

# Social capital levels

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# Overview

- Understanding the different levels of analysis
- Social capital as the property of the individual, collective, or both
- Social capital as a public good, private good, or both
- Micro, meso, macro levels of social capital
- Different factors at different levels

# Levels

- Social capital exists at various levels as one feels belonging to family, community, profession, and country simultaneously, and these levels overlap and interact (Kilby 2002)
- Social capital is conceptualised differently at different levels of analysis and that these levels are highly interrelated (Halpern 2005)
- Social capital has been located at the level of the individual, the informal social group, the formal organization, the community, the ethnic group and even the nation (Bankston and Zhou 2002; Coleman 1988; Portes 1998; Putnam 1995; Sampson, Morenoff, and Earls 1999)

# Property of individual, collective, or both

- There is now general agreement that social capital has both an individual and an aggregate component (Buys and Bow 2002; Newton 1997; Slangen et al. 2003)

## **Property of the individual**

Becker 1996  
Bourdieu 1986  
Erickson 2004  
Flap 2002  
Glaeser, Laibson, and Sacerdote 2002  
Lin 2001  
Yang 2007

## **Property of the collective**

Fukuyama 1995  
Granovetter 1985  
Henrich et al. 2001  
Newton 2001  
Putnam 1995

# Public good, private good, or both

- Private good because an individual can invest in their social capital, have some degree of ownership and control, and derive benefits as exclusive private property (Alguezaui and Filieri 2010)
- Public good since many aspects of social capital are beyond the control of individuals and affect and benefit larger groups of people, not just those who created it (Kostova and Roth 2003)

## **Private good**

Alguezaui and Filieri 2010  
 Dasgupta 1999  
 Fukuyama 2001, 2002

## **Public good**

Andrews 2010  
 Bourdieu 1986  
 Coleman 1988  
 Houghton, Smith, and Hood 2009  
 Leana and Pil 2006  
 Subramanian et al. 2003  
 Yasunobu and Bhandari 2009

## **Both**

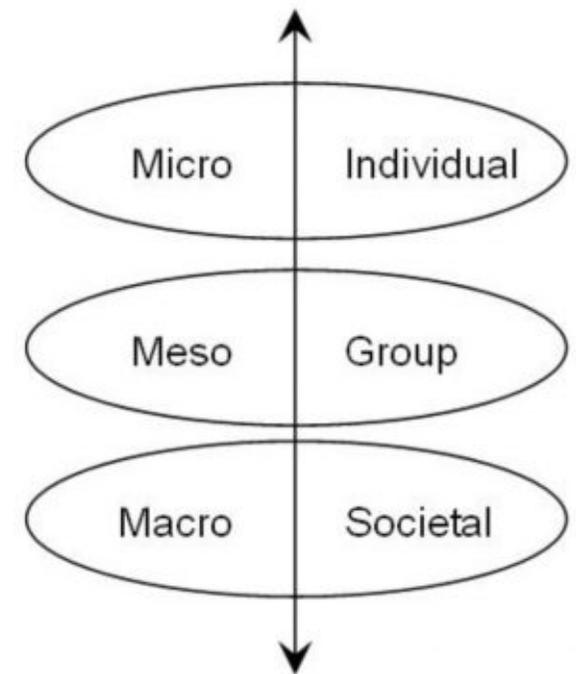
Buys and Bow 2002  
 Kostova and Roth 2003  
 Newton 1997  
 Onyx and Bullen 2001  
 Putnam 2000  
 Slangen et al. 2003

# Micro, meso, macro level social capital

- Social capital is identifiable at any level of social grouping, from the individual level to the level of the nation, and it exists at any level where there is identification and belonging, i.e. a social grouping.
- Levels can be classified as either micro (individual), meso (group or organisation) or macro (community or societal)
- Reality is not divided into levels, analysis at one level is inevitably embedded in or influenced by the other levels

# Levels of analysis in sociological inquiry

- **Micro-level analysis**, detailed examination of one-to-one interactions between individuals. Allows for nuanced analysis of dynamics of social phenomena but may fail to consider broader social forces that impact such processes.
- **Meso-level analysis**, detailed examination of a specific group, community, or organization, studies certain parts of a society.
- **Macro-level analysis**, examination of society as a whole, looks at the broad systems, institutions, hierarchies, and patterns that shape a society but may fail to consider diversity and dynamics of social phenomena.



