THE ATTRACTIVENESS OF SOCIAL LIFE IN THE COMMUNITY ENVIRONMENT

Dumitru STAN [*]

Abstract

There are no concepts in social sciences and in humanities that would enjoy unanimous agreement over their meaning. What is more, potential efforts at conceptual simplification and unification have led to the opposite effect, of complication of categories and diversification. The concept of community has a respectable history, especially in sociology, but it has also generated a genuine semantic and interpretative inflation. The current study aims to provide a version of the definition of communitarian reality, by setting it against social reality. Starting from arguments that justify the presence of homo socialis both in community and in society, we conclude with the aspects that produce the attractiveness and comfort of social life, especially in community areas: consanguinity, relational density, unconditioned solidarity, affectivity, mutual tolerance, educational similarity, elective affinities etc. The favourable image of a community is not constructed by tracing a detestable profile of society, as evidence confirms the presence of communitarian elements in society, as well as of societal elements in community. Also, by capitalising on the premise that communities offer individuals various advantages, we can establish the typological affiliation of community groups according to two differentiating criteria: the number of common elements recognised by community members and the degree of community stability. Since it has become increasingly frequent currently to talk about the return to community, in the end of our study we describe a series of socio-cultural and political circumstances that can fine-tune the contemporary concept of community.

Keywords: homo socialis, group resource, community, society, life scheme, sociality, sociability, community spirit, social distance, genuine community, pseudo-community, community stability, community comfortability.

Résumé

Dans les sciences socio-humaines, il n'existe pas de concepts qui connaissent l'unanimité en ce qui concerne leur sémantique. Tout au plus, les efforts de simplification et unification conceptuelle ont mené à des effets opposés, de complication et de diversification catégorielle. Le concept de communauté a une histoire importante, surtout en sociologie, mais il a aussi généré une inflation sémantique remarquable et interprétative. Dans cette étude, nous proposons une version de la définition de la réalité communautaire, en la rapportant à la réalité sociétale. En partant d'arguments qui confirment la présence de homo socialis dans le milieu communautaire mais aussi dans celui sociétal, nous concluons sur les aspects qui produisent de l'attractivité et de la confortabilité à la vie sociale justement dans l'espace communautaire : consanguinité, densité relationnelle, solidarité

[*] Assoc.Prof. Ph.D., Director of The Department of Sociology and Social Work, Faculty of Philosophy and Social-Political Sciences, Alexandru Ioan Cuza University, Iasi, Bd. Carol I no.11, 700506, Iasi, Romania; E-mail: dtrustan@yahoo.com

sans conditions, affectivité, tolérance réciproque, similarité éducationnelle, affinités électives, etc. L'image favorable de la communauté n'est pas construite par la mise en évidence d'un profil détestable à la société, puisque l'évidence confirme la présence de certains éléments communautaires dans la société, tout comme de certains éléments sociétaux dans la communauté. De plus, en outre, en valorisant la prémisse conformément à laquelle les communautés offrent aux individus des avantages différents, nous établissons l'appartenance typologique des groupes communautaires en fonction de deux critères de distinction : le nombre des éléments communs reconnus par les communautaires et le degré d'équilibre communautaire. Et puisqu'on discute actuellement de plus en plus sur le retour à la communauté, nous allons décrire, à la fin de notre étude, une succession de circonstances socioculturelles et politiques à l'aide desquelles le concept contemporain de communauté doit être nuancé.

Mots-clé: homo socialis, ressource de group, communauté, société, schéma de vie, socialité, sociabilité, esprit communautaire, distance sociale, communauté véritable, pseudo-communauté, stabilité de la communauté, confortabilité de la communauté.

Rezumat

În ştiinţele socio-umane nu există concepte care să se bucure de unanimitate în privinţa semanticii lor. Mai mult, eventualele eforturi de simplificare şi unificare conceptuală s-au finalizat cu efecte opuse, de complicare şi diversificare categorială. Conceptul de comunitate are o istorie respectabilă, mai ales în sociologie, dar şi el a generat o adevărată inflaţie semantică şi interpretativă. În studiul de faţă propunem o versiune de definire a realităţii comunitare, prin raportarea acesteia la realitatea societală. Plecând de la argumente care justifică prezenţa lui homo socialis atât în mediul comunitar, cât şi în cel societal, conchidem asupra aspectelor care produc atractivitate şi confortabilitate vieţii sociale în special în spaţiul comunitar: consanguinitate, densitate relaţională, solidaritate necondiţionată, afectivitate, toleranţă reciprocă, similaritate educaţională, afinităţi elective etc. Imaginea favorabilă a comunităţii nu este construită prin conturarea unui profil detestabil societăţii, întrucât evidenţa confirmă prezenţa unor elemente comunitare în societate, precum şi a unor elemente societale în comunitate. De asemenea, valorificând premisa conform căreia comunităţile oferă indivizilor avantaje diferite, stabilim apartenenţa tipologică a grupurilor comunitare în funcţie de două criterii de demarcare: numărul elementelor comune recunoscute de comunitari şi gradul de stabilitate comunitară. Întrucât se vorbeşte actulmente din ce în ce mai mult despre revenirea la comunitate, în finalul studiului descriem o serie de împrejurări socio-culturale şi politice prin care trebuie nuanţat conceptul contemporan de comunitate.

Cuvinte cheie: homo socialis, resursă grupală, comunitate, societate, schemă de viaţă, socialitate, sociabilitate, spirit comunitar, distanţă socială, comunitate veritabilă, pseudocomunitate, stabilitate comunitară, confortabilitate comunitară

1. The community of "Homo socialis" and society frameworks

Man often sees himself through Narcissus' eyes. This is why he does not hesitate to assign to himself ever more flattering qualities: *sapiens, faber, culturalis, oeconomis, aesthethicus, academicus* and so on, yet his Narcissism is too little justified as long

as the apotheotic moments in his existence are shadowed by numerous situations of irrationality in actions, behavioural immorality, physical fragility, intellectual incapacity, political immaturity etc. Despite the multiple proofs of existential precariousness, he continues to believe himself to be good, beautiful, efficient and strong, although he could easily be defined as *discordans, conflictualis, ereticus, ludens, stultus* etc. What keeps him in the sphere of optimism, feeds his illusion of power and the hope for success, is nothing else but his nature as *homo socialis* (Rădulescu*,* 2006, p. 112)*.* This means the objective, functional inclusion of any normal individual within a social frame, namely inside a group or several groups; implicitly, this means engaging all normal humans in the life scheme that is specific to the social environment of their belonging, so as to be able to benefit, when need be, from its capitalised forces. The group becomes the most important source of power and stability for the individual, and orientation towards this source is produced in a much more spontaneous manner than in a controlled one and much more empirically than scientifically.

