

## **FROM PERSONAL AND SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS TO SOCIAL NETWORKS**

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### **Abstract**

The study realizes a meta-analysis of knowledge about the flow personal relationship/social relationship/social network. The organization of conceptual knowledge and the cogitation on the problematic go to some elements that make a difference between those three concepts. Results that personal relationships are those relationships in which predominate the personal meanings. Social relationships are constituted as contacts, connections, connotation connections that exceed pure personal meaning. They resonate to models, types, customs, traditions, social commitments; they include social meanings. The most complex structuring of social relationship is represented by social network; this constitutes a transformation of social relationships at macro social level. The social network can be described in standard criteria of social relationship: ontological manifestation of some subjectivities, unity, coherence, systemically.

**Keywords:** personal meaning, social meaning, personal relationship, social relationship, social network

### **1. Introduction**

The thinking in comprehensive terms of social relationships and differentiation of personal relationship of their ocean constitutes elements hardly to quantify. Understanding of social relationship – personal relationship ratio is important for description, explanation, standardization and forecasting of society functioning. Approaching is more difficult so as, usually, the matter was registered as premise, and not as an issue. For example, it is not retained as being derivate of basic premise of sociology: „Basic premise of sociology is how much of human existence is social existence” (Goodman N., 1998, p. 12).

### **2. Personal relationships/social relationships**

Relationships between human beings can be two types: social and personal or individual. Social relationships are those that are constituted in social area. The object of these relationships is irrelevant concerning belonging to social relationships system. Their qualificative standard is represented by performing conscious in a social circumstance. This internal understanding of social

is constituted as social meaning and consists of reasons, goals, concerns, responsibilities and social commitments. Social meaning exists through functioning and developing of social conscious. Therefore, social relationships are those relationships in which the subject is individual involved and on one's own, but where is modeled by a social meaning. Relationships in which a subject is engaged without a conscious of social meanings are personal relationships. We consider that, in terms of Thomas's theorem, we can have assurance that only intimate conscious of social meaning gives to relationship a social character. Also the personal relationships are placed within a meaningful conscious. The meaning is thought within these only in criteria of personal order (Tshesane, 2001; Angelopulo & Barker, 2013; Craft & Davis, 2013). Any times personal meanings are impregnated by notes, tones, aspects or interpersonal attributes, they get a social character. Personal meanings are converted in social meanings. Personal relationships are cut off to meanings of some personal attributes. Social relationships resonate to models, types, customs, traditions, social commitments. They are constituted as contacts, connections, connotation connections that exceed pure personal meaning. Social relationships as also personal relationships are risen on attributes background and characteristics of the individual. This passive potential can be seen as its relational competence. When takes place manifestation of some of attributes and characteristics, relational potential becomes active and is visible as relational performance (Sonderling, 1996; Munteanu, 2013). Relationship is not individual, but relational, the contact. Any attributive contact constitutes a relationship. Some contacts becomes connections, when besides of primary meaning is added meaningful an attribute. Among contacts became connections some of them become „connections of..”, when to secondary meaningful conscious is added a third conscious or institutional (Ishizaki & Kato, 1998; Katagiri, Takanashi, K., Ishizaki, Den, & Enomoto, 2013).

In the ocean of individual relationship, strict personal character has only few of its relationships (Du Plessis, 2001; Fourie, 2010). Our opinion is that individual relationships constitute a component of contacts and they doesn't accede in connexities area and connections. Overall, as social agents in social space, human beings enter in a multitudinous of social relationship. The ampleness, profoundness, quality and value of these relationships depend on personal attributes of agents, of capacity to develop and to infuse another attributes, and also of ability to resonate according this with another agents (Dobrescu & Bârgăoanu, 2001). In Nelson Goodman's opinion, „the social relationships are the heart of social life” (Goodman N., 1998, p. 140). Social relationships compose a field of diffuse connexities. From sliminess bulk and anesthesia of these are detached cells of relationship, are crystallized functional configurations and with recognoscible profile. Social relationship forms a huge relational system. The radiography of this system shows that inside of it is constructed and is functioning relational affinities. John Scott ascertains that „relations connect pairs of agents into larger relational systems” (Scott J., 2000, p. 3). Social agents construct relationships and, partly, are created, as social profiles, of these relationships. As human beings, individuals are defined through relationships that exist between them (Bârgăoanu, Negrea Dascălu, 2010; Frunză, 2014). As elements of the social system, as social agents, their identity contains a large specter of active and passive relationships. Social agents live and become visible through circuits of social relationships in which they are contained and cross them. They don't take part of relationships, their identity belongs to these relationships. Relationships makes them to be

also something else, additional and more, than their static attributes allow them to be. Social relationships make that individual to be functional and visible. Each agent is agent as exerting person of a function in the system. The function is definitive component of its existence as element of system. On the other side, the social agent is visible as milestone in system structure design (Teodorescu, 2010; Gorun & Gorun, 2013; Louw, 2014).

