

Dream of a Nation
Strengthening Communities

Infographic

1. How is civic engagement, often argued as an end in itself from a moral perspective, important in fostering social capital?
2. How are development efforts more effective if they incorporate civic engagement?

Transforming Urban Injustice into Beauty and Empowerment

1. How can a dense network of reciprocal social relations positively impact environmental capital?
2. Malik and Wagle note that civic engagement is, “a process that organizes citizens or their entrusted representatives to influence, share and control public affairs, [for the purpose of] contributing to social capital through interactions between people and processes they engage in for a positive public outcome.” How can civic engagement also contribute to environmental capital?

Creating Food Security, Improving Health, Creating Community

3. Are there specific policies state institutions introduce that support or hinder civic engagement?
4. How can public policy be made more amenable to productive civic engagement for the purpose of increasing social capital?

The Next Generation of Family Farming

5. Korten reminds Americans of their revolutionary heritage and states that, “if sovereignty resides ultimately in the citizenry, their engagement is about the right to define the public good, to determine the policies by which they will seek that good, and to reform or replace those institutions that no longer serve.” How can Americans come to consensus on what serves the public good in order to engage in meaningful reform?
6. Why does civic engagement require mutual and reciprocal obligations on the part of its actors?

Supporting a Green Future in Native American Communities

7. What historical factors underlie the government’s low responsiveness to Native American community concerns? Is it possible to establish strong features of positive social capital without government responsiveness?
8. In what ways is civic engagement a means as well as an end in itself?

Envisioning an Inclusive World

9. Adler and Kwon notice that while some civic engagement can build social capital and positively impact other capitals, “The same forces of solidarity that ‘help members bind can turn into ties that blind,’ as over-embedded relationships stop flow of new information and ideas into the group.” What is the distinction between over-embedded social relationships and healthy trust between societal members?
10. Religious cults, terrorist organizations, gangs, and drug cartels are groups with strong internal ties among members in society. How are these organizations different from civic engagements that foster inclusion and promote social good?

Immigrants in America: Common Values, Common Dreams

11. Explain how assimilation of all people into a society increases social capital.
12. Social capital is embodied in relationships. How is that social capital limited through, as well as encouraged by, societal relationship?

Reforming Prisons Saving Billions Creating Opportunities

13. How does the idea of incarceration work against the goal of building social capital and civic engagement?
14. How does a system of punishment undermine trust between citizenry and the government?

Post-Reading Questions

15. How is social capital analogous to human and environmental capital and how does it, similarly, influence a community's productivity?
16. Alexis de Tocqueville noted, in the 1830s, that, "Americans of all ages, all stations in life, and all types of disposition ...are forever forming associations." Is this true today? What encourages or discourages people from forming associations of civic engagement?