The fact that man denies and overcomes his weaknesses must be correlated not so much with the actual capacities of certain persons as with the *sui generis* state of *socialis* of the human species. Most times, persons facing critical moments or found in hypostases that only threaten comfortability tend to exaggerate about the dangers to which they are exposed and they show lack of confidence in individual possibilities to counter them. In exchange, if they set themselves against the potential of the species to which they belong and they become aware of the scope of its achievements, they reach the conclusion that the difficulties that they are going through are only some unfortunate episodes for which the optimal solutions have not been discovered yet; sooner or later, according to this conclusion, the extra-individual environment will prove its additional resources of creative force and it will offer a person the solutions that he or she expects.

Thus, on the one hand, temporary personal incapacities are metamorphosed in *almost unlimited trust in the species' capacities of belonging* and, on the other hand, in non-conditional connection to humanity's real or virtual cultural capitals. Group resources, especially those lesser known, are hyperbolised by persons in difficulty, as if the group could do anything and would have huge resources, known to it only. Expectances connected to these resources become huge and quite many times individuals do not go beyond the status of consumers, giving up the idea of conceiving solutions through their own forces thinking that the latter would perform less than those discovered by the group.

The quality of *homo socialis* must be understood not as an alternative to individual existence, but as an absolutely compulsory human state; this is why, those who do not come to internalise the contents of this state can be said to not only diminish their existential chances but also to stop belonging to the human species from a socio-cultural perspective.

Sometimes, people adopt excessively particularised life schemes and they seem to have no need for the cultural offers of the group. Although their participation to social life is significantly reduced, this does not deprive them of the attributes of sociality as long as they remain, even though only formally, integrated in the social environment. In rare contexts and for limited lengths of time there can be individuals who would claim total independence from the groups to which they are affiliated or who would even constrain the members of those groups to become subordinate to them. Even in such circumstances, the status of *homo socialis* remains fundamental; via communication, exchanges of goods, involvement in the unfolding of events or simply via the way in which various power relations are managed, those who pretend to be situated above the functional exigencies of collectives remain in the area of influence of social life. History has proven that tyrants, dictators, and monarchs of absolute powers themselves were either sacrificed or ”devoured” by groups that they controlled radically, or they made enough concessions to those around them in order to be able to co-exist. In other words, there is a process of mutual adjustment and accommodation at work between individuals and groups, in which the main beneficiary are individuals. The latter's need to make permanent the obtained benefit has motivated and shaped them in such a way that they come to express the social state of their species both in daily behaviours and in exceptional behaviours, in conscious manifestations as well as in instinctive ones, in rational forms as well as in less controlled or residual ways. This explains why, in general, individuals are said to be what they are depending on what they have received from the social environment in which they were formed, and to remain relatively faithful to it despite coercions and rejections from it (Durkheim, 2001).

Man's capacity as a social being is all the more attractive as it is associated with a huge plethora of advantages: collective defence, general will, mental contagion, social contract, collective consciousness, interdependence, social assistance, global culture, democracy, national salvation, collective memory, social protection etc. They do not emerge automatically in individuals' life. The depth at which they assimilate the advantages listed above depends mostly on them; the same holds true for the efforts, purposes, speed in relation to the emergences of personal aspirations and the risks attracted in the steps taken to conform to the group.

In the functioning of the relations between individuals and collectives that they intersect with a process of negotiation is initiated, and the contents of the relations developed by the parties reflect their sides and qualities as *homo socialis*; for instance, the help that an individual gives to relatives can be justified by consanguinity or by the moral duty that one has towards them. Both for an individual and for group members, the act of helping is seen as an obligation or as a self-deriving gesture when the persons are inter-related. But it is not in the same manner that individuals understand, for instance, the tax that they pay from their own revenue so as to collect the sums from which society will pay unemployment

benefits to some of its members. Ignoring the direct beneficiaries of the money that they give, individuals interpret tax either through the social reasons for which it is applied, as an abuse of the state, or as a tribute offered to some strangers whose merits to receive it cannot be established precisely.

The quality of *homo socialis* is undoubtedly captured in both hypostases presented above, with the difference that in the former case the connection between parties has in kinship an internal energetic support, which ensures its stability, while in the latter case the relation is supported only formally, normatively and it could be given up unless various negative effects occurred. An individual's relation with the group substantially shapes the former, which thus *creates* the necessary and sufficient processual condition of the formation of *homo socialis*. Beyond the satisfaction of this condition, man's social formation gains individualising valences that are in agreement with the density of relations, the intensity of interactions, the weight of formal and informal elements in the relational dynamics, the nature of the negotiated contents, the motivations of the interacting parties, the level of mutual tolerance, the degree of interdependence between individual and group etc. Finally, the ways in which the relation to which we refer is expressed come to configure both human typologies and group typologies. Thus, sociologists distinguish between "Philistines", "Pharisees", "Bohemians", "creators", (Znaniecki, 1958) "speculators", "persons living on unearned money" (Pareto, 2007) in order to describe some repetitive tendencies in individuals' openings towards groups. Also, from the perspective of sociology, one can distinguish between "*masses", "middle class", "elite", "primary collective", "secondary collective"* (Rouchy, 2000)*, "community", "society"* (Tönnies, 1963)*, "rural community", "urban community"* etc.; in this way, types of groups are differentiated depending on their size and the depth of the relations existing among those who make them up. I have mentioned this so as to conclude that through his very nature, man belongs to the "*socialis"* species as well as to suggest that human being's belonging is not everywhere as tempting and advantageous.