In fact, beyond systemic block, social relationships are fluid, volatile and even disruptive. However, social system is functional and relative stable. The structures and structural nuclei of this have coherence and cohesion, and structural breakages are rare. In essence, as has demonstrated it John Scott, „structures are built from relations” (Scott J., 2000, p. 4). So, we have to understand the networks as systems of social functional evolutionary relationships as elements, having accessibility, density, range and instant structure (Maior, 2009; Dănișor, 2013).

The ratio between personal relationship and social is not a static one, but a transformation one. There are personal relationships which the time, interaction and extension transform them into social relationships. Not all personal relationships are getting to develop as social relationships. A. Radley distinguishes „between personal relationships (...) and social relationships” and shows that „both kinds of relationship involve interaction” (Radley A., 1996, p. 26). On the other hand, he emphasizes that „what was once a personal relationship becomes merely a social one” (Radley A., 1996, p. 26).

In a great scientific resonance study „The Four Elementary Forms of Sociality: Framework for a Unified Theory of Social Relations” (1992), Alan Page Fiske put the question of unification of theoretical points of view concerning social relationships and identify an exclusive set of four forms of social relationships that constitutes the base of a new and „alternative paradigm”: „The relational models theory” (Fiske A. P., 1992, p. 689). This shows that „people are fundamentally social” – „they generally organize their social life in terms of their relations with other people” (...) „people’s intentions with regard to other people are essentially sociable and their social goals inherently relational” (...), „The relational models theory explains social life as a process of seeking, making, sustaining, repairing, adjusting, judging, construing and sanctioning relationships” (...), „people are oriented to relationships as such” (Fiske A. P., 1992, p. 689). As stipulates Pantelimon Golu „in all cultures there is a set of fundamental social relationships” (Golu P., 1996, p. 6).

Such as fundamental social relationships are: relational, organizational, family, working, cooperation, friendly, love, help, marital or another type of cohabitation, parents-children (Barker, 2003; Barker, 2012).

### **3. Social networks**

3. 1. This section starts from an ascertainment made not long time by Eva Vetter: „the theory of networks is vague” (Vetter E., 2011, p. 208). C. H. Cooley saw the social epistemology as a „social mind” or „larger mind” and talked many years ago about existence of some conscious social relations and/or unconscious: „In the social mind we may distinguish, very roughly of course, conscious and unconscious relations, the unconscious being those of which we are not aware, which for some reason escape our notice” (Cooley C. H., 1983, p. 4). From this perspective,

more than a simple social relationship, the network would be a „larger mind” and would have a self-conscious more extended.

The most complex structuring of social relationship is represented by social network. In relationships universe, the social network composes a galaxy of social relationships. The galaxy named network constitutes, generally, a transformation of social relationships at macro social level. The social network can be described in standard criteria of social relationship: ontological manifestation of some subjectivities, unity, coherence, systemically.

The social relationship transformation takes place through increasing of involved agents number and, in parallel, developing a membership conscious to network.

To define the social network it was started from its understanding either to relate with its relational essence or to relate with its configuration as social structure or as macro group, as organization. Concerning social networks, there were delimited two defining perspectives: personal line and modular-structural line. In personal line, the network is defined as belonging to a person. Its principal representant is Nelson Goodman. He asserts: „The social relationship web of a person is named social network” (Goodman N., 1998, p.138). Although through theses of "Personal Relationships and Personal Networks” (2006), Malcom R. Parks is placed on the same direction: he speaks about "personal social network"(Parks M. R., 2006, p. XIII). On modular-structural line, the network is conceived as non-directive automate structure, non-derivative. For example, Mark Granovetter, sees the network as having interpersonal character and functioning as "interpersonal network" (Granovetter M., 1973, p. 1360). Related to this, he is speaking about "structure of the overall network of relations" (Granovetter M., 1992, p. 33) and about "social networks" as forms of social structures ( “social structure especially in the form of social networks” – Granovetter M., 2005, p. 33). Although, John Scott speaks about, „networks of social relations” (Scott J., 2011, p. 26).