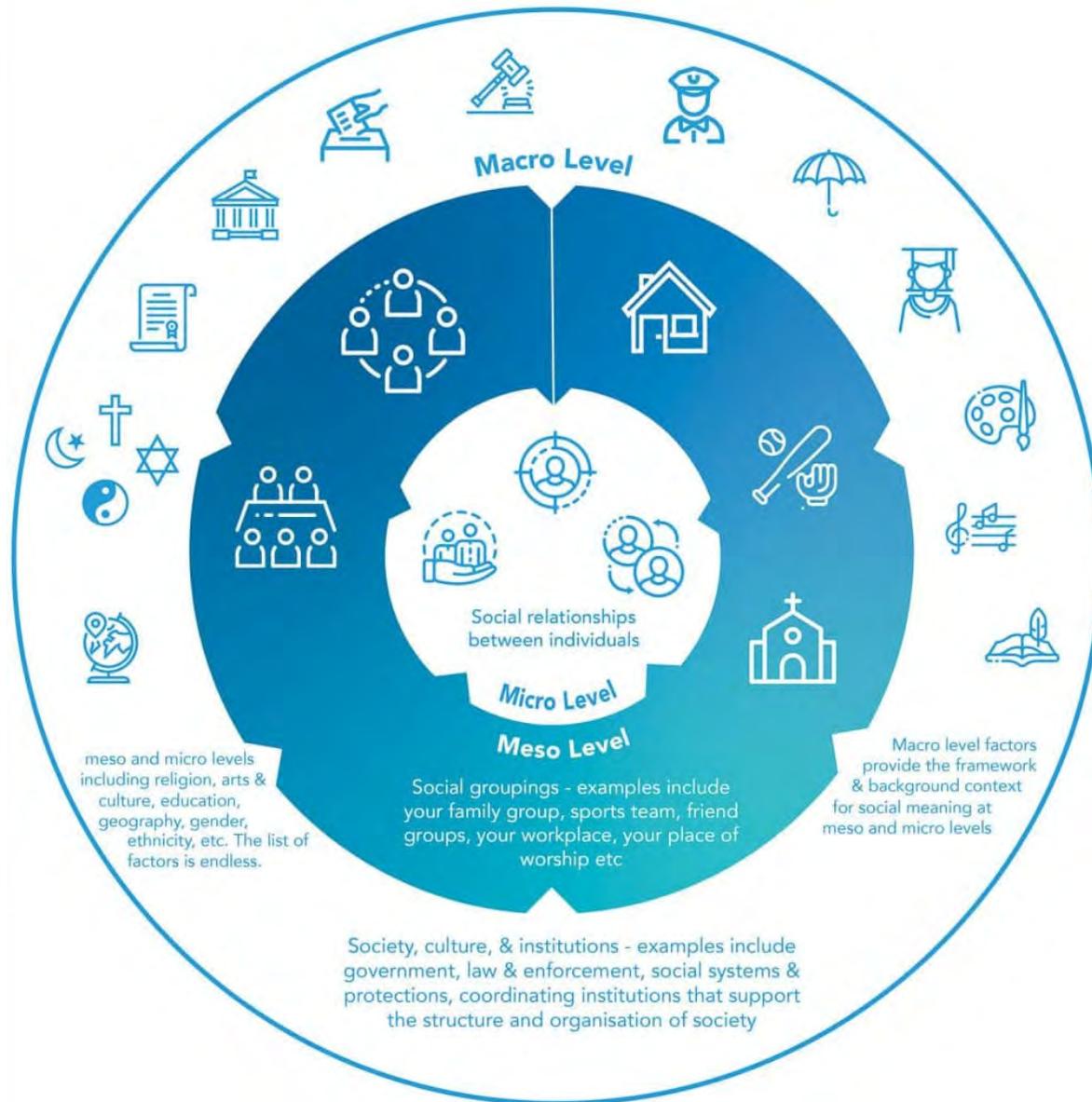
## Levels of analysis

- Simplistic view
  - Micro is the minimum unit → Individual
  - Meso is intermediate levels → Group
  - Macro is the maximum unit → Society

Source: Sell, 2016

## Social capital factors at different levels

- **Micro** - Factors related to, or embedded in, specific social relationships
- **Meso** - Factors that are applicable in the context of a social grouping
- **Macro** - Factors that are generally relevant and widely applicable to a community or society



## Interactions between levels

- All levels are relevant:
  - Macro level provides the context for social meaning
  - Groups and society are comprised of individuals and their relationships

## But there are different approaches

- Authors who treat social capital as exclusively involving social relationships often consider levels as relationships on different geographical scale
  - Micro level refers to relations between individuals,
  - Meso level refers to relations between groups or firms,
  - Macro level refers to relations between regions or nations

(for example Chen, 2005; Halpern, 2005; Yasunobu & Bhandari, 2009)

# Summary

- Social capital exists at different levels and levels are interrelated
- Different conceptual approaches treat social capital as
  - The property of the individual, collective, or both; or
  - As a public good, private good, or both
- Micro, meso, macro levels can be useful to understand the different levels
- It is important to be clear about the level of interest and the influence of other levels