

The Dynamics of Social Capital in Urban Communities in Facing Social Change in the Digital Era

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the dynamics of social capital in urban communities in the face of social change triggered by the development of digital technology. The shift in social interaction patterns from relationships based on physical proximity to virtual connectivity has influenced the structure of social networks, trust-building mechanisms, and the validity of social norms in urban environments. A qualitative approach with a descriptive design was used to explore the meanings, experiences, and social practices of communities in utilizing digital spaces. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and documentation, then analyzed thematically to identify patterns of social capital transformation. The results show that social capital has not experienced an absolute weakening, but rather has undergone a transformation in form and function. Social networks have become broader but tend to be fragmented, while social trust is more fluid and situational due to the mediation of digital technology. Social capital plays a crucial role as an adaptive resource that supports the ability of urban communities to respond to rapid social change. The sustainability of social cohesion is largely determined by the quality of social relations, digital literacy, and the role of communities and social institutions in managing social interactions. These findings confirm that strengthening social capital based on an adaptive and inclusive approach is a crucial strategy for the social resilience of urban communities in the digital era.

Keywords: Social Capital; Urban Society; Social Digitalization

INTRODUCTION

Social change triggered by the development of digital technology has become a dominant phenomenon in urban areas. Urban life has undergone a significant shift from face-to-face interactions to digital platform-based communication. Social relationship patterns previously formed through geographic proximity now increasingly rely on virtual connectivity. This condition influences how individuals build trust and a sense of community. Social capital, as a social resource, is undergoing a transformation along with these changing interaction patterns. Social trust is no longer built solely through face-to-face meetings, but also through digital representations. Social networks are expanding but often becoming shallower; these dynamics demand a new understanding of the social structure of urban communities (Fitri & Sitorus, 2024; Grotto & Buja, 2025).

Urban communities are characterized by high levels of mobility and diverse social backgrounds. This diversity creates the potential for rich social exchanges while increasing the complexity of relationships between individuals. Social relationships are often functional and based on practical interests. Traditional social ties tend to weaken as urban individualism increases. Social capital faces challenges in maintaining the values of solidarity and social cohesion. Social relations become more flexible but less deep.

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Interpersonal trust is not always formed sustainably. This condition affects society's ability to adapt to social change.

Digital technology provides a new space for the formation of communities based on shared interests and goals. Social media allows individuals to build social networks without the constraints of time and space. Social interactions can be intense even without physical proximity. Social capital takes on new forms through evolving virtual relationships. Social participation can increase through broader access to information. Opportunities for social collaboration open up through inclusive digital platforms. These dynamics demonstrate the potential for strengthening social capital in urban environments. This transformation is changing how society defines togetherness and solidarity (Ahdan et al., 2024).

These changes also carry consequences in the form of potential social fragmentation. Digital algorithms tend to create homogenous interaction spaces. Differences in social views can become more entrenched due to selective exposure to information. Social trust faces the risk of decline due to the proliferation of disinformation. Social capital does not always develop evenly across all levels of society. Certain groups benefit more from digital access than others. Social inequality can be further exacerbated through the digital literacy gap. These challenges require serious attention in managing social change.

The dynamics of social capital are closely related to a society's ability to cope with social change. Social adaptation requires strong and sustainable networks of trust. Urban communities require social mechanisms capable of bridging differences. Social capital acts as a social glue in situations of rapid change. The existence of shared social norms helps reduce the potential for conflict. Active community participation strengthens social resilience. Inclusive social relations enhance collective capacity to face challenges. The role of social capital is becoming increasingly strategic in the digital era.

Formal and informal social institutions play a crucial role in shaping social capital. Urban community environments can serve as spaces for strengthening social relations. Community-based social activities encourage interactions across diverse backgrounds. Digital technology can be leveraged to expand the reach of social participation. The synergy between physical and digital spaces enriches communities' social experiences (Hilman et al., 2024). Social capital develops through a combination of in-person and virtual interactions. The sustainability of social relations depends on the quality of these interactions. An adaptive approach is needed to maintain social balance.

Social change in the digital era demands a comprehensive understanding of social dynamics. Social capital is not static and is constantly undergoing negotiation of meaning. Urban communities face pressure to adapt social values to digital realities. Social identities are formed through increasingly complex interactions. Social trust requires new mechanisms to maintain it. Social solidarity needs to be managed through a contextual approach. Social transformation opens up opportunities for innovation in social practices. This understanding forms the basis for strengthening social cohesion.

