

RESEARCH FINDINGS ON SOCIAL CAPITAL AND MATTERS IN BRASOV COMMUNITY. A SECONDARY ANALYSIS APPROACH

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Abstract: *The aim of this article is to present new research findings regarding sustainable development projects in Brasov County, depending on the social matters and social capital. The method used is a secondary analysis of data collected in a 2009 survey carried out on 3960 persons, representative for Brasov County. This new approach manages to reveal a classification of the Brasov County localities according to the social capital typology (bonding or bridging) and according to the identified social matters' categories. The data indicates new perspectives on the two types of social capital and on their relation to social matters, representing guidelines for future research.*

Key words: *social capital, social matters, secondary analysis, bonding social capital, bridging social capital.*

1. Introduction: conceptual clarifications

Social matters are not rooted in the social circumstances but in the presumptions of the interested parties and of the partisans committed to win over the political acceptance in the sense of perceiving certain circumstances as problems, depending on which said perceptions reflects the evolution of the social matters' construction process (Spector and Kitsuse, 1977; Jenness, 1993). Thus, the study of social matter becomes the study of social construction of reality itself. We may regard the existence of a social matter when a significant number of people consider a certain social situation to be inconsistent

with their values and measures must be taken to the end of eliminating such a situation [18]. These authors underline the following defining elements of social matters:

1. The situation presumed to be problematic. The existence of the situations is supported by people talking about it, by mass-media airing it;

2. The inconsistency of such a situation with certain values and interests. Any situation defined as problematic in terms of certain set of values;

3. The existence of a significant number of people defining the situation as being a problem. It is not necessarily a matter of how many people are there but how well organized they are or the positions they occupy in society;

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4. Call for action to solve the problematic situation. The people affected in their values and interests by said situation tell each other about that and convey to the public the need for measures to solve the problematic or disturbing situation [18, p. 4-6].

Coleman adapted the theory of rational choice, based on the methodological individualism, where he construed social capital as the concept that was missing for a complex analysis of the large scale social phenomena. Nonetheless, Bourdieu analyzed the social capital concept to the end of refining his theory on hierarchic social structures [7, p.501].

To Robert Putnam, „social capital concerns aspects of social organization – networks, norms and trust – that allow the participants to act together more effectively to the end of achieving joint goals” [17, p.664-665]. Social capital is seen as a prerequisite for economic expansion and effective leadership since: it strengthens the norms of generalized reciprocity; facilitates the coordination and communication, contributing thus to the conveyance of information on the level of trust of other individuals/ groups; keeps alive the memory of successful past cooperation, creating a „cultural shape” where future cooperation may take place (Putnam, 1993). This way, Robert Putnam places social capital in connection with social development, in the sense that a rich communitarian life contributes to the creation of public asset, facilitating the reproduction and setting of all types of capital. However, in the name of efficiency, public politics in the field of social capital must be integrated into general politics of economic capital expansion (physical and financial), human and social [22].

The operationalization of the social capital as concept aims its relation to: civil commitment, social network

structures, trust. Civil commitment may be measured through the following markers: vote attendance, reading the newspapers and appearance in similar association and literary congregations. The more ‘horizontal’ the structure of social networks providing personal social contact between its members, the higher the levels of social interaction, of communication and of trust. Trust facilitates the cooperation and aids the solution of misunderstandings at the level of joint actions. Solid trust favors a low cost of economic transactions, since people are more willing to invest in joint assets when „free riders” are a rare breed. When civil commitment is less powerful, economy is expected to be weak, leadership ineffective and corrupt. There is a connection between social capital and social matters of a community: political involvement and participation, education, safety of urban setting, pollution prevention, health, unemployment and many other, all influenced by the level of social capital of the people in question [22].

2. Types of social capital: bonding and bridging

Narayan (1999) and Woolcock (2000) introduce the distinction between bonding and bridging types of social capital [13], [23]. The bonding social capital is relevant for the life of small, closed communities that are dominated by relations developed within the group of nearest affiliation, often overlapping kinship, and by trust towards any corporate actor, individual or outside institution of the group. The bonding social capital usually contributes to the flourish of the familial amorality described by Banfield (1958), the community becoming socially isolated from the rest of the world and working

according to its own set of unwritten rules, despite the possible spatial interference with other groups, collectivity and individuals [2].

The bridging social capital implies on the other hand the establishment of relations and trust amongst other groups besides the primary, higher levels of trust in institution, participation in social relations materialized in partnerships. The bridging social capital's main role is favoring evolution [apud 21, p.13]. The bonding social capital concerns the horizontal relationships between members of the social network perceived similarly and may be associated with the social cohesion concept. The bridging social capital is more concerned with the vertical relationships established between various groups of the society that do not necessarily share similar social identities, that do not have the same take on social justice, on solidarity within society in general [15, p.256]. Thus, the bridging social capital is the one linking the social groups and maintaining the society united and operational while the bonding social capital is the one separating the groups, dividing the societies. The first serves as glue and catalyst for the generation of public asset, favouring the civil participation and activism. The latter hinders the creation of public assets [22].

