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## Transformation of Social Capital in Urban Communities in the Digital Era: A Study of Changing Patterns of Solidarity and Social Participation

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### ABSTRACT

*This study examines the transformation of social capital in urban communities in the digital era through a literature review of recent scientific publications. The main focus is mapping changes in the structure of social relations, patterns of social solidarity, and community participation due to the digitalization of social interactions. The review process included identification, selection, and thematic analysis of literature related to social capital, community digitalization, solidarity, and social participation from various national and international journals. The findings indicate that digitalization expands social networks but tends to weaken the depth of interpersonal relationships, and shifts the mechanisms of solidarity formation to issue-based and more symbolic digital participation. The results also highlight the challenges of digital literacy and the gap in technology access that affect the distribution of social capital in urban communities. This article presents an argumentative synthesis of the changing dimensions of social capital and its implications for urban social cohesion. This research is expected to serve as a conceptual foundation for further empirical research and for the formulation of inclusive digital interaction-based social policies. The findings demonstrate the urgency of integrating online and offline relationships to strengthen the social capital of urban communities sustainably.*

**Keywords:** Digital social capital; Urban community solidarity; Digital social participation

### INTRODUCTION

Digital transformation has significantly altered the social landscape of urban communities, particularly in how individuals build and maintain social relationships. Physical spaces, previously the center of social interaction, are now experiencing a shift in role with the increasing intensity of technology-based communication. Digital media accelerates the exchange of information while simultaneously transforming the character of social relationships, making them more flexible and space-agnostic. These changes impact

the structure of social capital, which encompasses networks, trust, and social norms. Social relationships tend to be broader but less emotionally profound. This phenomenon has given rise to new dynamics in urban community solidarity. Therefore, the social transformation resulting from digitalization is an important aspect to analyze systematically.

These changes in interaction structures have direct implications for the form of social solidarity within urban communities. Solidarity, previously built through geographic proximity and social routines, is now shifting toward shared interests and digital affiliations. Social media enables the formation of issue-based solidarity that transcends regional boundaries. However, this type of solidarity is often temporary and dependent on the intensity of digital exposure. Reliance on virtual interactions has the potential to weaken long-term social bonds (Arafah & Winarso, 2025). This situation raises questions about the sustainability of established social solidarity. Therefore, analyzing changes in solidarity becomes relevant in the study of urban communities.

In addition to solidarity, urban social participation has also undergone a transformation with the development of digital technology. City residents are increasingly actively expressing their aspirations and social concerns through online platforms. This participation includes public discussions, digital campaigns, and even virtual community organizing. Digitalization opens up broader access to participation without the constraints of time and place. However, the increase in the quantity of participation is not always accompanied by an increase in the quality of social engagement. Symbolic participation often replaces direct involvement in community activities. This situation indicates a shift in the meaning of social participation in urban communities (Dulkiah & Majid, 2025).

These changes in participation patterns influence the formation and distribution of social capital within urban communities. Strong social capital requires ongoing interaction and reciprocal trust. Digital interactions can expand social networks but do not necessarily deepen relationships between individuals. Social trust formed virtually is often fragile and situational. When trust weakens, the effectiveness of social capital in supporting solidarity also decreases. This can result in low social cohesion within urban communities. Therefore, the relationship between digital participation and the strength of social capital requires a critical examination.

On the other hand, digital technology also offers strategic opportunities for strengthening the social capital of urban communities. Digital platforms can be utilized to strengthen communication, coordination, and collaboration between residents. Online community-based initiatives can bridge differences across social and economic backgrounds (Gupta & Singh, 2025). Appropriate use of technology can enhance a sense of community belonging. However, the success of technology utilization depends heavily on the social and cultural capacity of the community. Without the support of collective values, technology has

the potential to reinforce individualism. Thus, digital potential does not always translate directly into strengthening social capital.

Inequality in digital literacy is a crucial factor influencing the effectiveness of social capital in urban communities. Not all individuals have the same ability to access and utilize digital technology. This disparity creates a gap in social participation in the digital space. Groups with low digital literacy tend to be marginalized from online social networks. As a result, the distribution of social capital becomes unequal. This inequality has the potential to widen social distances within urban communities. This situation emphasizes the need for an inclusive approach to digital community development.