We understand easier the differences between human types, as well as those between the various categories of groups, if we differentiate between sociality and sociability as essential notes of "homo socialis". We refer to man's quality to be a social being and to society's property to be constituted as a form of *people's* inter-existence by using a single term, *sociality,* which we shall distinguish from *sociability,* considering that the latter expresses the capacity (ability) of a man or a group of persons to integrate in society" (Ungureanu, 1990, pp. 22-23). In other words, sociality means, broadly, the sum of the basic socio-cultural characteristics that are inherent to human beings everywhere (thought, communication, affiliation, symbolising etc.), and in a narrow meaning, all the elements necessary to man (traditions, values, norms, styles, similarity behaviours etc.) in order to be considered the representative of a certain human group. Therefore, sociality is a qualitative state that man must reach so that his group affiliation could be defined

more precisely, while sociability is nothing but the quantitative dimension at which sociality is accomplished.

When we say about a person that he or she is more sociable than another, we argue, in fact, that he or she is capable of manoeuvring a larger number of aspects of sociality in inter-individual relations, with more ease. One's numerous interpersonal openings create relational closeness, familiarity in communication, dense mutual knowledge, foresight about the effects of engaged relations and the feeling that parties have many similar or even common elements.

Starting especially from the degree of sociability that is manifest between the individuals of a group and the number of direct connections established between them, we can distinguish clearly enough between two of the fundamental types of human groups that we mentioned: *community* and *society*. As for the former, the community, it has been argued that its members are strongly integrated, and they remain greatly connected, interdependent, including when they make efforts to separate and that the formal supports of the relations among them are heavily completed by sympathetic energies, empathies, affects, intuitions and impulses that are almost impossible to master or to avoid. About the second group that we distinguished, society, F. Tönnies (who is said to have introduced in sociology the opposition between the community and the society group) stated that it enables a calculated sociability and mediated, strongly standardised social relations. This is why, in society, individuals remain organically separated despite their attempts to reduce formalisation, and in interpersonal relations "nobody acts in any way to the advantage of another unless he obtains an equivalent in exchange" (Tönnies, 1963, p. 164).

"Homo socialis" is present both in the community and in society only that, for the individual, the level of comfort perceived in the societal environment is less attractive: **a.** the protection that he is offered is rationalised and conditioned by the meeting of certain standards; **b.** the social body in which he is integrated has huge dimensions and he finds it hard to understand the contractual connections existing between him and the multitude of people whom he does not know; **c.** the normative fund according to which the functioning of society is ordered is many times trespassed, and this is why individuals become prudent and suspicious with respect to the quality of the intentions of their fellows; **d.** the relations of an individual to the societal group are decanted, evaluated and maintained as long as there are chances for them to be finalised by accomplishing certain interests; **e.** individual appeals from the societal environment to informal relational forms specific to the community environment lead to the institution of supplementary discouragement measures on behalf of society and of moral blaming of those concerned because they betray their weaknesses and secrets in front of strangers; **f.** common individuals do not always capture correctly the reasons of the existence and functioning of society, what advantages they get from society and, consequently, they mask its purposes, tend to consider themselves its victims or to define

themselves as a manipulated and tolerated instrument only as long as they meet the rigors of the societal environment; **g.** situations of attachment to the societal group are relatively few and circumstantial, and individuals prefer to speculate opportunities (that are obscure, most times) offered by foreigners and to avoid their threats and sanctions so as to make sure that they will obtain a certificate of normality or social integration; **h.** social distance dictates the nature of reports between society members, constraining individuals to observe it starting from the modes of verbal communication, the politeness pronouns used, the differentiated sharing of certain benefits, the occasional manifestation of tolerance or intolerance etc. and ending with the courage to claim a privileged residential location or with the practice of segregationist spatial dispositions in current communication hypostases; **i.** The level of requests addressed to society is very large, as large as the one of the expectations that envisage social interventions, but the effects expected by an individual are rarely reached at the necessary intensity; **j.** society seems to be insensitive to extremely many problems of its particulars, and when it reacts to some of them it satisfies individuals only in part, as it offers valid solutions not only for him but also for everybody who falls under the same typical situation to solve; **k.** irrespective of how imposing the status of an individual might be, the latter is treated from a socio-cultural point of view as a subordinate of society, since it is well known that it outlives individuals and gathers experiences that are superior to those that individuals have; **l.** The vastness of the societal environment, the variety of cultural capitals found in its intension and the controlled guidance of these capitals towards beneficiaries, lead individuals to an ambivalent position: on the one hand, they are convinced of the enormous real and virtual potential of society, but on the other hand they are reticent about the quality of the relation that they can engage with this group. They notice that, sometimes, what is desirable for an individual is rejected by society and that there are groups for which the comfort of the members who make them up represent a priority objective in comparison with the general interests of society.

We call such groups communities, but they are so convenient for "homo socialis" that they determine individuals to resort to pragmatic discriminations: **a.** to direct themselves as much as it is necessary towards societal groups, namely towards the world of unknown persons or of persons from whom they do not need to expect affection and tolerance; **b.** to direct themselves mainly towards one or several groups of the community type, from which they feel entitled to claim affective responses, gestures of solidarity and permissiveness. Such options are easily detectable in normal individuals and we must consider them not so much opposed in their nature as generating consequences of various attractiveness. The societal group, for instance, is rigid, constraining towards an individual, but it develops extensively the latter's existential chances, if the beneficiary meets many formalised criteria. The community group, in exchange, is disposed to offer a person more than it receives from him or her, to make concessions or to be

forgiving towards its members including when they disappoint it and to use informal means of social control inside it. This is why *individuals agree to fit first into community environments and only later in society*. Ultimately, communities are group structures of much specificity and stability, relatively simple from the environment of the society, that have to integrate in this larger structure and prepare its members for the impact of the passage from the scheme of life focused on sympathy, selfishness and forgiveness to the scheme of life oriented towards competition, selfishness and intransigence. Therefore, the successful presence of an individual in the societal environment depends extensively on what he or she has assimilated while he or she was dependent almost completely on the community environment.