Social capital may have negative and positive effects on poverty and evolution. Those who hold more information/knowledge, are the same who present high levels of income and the coveted positions in society, hence the poor people's tendency to adopt imitative strategies with positive effects on evolution. On the other hand, social networks generally include individuals with the same set of knowledge. Thus, those with less information and skills are more likely to interact with those of their own level, having no success pattern available to

copy. The social networks of the poor are smaller than those of the other individuals and tend to limit to the vicinity. The result is the formation of closed groups, poor groups, with a separate social capital, practically cut down from evolution.

3. Measurement and data obtained from field research

A secondary analysis has been made over the database collected for the "Social matters' map" research, made in 2009 in Brasov County. In this way, researchers are overcoming this final cost obstacle by engaging in secondary analysis, building research projects around the analysis or reanalysis of data originally collected by someone else [8, p. 144]. Secondary analysis may be performed by taking information from sources other than surveys, but survey data are increasingly likely candidates for secondary analysis because of the quantity of such data and because of their availability in an inexpensive and well-organized form.

The secondary analysis constitutes a complex approach to the data with well determined application rules and specific methodological principles. The data may have been collected for and already analyzed by researchers, but new information or scientific interest may lead someone to reanalyze the data [8, p. 144].

It requires the filing of sociological empirical researches. At present, a strong revival is registered, being distinctive for the current evolutionary stage of socio-human empirical researches (actual, field research). To a certain extent, it resembles the communication content analysis; they are both applied to certain information generated by someone else, with different purpose than the one we pursue. "The fundamental difference between these two approaches resides in the fact that the secondary analysis is applied

directly to the quantified data already collected and not to the words already written or spoken” [4, p. 102]. In addition to its low cost, secondary analysis has several other advantages that make it a useful research tool. Analysis of available records may often be the only way to obtain quantitative data about the past [8, p. 144-5].

The statistics for the county has a volume of 3960 persons (the results’ guarantee probability is of 95%, the accepted error limit is of 1.5%). The samples have been structured so as to gain representativeness at the level of each administrative unit assessed within Brasov County.

Table 1
Level of each administrative unit in Brasov County

Small urban	26% of the population	1030
Rural	24% of the population	950
Brasov	50% of the population	1980
Total	100%	3960

A probabilistic sampling method has been used, with unrepeated choices among the focus population. The following sampling structure of the sample has been concluded: 1980 persons, at the level of Brasov City (the guarantee probability of the results is of 95%, the accepted error limit is of 2,2%); 157 persons for Ghimbav (the guarantee probability of the results is of 95%, the accepted error limit is of 4%); 177 persons for Codlea (the guarantee probability of the results is of 95%, the accepted error limit is of 4%); 125 persons for Predeal (the guarantee probability of the results is of 95%, the accepted error limit is of 4%); 136 persons for Rupea (the guarantee probability of the results is of

95%, the accepted error limit is of 4%); 125 persons for Victoria (the guarantee probability of the results is of 95%, the accepted error limit is of 4%); 600 persons for each of these localities: Fagaras, Sacele, Rasnov, Zarnesti (the guarantee probability of the results is of 95%, the accepted error limit is of 4%); 196 persons for Cincu (the guarantee probability of the results is of 95%, the accepted error limit is of 5%); similar to Cincu, the samples for the other rural areas of the county have been calculated as well.

4. Results and discussions

Social capital types and categories of issues prevailing in Brasov County are explained in the Table 2 (see Annex).

Bogdan Voicu [20] explains why the bonding social capital is a constancy of former communist countries: strong confidence networks, often closed, limited to thin social groups or categories, appeared back in the period of communism, supplementing the irrationality of institutional organization, the rarity created by this, and the state’s inability to provide various social services. The author quoted explains the consequences of these processes: in Eastern European countries these remained in a great proportion even after the changes of regime from 1989-1991, contributing to the presence of reduced confidence in institutions, substituted by the networks of interests that thus acted as barriers in the way of social changes. The relation is simple in this case: the increased confidence in the affiliation group associated to mistrust in others (from other groups) and in institutions, tends to reproduce, especially in the condition of a reduced economic performance.

However, it has to be said that most of the international studies targeted the democratic countries rather than the ones

from the former communist bloc, which fact makes it necessary to have more contextualized studies before the generalization of the bridging capital's supremacy. Narcisa Grigorescu, in 1999, underlined that in Romania, a great part of the organizations, especially the localized ones, are based on private confidence and not generalized confidence, therefore the bonding social capital can be, contextual, a foundation for civic mindedness [9].