Among those who consider network as organizational form are J. M. Podolny and K. L. Page who show: „We define a network form of organization as any collection of actors ( $N \geq 2$ ) that pursue repeated, enduring exchange relations with one another and, at the same time, lack a legitimate organizational authority to arbitrate and resolve disputes that may arise during the exchange” (Podolny J.M., Page K.L., 1998, p. 59).

On the other side, A. Portes discovers network as structure: „social networks are among the most important types of structures” (Portes A., 1995, p. 8).

In J. S. House, D. Umbertson and K. R. Landis’s opinion, „social network” would subsume, related with certain criteria to phenomenon „social relationships”: „the terms 'social network', (...), 'social ties', and 'social activity'” are used „to refer to essentially the same phenomena – the existence, number and frequency of social relationships” (House J. J., Umberson D., Landis K. R., 1988, p. 293). Social network constitutes a form of crystallizing of social relationships. Charles Kadushin shows that „a network is a set of relationships” (Kadushin Ch., 2012, p. 14).

An informational definition of network is given by Fritjof Capra. He sustains that „the network is a pattern that is common to all life. Whatever we see life, we see networks” (Capra F., 2002, p. 9). In our opinion, feature of organization in network doesn’t belong only to the life. Whole universe contains systemically and local organizations or regional as network form.

P. R. Monge and N. Contractor define social network related with messages and communicators: "communication networks are the patterns of contact that are created by the flow messages among communicators through time and space" (Monge P.R., Contractor N, 2003, p. 3). The message is understood as "data, information, knowledge, images, symbols and any other symbolic that can move from one point in the network to another or can be co-created by network members" (Monge P. R., Contractor N., 2003, p. 3)

The origin of social networks is constituted by dyadic social relationships, triadic or group. The time and different social motivations, economic, ethnic, religious etc make which social relationships, disparate to be crystallized in a system and to form a network. The network is one of social relationships possibilities: „Over time, social relations may become increasingly formalized and dense local networks” show C.W. Haepfer, C. Wallace, M. Raiser (2005, p. 246).

For relationship it is appropriate a structuration. Sometimes social networks are constitutes as organizations (Goodwin-Davey & Davey, 2000; Crețu, 2009).

S. Pin, E. Guilley, D. Spini and C. Lalive d’Epinay sustain that „social networks are divide in two categories: family and friends. The former consists of relationships which is governed by a measure of cultural obligation. In contrast, the friendship network is built up from elective choices and is based on reciprocity of exchanges” (2005, p. 204). In our opinion the social network ontology contains more such as categories of relational constructs. To both categories above mentioned is added, as a major category, professional networks.

O social network has some qualitative epistemological dimensions and fundamental quantitative: nature of characteristically (base of relational: family, amicably-friendly, professional, socialization etc.), composition-structure of actants and actors, centrality, size-extension, „density, accessibility and area” (Goodman N., 1998, p. 139), the occurrence of relational, the circuits of structuring, the influence flows. Daniel J. Brass shows that the network as totality, the actor and relationships have measurable definitive dimensions; as dimensions of network, he sets: size, inclusiveness, component, connectedness, density, centralization, symmetry, transitivity (Brass D. J., 1995, pp. 39-79).

3.2. Virtual social networks. Social networks are based on personal networks. In 1986, Craig Calhoun noticed appearing of some „indirect relationships” defining them as being „those relationships that require the mediation of a complex communications system” (Calhoun C., 1986, p. 322). Further, he developed the idea of a „conceptual distinction between direct and indirect relationships” (Calhoun C., 1992, p. 208). The idea of indirect relationships was imposed and was assumed by specialists. As stipulates professor Mihai Coman, „the human communication can be constructed based on two types of relationships: a) direct: communication is achieved between two or more persons, being in proximity positions (usually spatially)(...); b) indirect: communication is mediated by a carrier more or less complex from technological point of view (letter, telephone, computer) or a good produced by an assembly of institution, specialists, technologic endowment (books, movies, newspapers, radio, television, internet)” Coman M., 2004, pp. 13-14). The social relationships can be so, direct (interpersonal) or indirect (mediated, virtual). Subsequently, when relational takes place directly in network, it is associated to a personal social network. In case when

relational is performed mediated in network, it is associated to virtual network. The specific mediation of indirect social networks is one based on IT. A virtual network is supported on social media. Specifically, the virtual social networks uses global communication dedicated platforms (Grabara, Kolcun & Kot, 2014; Avram & Traistaru, 2014). The networks formed on these platforms have as social support the network sites. These types of networks are defined either according to platform, or according to web. Most make of platform the genus of network; for example, is asserted that „social network are popular platforms for interaction, communication, and collaboration” (Wilson C., Bryce B., Sala A., Puttaswamy K., P. N., Zhao B. Y., 2009). Instead, D. M. Boyd and N. B. Ellison determine the network according to web; they show „social network sites” are „web-based services that allow individuals to (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system” (Boyd D. M., Ellison N. B., 2008, p. 211).

