources in network*
- Macro-level social capital
 - *Trust*
 - *in institution*
 - *in strangers*
 - *in familiar people*
 - *Public participation*
 - *general*
 - *political*

- Control variables

- Economic situation of household, education, rural-urban, location

Profiles

- 47.3% of the sampled households live in communities affected by natural disasters last year
- 5% of the affected households received formal support, 17% received informal support
- 25% of the sampled individuals met mental problems
- 77% of the affected households seem to recover well from the disasters, while one third currently define themselves as “poor”
- The mean network size is approximately 26 persons, the mean network density (proportion of relatives) is 0.69
- High degree of trust in familiar people, and low degree of public participation

Results

- Impact on social support
 - *Micro social capital is very important, especially for informal support*
 - *Network density is negatively correlated to formal support, and positively correlated to informal support*
- Impact on psychological health
 - *Higher network density leads to better psychological health*
 - *Institutional trust and social participation is positively related to psychological health, while the trust in strangers and familiar people has negative impact*
- Impact on economic recovery
 - *Micro social capital, especially the network size, has an important impact*
 - *Higher network density seems to lead to worse economic recovery*
 - *Affected households in high-trust communities recover easier, whereas high levels of social participation seems to have a negative impact on recovery*

Conclusion and Discussion

- The important role of micro-level social capital in recovery from natural disasters supports the “social resource” theory
- Network structure, social capital and type of action
 - Networks with bigger size and less density improves the circulation of information and resources, thus they have a positive impact on instrumental actions
 - On the contrary, networks with smaller size and higher density (so-called “core networks”) could provide more informal support, and are better for expressive actions
- Trust, participation and recovery
 - Trust and participation do not necessarily lead to more resources. Rather, their main function is helping people to cooperate, hence make better use of existing resources
 - Higher trust in institution and strangers brought better economic recovery, which shows the importance of trust and cooperation for recovery from disasters
 - People in communities with higher level of public participation had worse economic recovery
 - Macro-level social capital has significant positive effects on psychological health
 - *High trust and participation → higher level social integration → better psychological health*



Thanks

