Johan Mellström
Ht 2014

Ethnic Diversity and Social Trust in Capetonian Townships

While the positive consequences of social capital on citizen behaviour and interaction with social, economic and political development are widely accepted and appreciated, the question of how social capital originates remain contested. One particularly lively debate continues to circulate around the implications of ethnic diversity for social capital and whether or not ethnical heterogeneity has negative correlation with social trust. Considering the multiethnic transition in virtually any modern society, this question becomes significant for policymakers within a wide array of fields, all across the world. Based on such premise, I would like to find out more about ethnic diversity and social trust by studying the causal mechanisms at play in one of the most heterogeneous countries in the world – South Africa.

Why South Africa?

Although South Africa is listed as one of the world most ethnically diverse countries, it continues to be subjugated by racial-space divisions from the Apartheid era. South Africa is in many ways a unique case and despite social restructuring processes commissioned by post-Apartheid governments to alter urban residential patterns - citizens' physical, social and economic landscapes maintain segregated (Kotze & Donaldson, 1997, Alesina et al. 2003). Small desegregation has been reported inside South African metropolitan cities, but other spatial space, such as the many townships outside the cities, remains ethnically homogenous (Naude, 2010; Hunter 2010). One exception is however the desegregated Capetonian township of Delft South, built by the government between 1996 and 2002, as one of the first official mixed townships and one of the first projects where desegregated housing programs explicitly were used for racial integration (Oldfield, 2003). This makes Delft South of major interest for political scientists and the entire discourse of social capital. I would like to combine both quantitative and qualitative methods to investigate the relationship between ethnic diversity and social trust in Capetonian townships. By deducting relevant theories from the literature on social capital, I would like to

create main hypotheses, and then conduct a regression analysis to test the correlation between the variables ethnic diversity and social trust. In order to trace the mechanisms at play however, I would have to combine my findings with a field study on micro-level in Delft South. I want to answer the following questions: What is the relationship between ethnic diversity and social trust in Capetonian Townships? How can causal mechanisms be explained in the desegregated township of Delft South?

Theories and Hypotheses

There has been much recent attention within the social capital literature on the effect of ethnic diversity on social trust. This research has however been far from coherent. As academic scholars have concluded on divergent implications of ethnical diversity on social capital, two main bodies of literature with diametrically opposed perspectives have emerged - the '*contact hypothesis*' and the '*conflict theory*'. While the former argues that ethnic diversity seem to have positive effects as it reduces ethnocentric attitudes and fosters inter-ethnic trust, the latter proclaims that ethnic diversity only fosters intra-ethnic trust and increases inter-ethnic distrust. However, on top of these two theories, Putnam (2007) has claimed support for a third option based on his findings in the United States. The '*constrict theory*' suggests that people residing in more ethnically diverse neighbourhoods not only decrease inter-ethnic trust, but also intra-ethnic trust. According to Putnam, there seems to exist a strong linear effect of ethnic diversity on social trust when controlling for other variables. His conclusion is that ethnic diversity inhibits social trust in the short to medium run, and that people residing in more ethnically diverse neighbourhoods trust everyone less, than people residing in more ethnically homogenous neighbourhoods.

Despite the prima facie plausibility of Putnam's findings, scholars have questioned the generability of the study (Sturgis et al. 2010). Others, such as Dawkins (2010) have pinpointed the methodological shortcomings as the study is not based on actual local neighbourhoods, but on statistical correlation that for the most part represents metropolitan areas. This would mean that Putnam is incapable to distinguish between community-level ethnic diversity at a larger scale and neighbourhood-level residential segregation. At a minimum, this would imply measurement errors in Putnam's operationalization of ethnic diversity. Dawkins illustrates this by the fact that many different ethnic groups are represented in a large ethnically diverse metropolitan area but neighbourhoods are nevertheless composed largely of residents from a

single ethnic group. In order to measure the actual impacts of ethnic diversity on social trust, one has to control for local residential segregation and capture more specific local neighbourhood units on micro-level. This thesis aims at testing the 'contact hypothesis', 'the conflict theory' and 'the constrict theory' in the South African context when controlling for residential segregation. As yet, this has not been done before.

Material and Methodology

There is limited research about social trust on micro-level in South Africa and on ethnic diversity in Delft South. Most data has been reported either on provincial level by Afrobarometer and South African Social Attitudes Survey (SASAS), or on national level by World Value Survey. In order to make field research in Delft South relevant, I have to be able to compare results with other neighbourhoods varying values in the independent variable ethnic diversity. This could be achieved by using the Cape Area Panel Study (2005) that surveyed approximately 1200 households in Cape Town on a range of aspects, including Putnam's parameters for the dependent variable social trust (trust in: people in neighbourhood, other racial groups, respondent's own race etc.). The majority of the households are situated in township neighbourhoods (Delft South has three respondents) and as the survey is geo-coded, it is possible to capture both respondents' social trust and the specific neighbourhoods' ethnic diversity. The latter would be calculated by using the Herfindahl index (also used by Putnam) calculated across the four basic ethnic categories used in South Africa. This would allow me to run a regression analysis and test the overarching hypothesis about ethnic diversity and social trust in Capetonian townships. However, in order to track down and analyse causal mechanisms, I would need to combine methods and conduct a field study in Delft South. This could be done either by in-depth interviews or detailed surveys that would be designed from the results of the hypothesis testing regression analysis:

- If the regression analysis indicates support for the *'contact theory'*, I would have to ask respondents whether it is more contact with people of other ethnic backgrounds that makes them foster inter-ethnic trust.
- If the *'conflict theory'* gets support, then I would have to ask if it is the physical proximity with people of different ethnic background that makes them trust the in-group more and the out-group less.

- If Putnam's *'constrict theory'* seems correct, then I would have to ask if it is the ethnic diverse setting that makes people distrust everyone less, regardless their ethnicity.
- If *none* of the hypotheses receive any support, I would still have reason to investigate the relationship - the outcome would be hypothesis generating.

Previous Experience and Details about the Stay

I would classify my general knowledge about South Africa as high. Foremost, I have profound knowledge about the political and social situation in the Cape Area due to an internship in the region during the Fall Semester 2012. I spend over four months at an NGO in the township of Langa, situated approximately 25 kilometres from Delft South, and managed to build up a good contextual understanding and a decent network. As a result, I have already been able to establish contact with Sisa Makaula, who is the project manager of Rainbow Arts Organisation (RAO) – an NGO working in Delft South that has promised me help access the neighbourhood, and with other potential requirements (translators, transportation and general assistance). Getting access to the residents in Delft is probably the most critical part of this study. If this would not work, an optional design would be to conduct a smaller amount of so called 'elite interviews' with a smaller amount of residents, such as local politicians, business owners or project managers. Another optional approach would be to try to access the schools in the community.

I am currently awaiting answers from some of the few scholars that previously have conducted research in Delft South. I have also been in close contact with Jonas Sjölander, a PhD Historian at Linnaeus University with many years of experience from fieldwork in similar surroundings. Jonas is currently working with a research project in Cape Town and has generously offered to read and comment my work during my stay.

While data would be collected on site in Delft South, I would most likely be accommodated somewhere closer to Cape Town CBD. The proposed dates for the field study would be ends of October to ends of December 2014, provided that the compulsory MFS-course in Härnösand would be available between 13th and 15th of October. At present, 15/30 seats are available and deadline for registration is the 30th of September.

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