Understanding the Methodology of the World Social Capital Monitor

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Summary

Social Capital is measured since 1999 yet when the World Bank started the *Social Capital Initiative* with contributions from three Nobel laureates, Elinor Ostrom, Amartya Sen and Joseph Stiglitz.

Since then, the methodology used for measurement has evolved from 27-page household surveys by interviewers to online-based perception surveys by open access that allow a qualitative say.

Since the World Social Capital Monitor became a UN partnership project in 2016, panels of up to 14,700 participants (Cambodia) could be surveyed. By comparing larger panels with smaller ones, patterns can be identified that facilitate the validation of small panels.

This methodology paper shows approaches to identify and assess local social goods on a small scale without representative panels.

Dimensions of Social Capital: trust appearing in all concepts

Networks	Trust	Norms and Values

Source: van Deth 2003, p. 83

Groups and Networks	Trust and Solidarity	Collective Action and Cooperation	Information and Communication	Social Cohesion and Inclusion	Empowerment and Political Action

Source: World Bank, SOCAT (Social Capital Assessment Tool) 2004

Personal Relationships	Social Network Support	Civic engagement	Trust and cooperative norms

Source: OECD 2013

Charitable Intent	Family Bonds	Trust

Source: Legatum Prosperity Index 2014, p. 29/30

Social Climate	Trust	Societal solidarity	Helpfulness	Friendliness	Hospitality

Source: World Social Capital Monitor, 2017

What are the major differences of the World Social Capital Monitor to other surveys?

- The monitor is a classical *perception survey* according to the guidelines such as the OECD Practioner's Guide on Perception Surveys. To avoiding the pitfalls of this kind of survey, the questionnaire has been tested before in 60 countries before the monitor became a UN SDG Partnerships project in 2016.
- In difference to the two existing Global surveys, the World Values Survey (WVS) and the Gallup World Poll (GWP), the questionnaire does not contain binary questions, questions related to socio-demographic characteristics and predefined sentences and statements.
- In difference to almost all representative surveys, the monitor considers the local place or district of the respondent. The monitor can therefore generate local results.
- In difference to any representative survey, the monitor invites to give qualitative comments in 50 languages. The 2021 monitor published 500 of these single says.
- In difference to panels composed by age, gender and other socio-demographic features, the monitor allows the participation by open access.

Why that differences?

Social inclusion, including of minorities and conflict parties, is a central task in the implementation of the 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals. This requires the offer of local participation to every citizen.

Local social goods can not be represented by a select group of respondents, just as scarce electoral decisions often make it difficult to resolve social and ethnic conflicts.
Inclusion means: everyone is allowed to participate and as well has the right to comment.

You can easily test the methodology by yourself. Just take one of the indicators, e.g. friendliness and give your score for your hometown on a ladder between 10 (high) and 1 (low) Then ask some colleagues or friends for their score without telling them yours. If you have five scores – a really small panel – check the average deviation. You will be surprised how low the deviation is.

When I tried this in Munich in 2011, my survey's deviation for friendliness in Munich was exactly zero. Everybody I asked had the same estimate. So, is there a sort of 'social weather' we percept independent from our personal condition?

Let's have a look at our biggest sample which is the Cambodia Social Capital Monitor of the Pannasastra University in Phnom Penh with 14793 participants of all 24 provinces.

	Climate	Trust	Measures	Taxes	Invest	Helpfulness	Friendliness	Hospitality
2016-2019	7.2	6.5	6.2	6.6	5.1	7.3	7.7	6.4
Deviation	1.5	1.6	1.9	1.8	2.0	1.6	1.4	1.5

Why is the deviation for such a vague issue as 'social climate' so low? We might expect our participants to interpret social climate very different. But if they did so, the deviation would be much higher.

The deviation for questions three, four and five is higher in almost all countries and sometimes reaches three points. By counter common perceptions of the social climate and friendliness are that close that we find the same deviation in Cambodia, Afghanistan and Austria.

But the samples in Afghanistan (81 scores) and Austria (26 scores) are much smaller.
In 2019, the University of Zagreb, Croatia, did our survey by adding questions for sex, age, education, and religion in a sample of 420 respondents from 69 different Croatian towns.