The town Victoria is, even under the aspect of the type of social capital, an uncharacteristic case, being the only locality from the county where the bridging capital dominates. Whereas the bridging social capital is connected to heterogeneous relations, between different groups of individuals, we could find the explanation also in the history of Victoria, which over the time assumed the interaction of employees with an employer of other ethnicity than Romanian. Also, the industrial hallmark of the town made an absorbing phenomenon of the working force from various regions of the country at the middle of the last century, which altered the hallmark of the population in Victoria. This fact creates a link with the American studies that confirmed the theory of a reversed relation between the stability of neighborhood (measured as the median of the number of years during which the residents live in vicinity) and the bonding social capital, insofar as the stability of the neighborhood grows, the bonding social capital decreases [3]. Furthermore, the great number of young people gone abroad to work, also contributed to the intensification of cultural exchange with other countries, to an increased tolerance towards other groups and cultures than those affiliated, to creating new working opportunities, thus to a vertical diffusion of power, welfare and prestige.

This type of capital promotes the instrumental and emotional support, and

maintains the social norms in the homogeneous communities that tend to have closed structure, with few exterior relations, which leads to the decrease of tolerance towards outsiders and to the emphasizing of differences between in-group and out-group, which process is called in the sociological literature "the disadvantage of the social capital" [16], [17]. Another disadvantage of the bonding social capital, demonstrated by recent studies is the decreased participation at voting [10].

There is no consistent relation between the variation of certain social circumstances and the public designation of said circumstance as social matter, as said by the sociologic subjectivism. In the view of this paradigm the objective focus was mistaken when studying instead of the social matters certain social circumstances defined as problems by interested groups. However, the subjective sociologists suggest the study of the processes by which certain social circumstances come to be publicly labeled as social matters. Social matters are thus redefined as discourse, interactions, institutional practices by means of which certain circumstances are defined as social matters. Subsequently, theorists of social capital have considered this to have two dimensions: structural social capital (may be objectively verified and concerns what people „do”: associationism, networks) and cognitive social capital (may be subjectively verified and concerns what people „feel”: social cohesion, trust) [7, p.501].

The lack of trust in individuals or groups outside the family that makes any outside cooperation impossible is known as „familial amorality” and is reflected in a reduced capacity of a given community to organize itself to the end of creating public assets, hence influencing the social development of the community [2]. The

large-scale inter-personal trust is associated with stable democracies [1]. Social capital has an impact on the welfare of households in the underdeveloped countries [11]. „Social capital reduces the likelihood of poverty and the income deriving from the investments made in the social capital are higher for the poor than for the rest of the population” (Grootaert, 1999). Social capital influences the rural households’ income by means of five mechanisms:

1. social capital contributes to the increase of public services’ effectiveness;
2. The communities that are rich in social capital have a better cooperation to the end of creating joint/public assets;
3. social capital favors the spreading of innovations;
4. Social capital facilitates the access to varying markets;
5. social capital may play the role of an informal insurance in what the risks incurred through several live strategies are concerned, in particular, the economic decisions of the household [apud 13].

The bonding social capital’s tendency to appear more eminently in rural environment can lead to a theory, also confirmed by international studies, according to which poor environments prefer the predominance of the bonding capital, because “the poor know many akin in that place and have very little ties with people from other places” [5]. The eminent appearance of the bonding social capital in the rural environment can be interpreted through a second theory as well, confirmed by recent studies: the lower social classes have fewer extensive social networks and more formal and informal intensive social networks, which favors the predominant development of the bonding social capital [14].

Out of the eight localities that require tourism developing projects, in five dominates the bonding social capital (Brasov, Predeal, Sacele, Vistea, Prejmer),

which fact can be associated with a need for opening, towards interacting with different social groups and implicitly towards the development of the bridging social capital.

The spaces designed for spending free time represent pretexts for meeting and developing confidence, social relations, in more familiar environments, or at any case less formalized, facilitating the appearance of community spirit where this is missing. The risk associated to the neglecting of this element is the reduced impact on medium and long term regarding the formation of social capital. In this sense we recommend setting up more leisure spaces in localities with an excessive developing risk for the bonding social capital to the injury of the bridging capital: Braşov, Predeal, Săcele, Voila, Viştea, Ticuş, Prejmer, Feldioara, Comana, Cincu. To the support of these conclusions comes the fact that from the total of these eight localities that invoke the lack of leisure spaces, there are five where the bonding social capital dominates (Braşov, Predeal, Săcele, Prejmer, Feldioara).