The study of social capital dynamics makes a significant contribution to urban social development. This knowledge helps formulate responsive social policies. Strategies for strengthening social capital can be tailored to the characteristics of digital societies. The sustainability of urban social life depends on the quality of social relations. Social change can be managed constructively through strengthening social networks. Social capital serves as a community's adaptive resource. The digital era demands an inclusive and participatory social approach. This study is relevant to addressing today's social challenges

METHODS

This study employs a qualitative approach with a descriptive design to understand the dynamics of social capital in urban communities in the digital era. The research focuses on the formation of social networks, trust, and social norms mediated by digital technology, with social reality understood as the result of continuously evolving interactions. The research location was purposively selected in an urban area with high digital technology penetration and social diversity, while informants were determined through purposive sampling based on social engagement and digital experience.

Data were collected through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and documentation, covering both digital-based and face-to-face interactions, with triangulation used to ensure data validity. Data analysis involved data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing, conducted simultaneously and reflectively. Data credibility was ensured through triangulation, member checking, peer discussions, and an audit trail, and the study was conducted in accordance with research ethics. This methodology is expected to provide a comprehensive understanding of changes in social capital in urban communities, as well as theoretical and practical contributions to the development of social policies in the digital era.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Transformation of the Social Capital Structure of Urban Communities in the Digital Era

The development of digital technology has driven fundamental changes in the social capital structure of urban communities. Social interactions, previously based on spatial proximity, have shifted to relationships based on digital connectivity. Social relationship patterns are no longer solely determined by residential environment. Social networks have expanded beyond geographic and administrative boundaries. This situation has created a more fluid and flexible configuration of social capital. Social ties have shifted from communal forms to relationships based on interests and affiliations. The intensity of social relationships does not always align with emotional depth. This transformation is changing the foundation of social relations in urban communities.

These structural changes impact the mechanisms by which social trust is formed. Trust is no longer built entirely through direct interaction experiences. Digital identity representations become a crucial element in shaping social perceptions. Social validation is often achieved through online symbols and activities (Suyatna et al., 2024). This process creates a situational and contextual form of trust. The sustainability of trust becomes more fragile due to the low depth of relationships. Social capital is being redefined as a dynamic resource. This complexity demonstrates ongoing social adaptation.

Digital social networks expand opportunities for social participation in urban communities. Individuals can engage in various interest-based communities without being tied to physical space. Access to social information becomes faster and more equitable. Collective participation can be formed through inclusive virtual spaces (Rodriguez-Camacho et al., 2024). This situation enriches the variety of forms of social capital. Social networks become broader but tend to be fragmented. Social relationships are formed through uneven communication intensity. This phenomenon demonstrates the ambiguity of simultaneously strengthening and weakening social capital.

This transformation also impacts the social norms that govern social interactions. Social norms are adapting to the ethics of digital communication. The boundaries between private and public spaces are becoming increasingly blurred. Social behavior

patterns develop through the negotiation of constantly changing values. Normative inconsistencies can trigger social tensions. Social capital serves as an adaptation mechanism to changing values. Successful adaptation depends on the collective capabilities of the community. These dynamics highlight the complexity of modern urban social life.

Changes in the structure of social capital reflect society's response to digital modernization. Social resilience depends on the ability to manage changing social relations. Social capital is not lost, but rather undergoes a transformation in form and function. New social networks have the potential to strengthen collective capacity. Challenges arise when social relations lose their depth of meaning. Understanding structural change is crucial for social development. An adaptive approach is needed to maintain social cohesion. This transformation forms the basis for analyzing urban social change.

2. Dynamics of Trust and Social Networks in Urban Digital Spaces

Social trust is a key element of social capital that has undergone significant changes in the digital era. Urban communities build trust through technology-mediated interactions. This process does not always involve direct social experience. Digital information becomes a primary source for shaping social perceptions. Individual credibility is often measured through online activities. This creates a representational form of trust. The stability of trust becomes more volatile. These dynamics impact the quality of social relationships.