2. Differentiating notes between community and society

In 1651, Thomas Hobbes published the celebrated work "The Leviathan", whose title was taken over from the name of a horrifying Biblical monster. On the cover of the book, the Leviathan is represented as a huge human body made up of a very large number of "agglutinated little humans" (Braunstein, Pepin, 1996). The force of this huge body emulates from a complex set of factors, starting with the number of those included in the respective bodily unit, continuing with the level of osmosis between the self-adhering Lilliputian human figures, the reasons which explain why they remained in the supra-individual bodily structure, the external and internal attacks that can make the giant vulnerable, and ending with the recognition of the differentiated importance of the "little humans" depending on the vital area covered by their spatial disposition on the colossal body.

Considering the Leviathan to be a symbolic embodiment of "homo socialis" and leaving from elements that can be easily seen or only from those presupposed that concern the state of the Leviathan, we can trace with more certainty the specific notes of community:

a. The large and very large number of individuals who form a group normally characterises society, and small and medium sized groups are favourable to the social functioning of a community type. When an extraordinary causal pheno-menon comes to affect the population of a region, of a country or even of the entire humanity, and individuals have similar preoccupations and reactions to it although they do not know each other, we can state that these massive demographic groups are communities. Yet, community stability in such cases is much more contextual or temporary, as the group ceases to be of a community type as soon as the reasons that united its members as individuals disappear.

b. The larger the number of elements that bring people close within the social body is and the more they stimulate them to remain attached to this body, the more obvious the consistency of the community is. If the connections between indi-viduals and the community group to which they belong are superficial and so much

diluted that individuals can easily leave and go to other group structures, then the force of the community is in regress, and the societal spirit becomes prevalent.

c. The shorter the length of interdependences between persons are, the more dynamic individuals are, the less inclined they are to prolong the validity of relations between them and the more rationally they control the contents of their relations, the more the societal scheme of social life is promoted. If, on the contrary, inter-personal relations run by virtue of habits and are reproduced almost in the same way over large periods of time, despite pressures for them to change, the group that practices them is of a community type.

d. Within the community, inter-knowledge is real, rich, most often direct and it gradually brings individuals close until unconditional solidarity emerges among them. In exchange, society offers the organisational frameworks of the process of inter-knowledge and, at the same time, it establishes the reasons why inter-knowledge should be achieved. Both in the community and in society symbols are being built which generate the collective identity of their members, with the difference that the community symbol does not reflect enough the multitude of common elements and the level of inter-knowledge of individuals, and the societal symbol is more a synthesis or a forced definition of the collective of some people who are much too different among themselves and who know each other too little. In fact, society does not encourage the overcoming of certain limits of inter-personal knowledge, so that individuals should not become the victim of the indiscretions of their fellows.

e. Within the community, existential risks are assumed both by the individual and the group; their involvement to mitigate risks depends not only on their capacities but it is also compulsory. In the societal environment, individuals tend to leave everything to the group and accuse the latter whenever their life quality is affected. In its turn, society, under the pretext of individuals' main equality, exposes the latter to fierce competitions and tends to do away with persons whose survival resources are meagre. By proceeding in this manner, society situates itself at the longest moral distance from the community. Despite its considerable assistance efforts, due to the lack of emotional involvement and the insufficiency of resources - society can only probe its own "social impotence" (Adorno, 2007, p. 227) and project the community in ever favourable lights.

f. In relation to society, community appears as a space that is rather restraint, homogeneous and unitary from the point of view of its internal structures and functions, intimate, stable, therapeutic in critical moments and especially agreeable for individuals. Also, the rational dimension cannot miss from the community (Selznick, 1992, p. 368), but it is mobilized by phenomena that are specific to the community group, and that are hard to understand by its outsiders. Including when the community is aggressive towards one of its members, the aggressive act is motivated by a high rationality, and the group pretends that, in fact, it protects the individual and "sees", "knows" and "does" what is better for it.

g. One cannot trace rigid and definite boundaries between community and society, although almost all analyses of these concepts start from their disjunction. On the one hand, setting them in a radical opposition is the main reason of the idealization of community, and on the other hand, of the detestation of society. Yet reality confirms that within society there can be moments of spontaneous solidarisation and friendly interpersonal coagulation that is specific to the community, just as in a community there can occur societal manifestations of the kind of disloyal competitions and de-structuring conflicts. The fact that there are societal aspects within a community and aspects of a community type in the sphere of society forces us to delimit community from society via three explanatory premises: – by birth, an individual belongs to the primary group or to the community, and by going through the exigencies supposed by continuous training and personal development he or she becomes a member of society also; – the individual assumption of a multitude of elements (kinship, traditions, material resources, history, responsibilities etc.) shared with persons whom one can easily designate (blood-relatives, neighbours, friends, fellow townsmen, followers of the same religion, members of the same team or ethnic group etc.) validates the existence of the community, while the small number of such elements and the superficiality of their effects in group solidarity validates the presence of society; – as human group genres, community and society claim the manifestation of socio-cultural components of the same type (relations, communication, association, education, social order etc.), but they distance themselves quite obviously in terms of the depth of the expressed psychic components (spirit of sacrifice, elective affinities, collective representations, tolerance to ambiguity etc.).

By valuing these explanatory premises and differentiation notes between community and society, one can agree on the following way of defining groups that are considered non-societal: *any social life environment in which connections between individuals are very little formalised, dense, naturally reproduced, founded on positive experience from the time of primary socialisation, desirable through the provoked affective comfortability and which guarantees unconditioned solidarity, mutual tolerance, collective identity, interactional honesty, durable harmony and the maintenance of their life style to the people who make it up, represents community.*

The features which are specific to the community group captured in this definition should be identified in each type of community. Reality does not confirm as convincingly the satisfaction of this exigency in all community environments; actually, *mutual tolerance,* plentifully manifested in the family community, is not accomplished in the same way as in the work community, *solidarity* gains different contents in the village community in comparison with solidarity in the ethnic community, *collective identity* is differently supported in a religious community in comparison with a national community etc. Yet noticing lags of community expression does not eliminate the validity of the characteristics listed in the definition. In

addition, it forces us to take into account a new defining feature that depends on the specificity of each community: the *presence of community spirit*. Thus we can explain why the generic features of community groups have contents and intensities that are different from one community to another and, at the same time, we obtain the overwhelming argument that persuades us to admit the very large importance of the psychological factors in the constitution and functioning of communities. On the one hand, the confirmation of this recognition derives from the large frequency of use, especially by psycho-sociologists, of the notion of community spirit and, on the other hand, from the considerable weight of psychological indicators in analyses conducted on communities.

