UNIVERSITÀ
DEGLI STUDI DI MILANO-BICOCCA

COURSE SYLLABUS

Networks and Social Capital

2526-2-E1601N092

Learning objectives

The course is structured into four sections and its overall objective is to highlight the importance of social relations and networks in socio-economic phenomena. The assumption is that we cannot understand socio-economic phenomena without taking into account the social relations that constitute and shape them.
The specific knowledge objectives (understading) to reach are:

1. Understanding the theoretical foundations underpinning social network analysis and social capital;
2. Examining the relational approach and the concept of embeddedness, including critiques of rational-actor models;
3. Exploring major theoretical traditions in social network theory, including:
   o The psycho-sociological school,
   o The Manchester School of Anthropology,
   o The Harvard School of structural network analysis
4. Understanding the basic mesures of Network Analysis

The students will use the aquired knoweledge to develop a project of Organizational Network Anlysis [ONA project] (Applying knowledge and understanding).
To fulfil the objectives, students are asked to attend lessons, studying the handbooks and scientific articles indicated in the sections ‘Detailed Program’ and ‘Bibliography’, to attend lab lessons, or watch videos, to learn the use of the UCINET software.
The ONA project wil be a team-work.

Students will be able to develop independent critical judgement in evaluating the theories and tools of Social Network Analysis, recognising the limitations of individualistic models and appreciating the role of social relations in socio-economic phenomena.

Through group work on the Organizational Network Analysis project and the discussion of its findings, students will acquire communication skills, learning to present theoretical concepts and empirical results effectively, both in written and oral form.

The study of theoretical and methodological texts, together with the use of specialised software such as UCINET or Gephi, will foster students' ability to learn autonomously and continuously, developing competences that are also valuable in future professional contexts and further academic study.
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Contents

During the first section of the course, students will become familiar with the relational approach and the concept of embeddedness. Students will be introduced to the main theoretical traditions on social networks in the study of economic and social phenomena. In particular, we will discuss the psycho-sociological school, the Anthropological Manchester School, and the Harvard School (which developed the structural network analysis).
Over the second section, students will be presented the main methodological concepts for network analysis (dyad, triad, homophily, largeness, density, intermediation, etc.).
During the third section of the course, students will learn the basic ideas and concepts of the Organizational Network Analysis, also with some team work. Lessons will be aimed at understading the use of a specific SNA software (Ucinet and/or Gephi).
In the forth section, we will analyse the concept of social capital and its relation with the concept of network (Coleman, Putnam, Burt, Lin). We will draw attention on the operationalisation of the concept and its application to the analysis of the labour market, enterprises, and local socio-economic systems.

Detailed program

The course is structured into **four sections**.

In the **first section**, the course will provide theoretical tools to understand the importance of the relational approach in the analysis of economic and social phenomena.
Part 1: We will clarify some concepts such as social capital, and networks providing the basis for the understanding of the course. We will deepen the relational approach and the embeddedness concept with the criticism to the individual rational actor and the norms based individual actor. This part is particularly relevant because it lays the foundations for understanding the entire course.
Part 2: We will address the importance of considering relationships between individuals, and among groups to understand the economic outcomes of individual behaviours. Particular attention will be given to the experiments of Elton Mayo. We will then consider the Anthropological School of Manchester.
Part 3: The Harvard School will be addressed in the development of network analysis and its roots in classical sociologists. We'll see the "Small worlds" theories.

The **second section** of the course will address the main methodological concepts of social network analysis (SNA).
Part 4: We will address the concepts of: node, direct, indirect relationship, Dyad, triad, homophilia, size, density, weak tie, strong tie, structural hole, popularity, centrality, multiplicity, cohesion.

In the **third section** of the course you will face the ONA:
Part 5: what are the steps of an ONA, how to build a questionnaire of ONA, how to analyze the results. Teamwork.
Part 6: How to use the software Ucinet or Gephi.

The **forth section** will address some real life phenomena to which network analysis can be applied.
Part 7: Social Capital, Networks and Labour Market: How to Find a job and Make Career.
Part 8: The macro approach to social capital, with reference to Putnam. Local development and SC with particular reference to the Italian industrial districts and their transformations.

Part 9: We will address the issue of sharing economy and its link with networks and social capital and some concepts revised according to the latest studies.

Conclusions of the course.

Prerequisites

The knowledge of English is the only pre-requite.

Teaching methods

The course is using traditional lessons, laboratory, team work..
The course will be 100% in Erogative teaching

Assessment methods

The course includes two assessments methods:

1. Three Quizzes composed by 30 questions each and one group assignment to submit during the course. On the e-learning page of the course, deadline and contents of the assignment will be clearly indicated and explained. The group assignement will consist to prepare a ONA questionnaire and to analyse an ideal company with ONA . The Quizzes are weighting for the 80% of the total grade.
2. The students who cannot deliver the three assignements, will take a final quiz on the entire programme composed of 60 closed questions and one open question.

Textbooks and Reading Materials

Granovetter, Mark. (1985). "Economic Action and Social Structure: The Problem of Embeddedness". American Journal of Sociology 91, pp. 481-510.

Mustafa Emirbayer (1997) Manifesto for a Relational Sociology. The American Journal of Sociology, Vol. 103, No. 2. pp. 281-317

Prell, C. (2012) Social Network Analysis, London, Sage. Cap 2, pp. 19-58

Kadushin C. (2012) Understanding social networks, Oxford, Oxford University Press, Cap. 1, 2, 3, 4, 10

Granovetter, Mark. The Strength Of Weak Ties. American Journal of Sociology 78, 1360-80.

Lin, Nan. “Social Networks and Status Attainment.” Annual Review of Sociology, vol. 25, 1999, pp. 467–487

Burt, R. (2005) Brokerage and Closure. An Introduction to Social Capital, pp. 1-27

Robert L. Cross, Salvatore Parise, and Leigh M. Weiss (2007) The role of networks in organizational change, McKinsey Quarterly, https://www.mckinsey.com/business-functions/organization/our-insights/the-role-of-networks-in-organizational-change

Cross, R. Borgatti, S. Parket, A. (2002) Making Invisible work visible: Using SNA to support strategic collaboration, in California Management Review, 44, 2, pp. 25-46.

Trigilia C. (2001). Social capital and local development. European Journal of Social Theory 4(4):427-442

John F. Helliwell and Robert D. Putnam (1995) Economic Growth and Social Capital in Italy Author(s): Source: Eastern Economic Journal, Vol. 21, No. 3 (Summer, 1995), pp. 295-307

Andreotti, A. ; Anselmi, G.; Hoffmann, C. (2018). Are weak relations working? Sharing platforms and social capital. SOCIOLOGIA DEL LAVORO, 4(152), 87-103

Sustainable Development Goals

GENDER EQUALITY | REDUCED INEQUALITIES