Digital social networks accelerate the process of forming social relationships. Interactions occur intensively through various communication platforms. The speed of information exchange expands the reach of social networks. Social relationships are formed through high frequency of communication (Mardiyah et al. 2025). The depth of relationships does not always align with the intensity of interactions. Social capital develops through extensive but heterogeneous networks. Social fragmentation can potentially increase due to differing interests. This complexity is a hallmark of digital urban social life.

Trust in the digital space faces challenges in the form of information uncertainty. Disinformation and content manipulation influence social perceptions. Information validation becomes an increasingly complex process. Reliance on digital sources increases the risk of trust erosion. Social capital can weaken when collective trust is compromised. Communities develop adaptive strategies to filter information. Digital literacy is a crucial factor in maintaining trust. These dynamics demonstrate the close relationship between technology and social trust.

Digital social networks also create new opportunities for solidarity. Collective action can be organized through virtual spaces. Social concerns are fostered through digital campaigns. Social participation is no longer limited by physical proximity. Social capital takes on innovative forms of collaboration. Social solidarity emerges through shared interests. Sustainable solidarity depends on collective commitment. This phenomenon demonstrates the potential for strengthening social capital.

The dynamics of trust and social networks demonstrate a continuous process of social negotiation. Social capital adapts to changes in the digital environment. Trust is not static and is constantly being reshaped. Social networks serve as a medium for social exchange. The balance between trust and openness is crucial. Digital challenges require reflective social responses. This understanding enriches the analysis of social change. These dynamics are relevant to the sustainability of urban communities.

3. The Role of Social Capital in Urban Society's Adaptation to Digital Social Change

Social change in the digital era demands a high degree of adaptability from urban communities. Social capital acts as a collective resource in this adaptation process. Social networks help individuals access information and social support. Social trust strengthens the ability to cope with uncertainty. Social norms provide a framework for collective behavior. Social capital supports social stability amid rapid change. A society's adaptive capacity depends on the quality of its social relationships. This phenomenon demonstrates the significance of social capital.

Social adaptation involves a continuous process of collective learning. Communities adjust interaction patterns to reflect technological developments. Social capital facilitates the exchange of knowledge and experience. The adaptation process is not linear. Social tensions arise from differences in levels of adaptation. Social networks help mitigate conflict through communication. Social solidarity strengthens collective resilience. These dynamics reflect the complexity of social adaptation.

Social capital also plays a role in maintaining social inclusivity. Access to social networks influences opportunities for community participation. Groups with low social capital face the risk of exclusion. Digital inequality increases social distance. Strengthening social capital is a strategy to reduce inequality (Tedjomurti & Widayasi, 2025). Social communities serve as spaces of empowerment. Collective participation enhances a sense of belonging. Social adaptation becomes more equitable through strengthened relationships.

The role of social institutions is crucial in supporting community adaptation. Formal and informal institutions mediate the formation of social capital. Collaboration between social actors strengthens adaptive capacity. Digital technology is utilized as a means of social organizing. Social capital develops through the synergy of physical and digital spaces. Sustainable adaptation requires structural support. Social policies play a role in strengthening social networks. A holistic approach is needed to address change.

Urban community adaptation reflects the evolving dynamics of social capital. Social capital serves as a mechanism for social adjustment. Successful adaptation depends on the quality of social interactions. Inclusive social networks enhance community resilience. Collective trust strengthens social solidarity. The digital era demands innovation in social capital management. Understanding the role of social capital is crucial. This discussion emphasizes the relevance of social capital in social change.

CONCLUSIONS

The discussion on the dynamics of social capital in urban communities shows that the development of digital technology has significantly changed the structure, function, and meaning of social relations. Social capital has not disappeared, but rather undergone a transformation to adapt to digital-based interaction patterns. Social networks are expanding through virtual connectivity, although the depth of social relations tends to shift. Social trust is formed through digital representation mechanisms that are more fluid and situational. This situation presents opportunities for strengthening social participation while simultaneously posing the risk of social fragmentation. Social capital plays a crucial role as an adaptive resource in facing rapid social change. The ability of urban communities to manage social networks determines the level of collective social resilience. Social norms and values adapt as the social interaction space changes. Digital challenges drive the need for stronger social and digital literacy. The role of communities and social institutions is crucial in maintaining social cohesion. Social adaptation occurs through a continuous process of value negotiation. Overall, the findings confirm that

social capital is a strategic element for the sustainability of urban social life in the digital era.

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