In addition to digital literacy, the culture of urban individualism also influences the transformation of social capital. Competitive urban life encourages an orientation toward personal interests. Digital technology is often used to fulfill individual needs rather than strengthen collective relationships. This pattern can reduce the intensity of meaningful social interactions. When social interactions decrease, community solidarity tends to weaken. This condition challenges the traditional concept of social capital based on togetherness. Therefore, the dynamics of urban culture need to be taken into account in the analysis of digital social capital.

Based on these overall dynamics, the transformation of social capital in urban communities is a complex and multidimensional phenomenon. Technological changes, patterns of solidarity, and social participation are intertwined, forming new social realities. Social capital is not completely weakened, but is undergoing a reconfiguration in its forms and mechanisms. Empirical studies are needed to understand the varying experiences of urban communities in facing digitalization. A contextual approach is key to understanding differences between communities. The results of this study are expected to enrich the discourse on urban and digital sociology. Therefore, this research has both theoretical and practical relevance for the development of urban social policy.

## **METHOD**

This research uses a qualitative approach through literature review to analyze the transformation of social capital in urban communities in the digital era. This method enables an in-depth understanding of the dynamics of solidarity and social participation through a synthesis of empirical findings and theoretical insights from various scientific sources. Data were obtained from national and international journal articles, academic books, and relevant conference proceedings, searched through accredited scientific databases. The literature was selected based on topic relevance and methodological quality, with priority given to publications from the last ten years. Data analysis was conducted using thematic analysis to identify patterns, conceptual shifts, and argumentative tendencies related to social capital in

urban communities. Data validity was maintained through source triangulation and systematic recording of the analysis process. This approach provides a strong conceptual foundation for understanding changes in social capital resulting from the digitalization of social interactions.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **1. Transformation of Social Capital Structure in Digital Urban Communities**

Social capital in urban communities is undergoing structural changes with the increasing penetration of digital technology. Social networks are no longer limited to interactions based on geographic proximity. Social relations are evolving through digital media, which enable connectivity across space. This pattern of relationships significantly expands the reach of social networks. This network expansion is often accompanied by a decrease in the intensity of face-to-face interactions. The depth of interpersonal relationships is becoming more varied and situational. These changes mark a shift in the character of social capital in urban communities.

Changes in social network structures also influence the dimensions of trust in urban communities. Social trust was previously formed through repeated interactions and shared experiences. Digital media facilitates the formation of trust based on online reputation and symbolic information. These mechanisms tend to be rapid but vulnerable to disruption. The uncertainty of digital identity has the potential to undermine the stability of social trust. Trust becomes more selective and dependent on social validation. These dynamics alter the foundations of traditional social capital (Djarmiko et al., 2025).

In addition to trust, social norms are also being reconfigured in the digital urban space. Norms previously controlled through direct social surveillance are now shifting to digital mechanisms. Online platforms create flexible and frequently changing rules of interaction. The internalization of norms occurs through algorithms and platform culture. Social control becomes less personal and fragmented. As a result, adherence to community norms is contextual and temporary. This situation indicates a shift in patterns of social regulation.

The transformation of norms and beliefs impacts the quality of social cohesion in urban communities. Social cohesion requires consistent values and relatively stable emotional bonds. Digital interactions accelerate communication but do not necessarily strengthen social bonds (Farhaeni, 2024). The fragmentation of interests and preferences widens the distance between social groups. Communities are formed based on thematic affiliations rather than social proximity. This pattern results in partial social cohesion. Such cohesion tends to be fragile in the face of social conflict.

These structural changes illustrate the process of social capital adapting to digitalization. Social capital is not lost, but rather shifts in form and mechanisms. Social networks become broader but less integrated. Trust and norms operate through a digital

logic that differs from traditional relationships. Urban communities face challenges in maintaining a balance between connectivity and depth of relationships. These challenges require a more contextual conceptual understanding. An analysis of the transformation of social capital structures provides an important foundation for subsequent discussion.

## **2. Changes in Social Solidarity Patterns in Urban Communities**

Social solidarity in urban communities has shown a significant shift with the development of digital spaces. Solidarity is no longer solely based on physical togetherness. Shared interests and issues have become the primary bond between solidarity relationships. Digital media enables rapid and massive mobilization of solidarity. Collective responses can be formed quickly through online networks. This pattern demonstrates efficiency in social organizing. However, the sustainability of solidarity is questionable.