The intensive use of the concept of community with meanings that are more understated than very precise (*lost community, vegetal community, animal community, absent community* – Luc-Nancy, 2005, p. 33 and the following) has been stimulatory for knowledge, and it has been concretised in new terminological variations coined to designate the community group (*illusory community, fake community, Morgana community, imagined community* – Pitulac, 2009); yet they are pretentious and even useless as far as the need for semantic simplification is concerned. Some sociologists have reached the conclusion that "the word community has so many meanings and uses that it is almost impossible to define it precisely" (Pascaru, 2003, pp. 32-33). Other sociologists, who are more optimistic, recommend a simpler procedure in the elimination of apprehensions concerning this issue, namely the typological recording of human community forms identified throughout the history of sociology (Balandier, 1983, pp. 10 and the following). This procedure could produce information both about the community group in general and about each type of community. Also, we could identify a set of incontestable differentiating criteria between genuine and pseudo communities. Implicitly, the premises to reduce conceptual inflation concerning community could be created, and thus the concept could be steered away from the area of philosophical speculations.

3. Differentiation of communities

The concept of community is significantly old in social philosophy, and it has gained consecration in the works of sociologist F. Tönnies. In "Community and Society", which he published in 1887 and which granted him a place in any serious exegesis on the history of sociology, Tönnies launched a knowledge paradigm of the two types of human groups mentioned in the title. Commented on and completed in time by many categories of specialists, this prestigious paradigm stands out through a few fundamental ideas:

a. Human groups are either communities or societies, if we evaluate them from the perspective of their size and the internal social relations that they practice.

b. Community pre-existed society, which means that forms of organisation such as the family, the village, the group unit based on religion, the work group, existed in the life of humanity before the emergence of large industrial villages, nations, trade corporations, and state societies.

c. The history of humanity is a continuous evolution of community towards society, without the total disappearance or the loss in significance of the community-type organisation. It was only after the Middle Ages that the societal organisation took over the community organisation in the sense that the industrial city, capitalism with an extended market economy, science, the bureaucratic apparatus, democracy etc. became more attractive than social rural life, activities in agriculture, the production of autarchic capacity, religious explanations, authoritarian political regimes, informal social control etc.

d. The difference between community and society is not definite; we cannot issue categorical statements about the quality of the passage from the organisation of a community type to the one of the society type, as long as it marks the replacement of affective elements with rational elements, of mechanical solidarity with organic solidarity, of natural order with legal order etc., but the performed substitutions do not persuade us that they equate with as many moments of socio-cultural progress. In very many cases, to abandon the community cohabitation style and to adopt the societal style can mean desirable changes (economic increase, organisational perfections, high revenue increases, the boost of individual and group life, access to a higher level of comfort etc.) in parallel with indubitable phenomena of regress: the conditioned granting of social protection, the dilution of the "warmth" of interpersonal relations, the increase of social distance between individuals, the multiplication of situations of social non-integration, the regulation of reports between individuals via prevalent recourse to juridical norms to the disadvantage of moral norms etc. In this explanatory context, the "return to community" as "return to innocence" (Bauman, 2001, p. 9) represents the best solution, states Z. Bauman – one of the subtest analysts of differences between community and society.

e. An individual is born in a community environment and, naturally, benefits from the advantages of its structures first: family, neighbourhood, friendship, affection. From the moment when he or she leaves the comfortable circle of the community and enters the societal environment, he or she has to face structures that are not only new but also hostile in comparison with the former: the place of relatives is taken by foreigners, complementarity between neighbours is replaced by segregated habitation, and the absence of friends is commuted in the supposition that the societal environment is inimical, dangerous, predisposed to very many conflicts. Societal structures are transformed, therefore, in factors of uncertainty for the individual, and he or she must diminish the coefficient of risk by capitalising on the socio-cultural capitals received in community. Actually, what could be used in community with positive results that are guaranteed to last for a long time must be

used in society as well, but with much precaution, strategies and doubts connected to the quality of effects that one could obtain even for a short term.

The knowledge of the types of communities is useful to community members first of all, but not so as to know what they have to do within the communities of their belonging, but so as to find out the most appropriate use of the capital assimilated in the community when they accede to the societal environment. Also, it is good to know the types of communities so as to avoid the error of the equation of genuine communities (family, village, small town, work group, religious group, ethnic group) with pseudo-communities such as the metropolis, the linguistic minority, the club, the union, regional demographic concentration etc. From a cognitive point of view it is necessary to differentiate even among the communities that we have called "genuine", as there are obvious differences among them – although we consider them essentially different only if we set them against pseudo-communities.

In order to understand the process of natural separation of communities from pseudo-communities, as well as the emergence of boundaries between the groups that we unhesitatingly define as communities, we have to identify the principle that leads to such demographic demarcations. To this end we resort to Frederic Fanget's theory (Fanget, 2008, pp. 81-85) about the four ingredients or dimensions presup-posed by the optimal state of human equilibrium: *encouraging social relations, devoted friends, comfortable affectivity* and *professional satisfaction.* Ideally, all these components should function; if some of them are disturbed, then the state of equilibrium is affected in direct relation to the number of non-functional or insufficiently functional dimensions. By analogy, we can state that a community is a(group) construction whose state of equilibrium varies depending on the number of resistance structures or pillars that support it: when community pillars are many (at least four, so as to ensure the grounding of the construction in its environment), and the state of equilibrium is obtained from inside, spontane ously, the community has a *certain stability*; when the number of community pillars is large enough and in agreement with the functional needs of the group, and the state of equilibrium is obtained by capitalising on and by redistributing some internal resources of the social body, then the community enjoys *comfortable stability*; when community pillars are few and disposed in such a way that one cannot take over the task of another, then the disequilibrium is imminent and the situation calls for urgent external interventions so that the community group could reach *adjusted* or *assisted stability;* when community pillars are too few, aspects of collective identity are insignificant, and internal equilibrium depends almost totally on external influences and interventions, the group is characterized by *instability*. Practically, this is the stage of community de-structuring, which leaves room for the organisation of a society type. The new group construction, i.e. society, has its own recipe to reach equilibrium, in which contingent elements are replaced by controlled ones, affective motivators are replaced by rational ones, traditional and transcendental factors are eliminated or justified by scientific ones, and so on.