Accelerated development of information technology in last decade, especially functional installing of Web 2.0, consolidated electronic communication between persons. Implicitly it gave a contour some new functional social structures (Yoshimi & Buist, 2003). The current moment feature is constituted by social impregnation of technology. Mediated communication by computer carried on to crystallization of some interactions systems of a pronounced specificity. For the first time in history was defined as paradigm, as social structure model, a virtual configuration. This revolutionary paradigm is social network site. In its case it is not associated only informatics endowing of traditional types of : group, union, party, social structures, commercial society, institution, state etc. In essence, the network checks valences and virtualities of interaction human potential. The network is not group + terminal. It is a change of thinking, of life, of work and of leisure. The network is a organism which get life in the context information-based society. The network is basic structure of information-based society in information age. It is, as such, fair that the network as social phenomenon to becomes object of a qualified concernment.

First of all, the network is a social phenomenon, and not an informatics phenomenon. As social phenomenon, it is circumscribed to rule that generated social sciences in 18th and 19th centuries. That was the moment in which, as John Levi Martin shows, „a number of European thinkers became convinced that there was some sort of order to the social life around them, an order that came neither from God nor from prince but was inherent to social life itself. The first metaphor that was used to describe this order was an organismic one” (Martin J. L., 2009, p. IX). In Information age, within information-based society appear to the end of 19th century a „sort of order to the social life” that is „inherent to social life itself”:the network. This type of organization it is not anymore described as organism, but as structure, as system or as a structural configuration of a system at a certain time (Sonderling, 1995; Panea, 2001; Frunza, 2011).

The virtual network, as any type of social network, is structuring a common manner to think and to action free of some individuals. The phenomenon makes visible patterns of recurrence interaction (Karlin, 2002). Beyond of those interaction is constituted a sequencer movement, that involve and cross them and against which as individuals they have no a decisive power. From interpersonal interactions results an impersonal structure. About the mode in which appeared such



as structure, J. L. Martin shows: „Structure emerges, perhaps, out of unstructured interactions quite like the emergence of crystalline structure in a seeming fluid” (Martin J. L., 2009, p. 3). It has to be reminded that Georg Simmel, first sociologist, as M. Zhang shows, who „think directly in social network terms” (Zhang M., 2009, p. 9), saw „the systems” and „the super-individual organizations” as „immediate interactions that occur among men” and „have become crystallized (...) as autonomous phenomena” (Simmel G., 1950, p. 10). In his opinion, „society, as its life, is constantly being realized, always signifies that individuals are connected by mutual influence and determination” (Simmel G., 1950, p. 10). Therefore, in society system-organizations are permanent crystallized being the result of immediate interactions of connected individuals through influence and determination relationships. The society is area in which take place phenomena of „sociation”. By „sociation” G. Simmel understood interactions crystallization in a relationship (Simmel G., 1950, pp. 9-10). Christopher Powel discovers in scientific work of Georg Simmel more interaction and sociation forms: „sociability, superordination and subordination, secrecy, city life (...), money (...), femminity, gender, filtration, love (...)” (Powel C., 2010, p. 43). Also, G. Simmel emphasizes „social types” [„the poor», «the adventurer», (...) «the stranger»” (Powel C., 2010, p. 43)] and analyses „the significance of number for social relationships, parsing the different dynamics that are possible for isolated individuals, dyads, triads, and larger group” (Powel C., 2010, p. 43).

### **3. Conclusion**

We reach to some certainties concerning a social network:

- It is based on social relationships;
- Usually, represents development as number and occurrence of connections belonging to a social relationship;
- Existing mode of a social network is similarly relationship. The network ontology is derived from an ontology of relationship, but not always is kept the cognitive circumstance;
- Almost always within social relationships the nature conscious, possibilities and relationship limits is a diffuse one. Some social relationships are not borne of totally consciously representation. Instead, social networks, especially the virtual one (social network sites), develops not only a conscious of existence, but a deep conscious of membership.

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