Issue-based solidarity tends to be high-intensity in the short term. Collective interest is often fueled by viral narratives and specific momentum. Once public attention wanes, social engagement also declines (Hilman et al., 2024; Kim & Ark, 2025). Reliance on digital exposure weakens the consistency of solidarity. Emotional bonds between solidarity actors are not always deeply established. Solidarity shifts to symbolic expression rather than social commitment. This pattern distinguishes digital solidarity from traditional community solidarity.

Changes in the nature of solidarity impact the social cohesion of urban communities. Social cohesion requires continuous interaction and a sense of shared responsibility. Temporary solidarity struggles to sustain long-term social stability. The fragmentation of solidarity creates narrowly focused communities. Relations between groups become less integrated. The potential for conflict increases when solidarity is exclusive. This situation challenges the sustainability of urban social cohesion.

However, digital solidarity also presents new opportunities for urban communities. Digital media expands solidarity participation across social classes and regions. Previously marginalized groups gain greater space for expression. Solidarity can be formed without intense physical presence. This pattern increases the visibility of certain social issues. Solidarity becomes more accessible. This potential demonstrates the progressive side of digital solidarity.

The duality between the opportunities and limitations of digital solidarity reflects complex social dynamics. Solidarity cannot be measured solely by the intensity of online mobilization. The quality of social relations is a crucial indicator of its strength. Integrating digital solidarity with in-person interactions is a necessity for urban communities. Such efforts can strengthen social cohesion sustainably. A literature review reveals variations in

experiences across communities. This variation underscores the need for a contextual approach to understanding digital urban solidarity.

### **3. Transformation of Social Participation and its Implications for Social Capital**

Urban social participation has expanded with the development of digital platforms. Participatory spaces are no longer limited to face-to-face forums. Social media and online platforms have become primary means of social expression. City residents can express their aspirations more quickly and broadly. This type of participation increases the visibility of citizen engagement. Access to participation has become more inclusive for various social groups. These changes mark a shift in the mechanisms of social participation.

The expansion of digital participation is not always accompanied by an increase in the quality of engagement; many forms of participation are symbolic and lack long-term commitment (Suyatna et al., 2024; Rachmawati, 2025). Activities such as sharing content or online support often replace in-person engagement. The depth of participation becomes relatively shallow. The social relationships formed through such participation tend to be temporary, and the tangible impact on the community is often limited. This phenomenon demonstrates the paradox of digital participation.

The quality of participation directly influences the strength of an urban community's social capital. Social capital requires sustained and mutually reinforcing engagement. Symbolic participation is less able to build stable social trust. The resulting social networks are broad but loose. The fragility of social relations reduces the effectiveness of community collaboration. Social capital becomes difficult to consolidate collectively. These conditions impact the resilience of urban communities.

In addition to the quality of participation, inequality in digital literacy also influences the distribution of social capital. Individuals with high digital skills are more active in online participation spaces. Groups with limited access tend to be marginalized from participatory processes. This inequality creates asymmetry in social networks. The distribution of social capital becomes unequal across groups. The potential for social exclusion increases in urban communities. These factors complicate the dynamics of digital social participation.

The transformation of social participation demonstrates the ambivalent nature of digital technology. Digital media can both expand participation and weaken the depth of engagement. Social capital is formed through a combination of digital interactions and direct relationships. A balance between these two forms of interaction is a prerequisite for strengthening urban communities. The literature review emphasizes the importance of integrating participatory strategies. This approach can improve the quality of social capital. Thus, the transformation of social participation is a crucial aspect in the analysis of digital urban communities.

### **Conclusion**

The transformation of social capital in urban communities in the digital era demonstrates a fundamental shift in the structure of social relations, solidarity, and community participation. Social networks are expanding through digital media, but the depth of interpersonal relationships tends to weaken. Social trust is shifting from direct experience to reputation-based mechanisms and online validation. Social norms are also being reconfigured as social control based on community proximity diminishes. Social solidarity is developing in the form of rapid and widespread issue-based mobilization. This pattern of solidarity is often unsustainable and dependent on the intensity of digital attention. Social participation in urban communities is increasingly inclusive through online spaces, but the quality of engagement tends to be symbolic. Shallow participation limits the formation of robust social capital. Inequality in digital literacy reinforces asymmetries in access to social networks and resources. This situation has the potential to widen social fragmentation within urban communities. Social capital is not experiencing an absolute decline, but rather is undergoing changes in its form and working mechanisms. Therefore, strengthening urban communities requires a balanced integration of digital interactions and direct social relations.

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