According to the listed types of stability, we can differentiate among genuine communities in the following manner: rural families and communities benefit from certain stability, religious communities and work communities cultivate comfortable stability, while small urban communities and ethnic communities are characterised by precarious or assisted stability. Beyond these correspondences between the various genuine communities and the degrees of group stability there are pseudo-communities and the various social environments that have a superficial self-repro-ducing capacity. If genuine communities can be said to preserve themselves including when they undergo moments of crisis, pseudo-communities and societies can be said to be permissive to significant changes even when they seem to be stable.

Certainly, the previous sentence is susceptible to lack realism, as long as certain intra-community phenomena contradict it: the current divorce rate is increasing, many villages are turning into cities, gestures of de-solidarisation occur among co-workers threatened by unemployment – although specialists almost unanimously agree that the family, the village and the small work group are genuine com-munities. At the same time, some metropolises, unions and political world organisations have an impressive age and they seem to function as very large-sized stable communities, although they can be re-organised and even dissolved within a short period of time including by the simple expression of the desire of their members. I have given these examples so as to highlight one more time the difficulty of radically distinguishing between community and society, but also so as to clarify the role given to the factor *stability* in definitions of community. Its authority seems to be overwhelming in comparison with the role of the factor represented by the *number of common elements* that community members relate to. Undoubtedly, both factors are essential, but the former is a consequence of the latter: *the intensity of the stability of the social body derives from the convergence of common elements that are assumed and legitimated as collective capital.* This explains why a group that is characterised, at a given moment, by a very large stability but that is supported by a single existential aspect (*community pillar)*does not represent a genuine community, or why a group such as the family, grounded on multiple common elements, remains a genuine community although it is confronted with economic distress, domestic violence, situations of adultery etc.

If, apparently, objections cannot be raised when it comes to the recognition of the quantitative dimension of common factors in the definition of community, this is not true when it comes to the qualitative dimensions of these factors; *from among the sometimes very high number of functional factors in a community, only some of them induce the nature and the essence of the group.*

In the previous pages we presented a series of ideal and typical characteristics of communities in general; in what follows we shall delineate a few ideal-typical features of genuine communities, and argue that their high-value support pillars are relatively few. For instance, from an ideal-typical perspective, the *Christian family community* is described in the following terms: **a.** it originates in a *special*

marriage ritual, which must have a value of uniqueness; **b.** the parties that enter a marital relation are constrained to meet criteria that would guarantee their physical, moral, social, cultural *maturity*, as well as the consent, in full awareness, to this relation; **c.** the act of marriage is *validated* by divinity via the religious wedding service, as well as by the residential community via the civil wedding ceremony, and the corresponding parties and festivities; **d.** married persons have *mutual rights and obligations*, and observing them consolidates family, just like failure to do so erodes the domestic group; **e.** the normal family environment must remain "a private universe" (Segallen, 2011, p. 372), starting from the living space, the manifestation of intimate relations among spouses, the formulation of group objectives etc. and ending with inter-generational distribution of responsibilities and the constructive resolution of internal conflicts; **f.** the essential ingredient of the construction and functioning of family is *love*, a superior feeling that attracts tolerant, solidary behaviours that go as far as sacrifice, that are focused on the beneficiary, unconditional, uncensored by intentions deprived of altruism; **g.** *aspects mutually shared* by family members are much more numerous than in the case of any other type of community, the feelings of love being joined by consanguinity between parents and children, the common use of several categories of goods, similarity of name and religious affiliation, unity in the pursuit of goals and ideals, very similar psychological experiences, compatibility and comple-mentarity among components etc. **h.** The fulfilment of *vital functions for an individual* such as care, education, security, socialisation, social placement, affective response, the replacement of generations etc., and the social importance of these functions is reflected in the longitudinal or historical stability of family communities; **i.** *The understanding shown to the other* within the family is not constructed, derived from an ever enriched inter-knowledge, deduced from many negotiations and compromises, but it is the precondition of being together or of being a unit that can respond efficiently to the aggression of many separating factors; **j.** the family body that has to undergo trauma mobilises its full potential so as to mitigate or annihilate it, which means the *co-participation* of family members to the sorting out of the critical situation experienced by only one of its components, or at least it becomes aware that the problem to be solved belongs to the entire family group and not in the least only to the person who is directly affected; **k.** *the state of harmony* in the domestic group does not derive from contract or consensus, but from the actual contents of individual wills, each individual willing for himself or herself only what does not prevent loyalty towards the rest of the group members.

The enumeration of the characteristics of family communities can continue with the listing of all elements that include, more or less convincingly, individuals in such a group. Yet, although we state that families "connect" their members through something, the nature of ties between them is debatable, in the sense that the latter are not encountered only within the family group: "we say that family is a group of

individuals connected by blood ties. Not always. Connected by name. Not always. Connected by love. Not always. Connected by common goals. Not always. Connected by the people who live together in the same house. Not always" (Băran-Pescaru 2004, p. 11). Consequently, to identify the aspects that define the domestic group exclusively equates to the designation of the perennial structure or of the pillars on which family community is grounded. It is only in such an approach that we seize the fact that this type of community maintains its specificity via a rather limited number of structures and functions, that have imposed themselves in time as sources of family stability: *marriage, kinship, specific relations* (marital, brotherly, filial), *their own statuses and roles* (as husband, wife, father, mother, son, daughter, brother, sister etc.), *bio-altruism* (automatic intra-family solidarity), *maximal empathy* (supported by the richness of common experiences), *the most protective affective response* (the result of a mix of psychological factors: love, attachment, compassion, altruism, the feeling of "we" etc.).