Result: *'We found no differences based on participants' gender'*. While the Croatia sample in 2020 was much smaller, we may expect a higher deviation. But the opposite happened:

	Climate	Trust	Measures	Taxes	Invest	Helpfulness	Friendliness	Hospitality
Deviation 2019 N=420	1.9	2.0	2.3	2.1	2.1	2.0	1.8	1.9
Deviation 2020 N= 33	1.5	1.3	1.9	2.0	1.9	1.6	1.5	1.4

Why is the deviation in all our panels so low?

It's because we treat the respondents as if they were sociologists and experts: *Please characterize the Social Climate at your place*. The ladder reaches from excellent (10) to poor (1).

Few people have a wrong and unrealistic impression of their local social climate. As we can see in ten thousands of scores, few participants lie on their local social climate.

In the 2020 survey, we identified only one group that significantly scores their hometowns better than the crowd did: mayors and members of the administration. If a town has excellent scores yet – e.g. the German city of Leipzig – we won't even remark this bias. In our 2019 report we featured such votes e.g. for the Austrian town of Klagenfurt and Germany's Kaufbeuren.
Mayors are a small group, wherefore their bias has no impact on the results in general.

Our review rules

Based on the comparison of thousands of smaller panels from a single vote on, we consider the following scores:

- Single scores in case we regard them as valid and authentic and have no additional scores from the town or country

Example:
Honduras

	Climate	Trust	Measures	Taxes	Invest	Helpfulness	Friendliness	Hospitality
2019 Tegucigalpa	4	2	1	2	9	10	10	10

- We show the average deviation in general from 10 scores on. In exceptional panels we start with six votes yet.

Example:
Central African Republic:

	Climate	Trust	Measures	Taxes	Invest	Helpfulness	Friendliness	Hospitality
2019	6.3	6.3	6.7	5.8	7.9	7.4	8.4	8.0
Deviation	2.4	2.7	2.0	2.4	1.3	2.3	1.3	1.6
2020	5.5	4.3	5.8	5.7	4.3	5.2	5.5	6.2
Deviation	2.1	2.0	3.0	2.7	3.0	1.9	1.6	2.0

- Scores with a broad distribution through our website or public links

Example: http://euroasia-uclg.ru/en/news/novosti-partnerov-i-chlenov-ogmv/onlayn-opros-o-zhizni-v-megapolisakh/

- Scores coming from a partner we know. That includes personal and offline interviews.

Example: Kabul, Afghanistan

10	10			19.08.2020 10:19	121.100.51.74
8	9			19.08.2020 10:24	121.100.51.74
9	10			19.08.2020 10:27	121.100.51.74
6	8			19.08.2020 10:29	121.100.51.74
7	9			19.08.2020 10:31	121.100.51.74
6	7			19.08.2020 10:42	121.100.51.74
6	6			19.08.2020 10:44	121.100.51.74
6	5			19.08.2020 10:46	121.100.51.74
8	9			19.08.2020 10:48	121.100.51.74
2	3			19.08.2020 10:55	121.100.51.74

Conclusion: Every vote counts

In difference to surveys using representative panels, we offer results from a single score on. Due to the easy test of any results through a small panel, any result presented here can be verified or falsified by the kind reader by asking three or five people the same questions.

You can do this by using our data service: just enter your score in https://trustyourplace.com/ and after browse the result by entering your town: https://trustyourplace.com/search-score

The results of your small panel will appear immediately in the search up to twenty scores.

We will nevertheless review and validate this results before reporting and publishing.

The World Social Capital Monitor does not reclaim representativeness for our results, but validity.

To assess our results by plausibility we offer to browse our 2021 results for 300 cities we published in the UN:
https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/commitments/3914_11706_commitment_3 00_Cities_and_their_social_goods_to_achieve_the_SDGs.pdf

We feel committed to measure and enhance the tacit knowledge of social goods, not to give forecasts for elections or to catch the public opinion.

We hope that our results will lead to a revaluation of many towns, regions and countries that are currently left behind because they cannot print their Gross Domestic Product (GDP) by governmental bonds – and therefore are not able to deliver and provide public goods such as environmental protection, health, education and social security.

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