I have presented these details about family community with the intention to justify not so much its complexity as the imperativeness and objectivity of the inclusion of any individual in such a group. At the same time, the listed details allow the formulation of a conclusion that supports many of the previous statements: *the community construction is the functional composition of a huge number of factors of which most are auxiliary and only a few are fundamental.* The number of the latter makes the difference between genuine communities, on the one hand, and between communities and the other types of human groups, on the other hand. Social life can change the status of a community by transforming an essential factor into an auxiliary one and, much more rarely, a secondary factor into a fundamental one. In the current family and the contemporary village, for instance, several essential factors such as marriage, kinship and morality are in unquestionable regress: many couples function as consensual unions, and kinship preserves energetic or community supports only for the first two or three degrees. In the long "self-sufficient" rural environment, morality – an essential factor – is gradually turning into an auxiliary factor, while formal justice, as a secondary factor, tends to become a fundamental factor and to replace morality.

I ought to mention several ideal-typical features of the *rural community*, as it can be ranked second, after the family, in terms of historical stability. I shall only highlight the essential factors, as they place the village among *genuine communities of certain stability*: **a.** its members fully subscribe to the typological affiliation of *village dwellers*, due to their residence and, mostly, to their capacity as *peasants*, as a result of their economic activities in agriculture; **b.** *Common economic capital* or *common property,* which unites them for good and provides well-grounded reasons for co-interest, is constituted by a consistent pool of elements: grazing fields, ponds, wells, forests, agricultural lands etc. in whose maintenance all village dwellers are obliged to participate, and whose ensuing benefits are shared among all; **c.** *the level of interpersonal knowledge* is very high

and it is favoured by the relatively low number of individuals who make up the village, as well as the rather small surface on which they are placed; **d.** the available material resources, the practiced social relations and the possessed symbolic capitals are aspects that ensure village dwellers their survival in cases of constraint or option for *autarchic existence*; **e.** *relational practices of neighbourhood* are interposed between the family style and the village style of social life, and they are based on mutual help, trust and complementarity, as if neighbours had special behavioural duties towards each other; **f.** cultivated *intra-community solidarity* has, at first, a spontaneous character, especiallyifit is claimed in moments of existential danger, but it becomes rationalized as the beneficiaries of interventions do not seem to reactaccordingly to adopt the bahaviours recommended by helpers; **g.** *common institutions* (the Church, the school, the city hall etc.), *the local history and the traditional cultural fund*, create the feeling of collective intimacy through which community members legitimate themselves in front of those considered to be "foreigners"; **h.** *labeling* and the "mouth of the village" provide ongoing evaluations, create differences of prestige, hierarchies and handicaps that are hard to contradict, and this is why individuals are very cautious about their expressed moral behaviours.

Such identity factors impose the village community as a durable residential unit, as can be seen in the following definition of the village proposed by sociologist G. E. Marica: "the village is a unit with a geographical basis, with an agricultural population that is little numerous, little dense, sedentary and homogeneous, a durable unit, slightly differentiated and stratified, yet well integrated. An involuntary and non-final unit (even a life community), a primary and total unit (a complete unit, yet without being complex but relatively simple, and an autonomous or rather autarchic unit), determined by tradition, which mostly explains its fixity, stability, the irrationalism of social motivation and the strong social conformism that prevails among village dwellers, as well as the routine-based way of living of this group, characterised by the predominance of personal, intimate, direct, total reports" (Marica, 1997). In a definition that is so broad as to cover rural mono-graphs, we can identify the factors that designate both the permanent essence, and the contextuality of the existence of community in villages. As far as the main factors are concerned, the ones indicated above are fully confirmed. There are quite large variations in the accompanying auxiliary factors, but they are somehow normal; although they forma primary group and they live by observing the pressure of mechanic solidarity, village dwellers are allowed to deviate, within certain limits, from the obligations to build in the same way, to wear the same type of clothes, to eat the same food, to do the same works etc., and these changes do not modify the essence of their community.

As one can easily notice, family and village communities have consistent stabilities supported by very many auxiliary "pillars", as well as by a considerable number of factors that we have labelled as essential or fundamental. The other

types of communities are said to have more reduced stabilities because they are built on fewer long-term resistance pillars. For instance, a *work community* (team) finds the elements of its *comfortable stability* in the *voluntary constitution of the group, the easy communication among participants, the group assumption of goals, the distribution of actions in such a way that the contribution of each member should be clearly outlined, the fast and internal resolution of conflicts, and the fair reward of work*. Above all these aspects of communion there is the *need of individuals to cooperate,* which explains the presence of communities both in archaic and traditional times and in modern and postmodern ones. A relevant example related to this need is provided by the economist Adam Smith: in order to produce pins "One man draws out the wire, another straights it, a third cuts it, a fourth points it, a fifth grinds it at the top for receiving the head; to make the head requires two or three distinct operations…the important business of making a pin is, in this manner, divided into about eighteen distinct operations, which, in some manufactories, are all performed by distinct hands" (Smith, 1966).

As for *religious communities,* we have ranked them with communities of *comfortable stability.* The indispensable elements of such a group are quite few: *the recognition of the same sacred instance by all community members, the assumption of explanations or dogmas that particularise their outlook on the sacred instance, practicing specific rituals and prayers, the recognition of the institutional organisation that is specific to the religious cult, steady participation in religious manifestation s*and the *expression of faith as feelings of loyalty towards divinity, the religious institution and followers of the same religion.* The force of these pillars is so great that community members gain the confidence that they can obtain anything with the help of divinity, and the likelihood of obtaining divine grace is amplified if their prayers are addressed through collective manifestations. The socio-moral order anticipated by religious affiliation determines believers to adopt behaviours that would not attract divine sanctions and, especially, that would stimulate the functioning of the community via the love of one's neighbours and the pursuit of collective good. The absolute capacities of divinity, correlated with the expectations of believers, persuade the latter to keep their religion more than they would keep their residence, work place or family affiliation. As such, the religion of a community seems to integrate individuals at the deepest level possible. In line with this explanatory argument, we could conclude that family and village community are overtaken, in terms of stability, by the religious community. Yet reality undermines this conclusion: religious communities invoke divinity precisely so as to optimise the functioning of the other types of communities (especially the one based on family),which demonstrates the importance that they are granted; some individuals change their religion, others give it up totally, certain religious followers prefer to perform cult-related practices in other collectives than the one that they had joined up to a certain moment etc. Anyway, the religious community preserves its authority via the sacred force that brings it close to the

world via specific means, but it is more efficient as a group of believers who share the same space in the same time, than as a group constituted of all individuals who share the same religious affiliation, irrespective of the places where they manifest themselves religiously.

We consider urban and ethnic communities to have low stability, and external saving interventions are necessary in order for them to be reproduced. Large cities can be said to be societies, because their inhabitants are united only by residence and the use of the same bureaucratic network (some rudiments of community survive in districts and suburbs). On the contrary, small cities can be considered communities due to the effects of social coagulation generated by religious institutions and local symbolic elements of broad recognition. As religion diminishes its social impact because of secularisation and the new symbols cease to generate as much local attachment and collective identity, the small city community will likewise change into a societal environment. As for ethnicity, the common elements acknowledged by its members are more numerous than in the case of small urban communities. The most important aspect of collective identity is the awareness of the common origin. To it is added the common cultural tradition represented by myths, customs, superstitions, habits, language etc. For majority ethnic communities, traditional culture is a source of differentiation from other populations, when the issue of legitimation is raised. For minority ethnic communities, the cultural elements listed above are turned into fetishes, and their conservation becomes a condition of group survival. Due to situations of supranational integration, policies of ethnic assimilation, the attribution of multiple ethnic affiliations, the involvement of political factors at the expense of ethnic ones, victimisation on ethnic grounds, the association of social dysfunctions with certain ethnic groups etc., it is not ethnocentrism but multiculturalism that is stimulated. This orientation is likely to continue and, consequently, the ethnic community will become a simple proof of cultural diversity and not a source of power or conflict in the social bodies.

The types of communities that we have differentiated among in these pages were briefly described according to the number of common factors that are assumed by their members and the degree of group stability. My underlying concern has been to highlight how pleasant it is for individuals to live in one or another of the described communities. The added attractiveness and existential comfort provided to community members are, ultimately, states of satisfactions et off by the community spirit that is specific to each of these groups; from family community to ethnic community, all types of community are distinguished via their own non-societal spirit that is first concretised in the state of relaxation experienced by an individual and deduced from the simple observation that he or she is not among strangers. In all hypostases, "foreigners are the embodied uncertainty", and they must not be identified only with unknown persons; they can be embodied as menacingly by family members, neighbours, work colleagues, followers of the

same religion etc. who behave like strangers. Paradoxically, even the awareness of the presence of strangers close to us is profitable as they make us understand "where the danger resides, and blows no longer need to be ...received placidly" (Bauman, 2001, p. 108).

4. Contemporary re-evaluation of community

There was a period in the evolution of social sciences and humanities when the word *community* was excessively used so as to "obtain a subject that would seem important" (Orford 1998, p. 13). Consequently, the term seems to indicate nothing special anymore; rather, it is a linguistic equivalent for *society, group, mob, collective, public* etc.

The waves of economic, moral, social and political crises have stimulated solution seekers to re-evaluate human groups. In this context, interest in community was rekindled, especially because community has been noticed to harbour a very rich anti-crisis potential. If we consider the phenomenon of globalisation, some puzzled sociologists wonder "is it still reasonable to persevere in the study of human communities? (Moscovici 2007, p. 21). Their question is legitimate as current reality confirms the globalisation of the problems of humanity and, implicitly, the categorical extension of the spirit of society at the expense of the spirit of community. Yet everywhere, the same reality shows us individuals who are both citizens of a nation, "European citizens", "citizens of the world", and members of a community or of several community groups, in which they were socialised and through which they are identified. In other words, contemporary individuals, unlike those from older periods, can be defined as both *communitarian* (as members of their family, village, town, work team etc.) and *societal* (as members of extra-community groups). The influences of those from outside communities have become so frequent and significant in the functioning of community environments that they must be considered, if we wish to have correct explanations about types of communities. The recognition of the weight of these influences does not raise the issue of the disappearance of community, but only of its adaptation to the new socio-cultural and political realities: families benefit from specialised medical assistance from outside the community, the children of community members take some school courses in the societal environment, some minority ethnic groups are positively discriminated by society lest they should disappear, some village communities receive subventions from societies, unemployed community members are assisted by society via social benefits etc.

Practically, a partnership is instituted between community and society which transforms these groups into complementary or inter-dependent environments. To deny the desire of the community to obtain a part of the offers of society or to believe that society has no need of community resources equates with the promotion of the absurd separation of these two environments; under the pretext of

the preservation of the purity of community and of the avoidance to disturb it, one can cause blockages and crises that the community could not manage and for which it would claim the post-traumatic intervention of society quite late. To prevent such situations, Robert Warren proposes a *model of dynamic analysis of the community group* (Warren, 1961). According to him, community is a synthesis of two categories of factors: *internal* (all aspects inside communities that influence social life: the available material resources, the existing institutional network, the density and the nature of relations between individuals, between groups, between individuals and groups, the local values that orient the acts of community members, forms of organisation, rational manifestations and those which refuse rationalisation etc.) and *external* (all hypostases in which community members enter in relation with individuals, groups, organisations, institutions from outside communities, especially at area level).

The disposition of internal factors along a horizontal axis and of external factors along a vertical axis allows one to draw comparisons and to establish the level of community importance given to these two categories of factors. The person designated to manage the pulsations and the effects of the above mentioned factors would easily come to the conclusion that external factors are becoming increasingly important, while internal factors are becoming increasingly neglected. Current communities capitalise on both categories of factors; they open up surprisingly much to societies, they rescale and resettle themselves, yet they do not disappear, because via community spirit they manage to compensate for many phenomena of social pathology.

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