5. Conclusions

Dasgupta (2000) points out that the establishment and upkeep of strong relations within the group encourages the delinquent and selfish behavior. This way may appear group interactions that affect the common social welfare like *Mafia*, *al-Qaeda*, *Ku Klux Klan* (Fukuyama 1995; Portes 1998; Putnam 2000). To put it otherwise, in bonding type of structures the lack of connection between groups and communities weaken the collective efficiency, making communities more vulnerable to criminality. The issue of criminality and of social tensions appears on the social agenda of four out of the ten localities where the bonding social capital

dominates (Cincu, Comana, Viștea, Săcele) [apud 12].

Bogdan Voicu [20] appreciates that in the localities oriented to agricultural production, the representatives of local authorities are considered by the locals as the main actors. They are the ones that can lead developing projects, and the confidence they are often credited with could be more useful than the uncertain position of an initiative group born out of the nothingness, being more efficient in promoting the civic participation and generalized confidence, just like the confidence in institutions. This strategy can be functional for localities that require developing projects in the agriculture area (Predeal, Victoria, Viștea, Târlungeni, Feldioara).

Specialized literature tends to give more credit to the bridging social capital than to the bonding one, based on the idea that this is the one that boosts the economic growth and the social development (Putnam, 2002), because the very strong personal relations and friendships, the private world with its close relations of kinship can interfere with the public confidence and with the expectations according to which public responsibility should contribute to the creation of common good [apud 19].

If the positions of the two value options in the hierarchy, as well as the percentages of population preferring those values are at a great distance, a situation of imbalance has been identified, demonstrated in: bridging type of dominant social capital (dominant position in the value ranking of confidence in people and a high percentage of population that chooses the confidence in people to the injury of family safety), bonding type of dominant social capital (a dominant position in the family security value ranking, and high percentage of population that chooses family safety to the injury of confidence in people).

In Coleman's rational pattern the choices, related to the manner in which one lives his life and relates to other, are based on individual interest. The functions of social capital are thus shared values and norms that sustain the social order. However, Putnam focuses on the role of social networks, of mutual obligations of the cooperative action. Bourdieu's theory on praxis renders a critical perspective oriented on the cohesive role of the norms and social networks, yet underlining the ways in which social capital encourages and feeds the capitalist society and inequality [6, p. 3].

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Annex

Social capital type and categories of issues prevailing in Brasov County

Table 2

Area	Trust in people/ Family safety	Bonding/ Bridging	Social issues' category
Bran	Trust in people= 3 rd place (11%) Family safety =2 nd place (17%)	Tends to equilibrium	Public services, social services, administrative services, tourism, development, political administrative class.
Cincu	Trust in people=4 th place (7%) Family safety =2 nd place (28%)	bonding (big differences)	Public services, administrative services, tourism, development, criminality, political administrative class.
Comana	Trust in people=7 th place (5%) Family safety =1 st place (31%)	bonding (big differences)	Public services, social services, administrative services, housing, economic development, criminality, political administrative class.
Feldioara	Fears of the personal and family life = (73%) fears related to social life= (28%)	bonding (differences)	Public services, social services, administrative services, tourism, economic development, agriculture, environment, political administrative class.
Fundata	Trust in people = 3 rd place (15%) Family safety =2 nd place (23%)	Tends to equilibrium	Public services, social services, administrative services, tourism.
Harman	Trust in people = 3 rd place (12%) Family safety = 3 rd place (14%)	equilibrium	Public services, social services, tourism, political administrative class, social tensions.
Moieciu	Trust in people = 3 rd place (11%) Family safety =2 nd place(19%)	Tends to equilibrium	Public services, social services, administrative services, tourism.
Prejmer	Fears of the personal and family life = (57%) fears related to social life= (39%)	bonding (differences)	Public services, social services, tourism, entertainment, economic development.
Tărlungeni	Trust in people = 3 rd place (12%) Family safety =3 rd place (12%)	equilibrium	Public services, administrative services, entertainment, agriculture, social tensions, criminality.
Ticuș	Trust in people =7 th place (9%) Family safety =1 st place (20%)	bonding (differences)	Public services, social services.

Area	Trust in people/ Family safety	Bonding/ Bridging	Social issues' category
Viştea	Trust in people =7 th place (3%) Family safety =2 nd place (24%)	bonding (big differences)	Public services, administrative services, Agriculture, Tourism, economic development, social tensions, political administrative class.
Voila	Trust in people =7 th place (1%) Family safety =3 rd place (23%)	bonding (big differences)	Public services, administrative services, political administrative class.
Victoria	Trust in people =3 rd place (15%) Family safety =4 th place (5%)	bridging (differences)	Public services, administrative services, Agriculture, Tourism, environment, political administrative class.
Săcele	Trust in people =4 th place (7%) Family safety =2 nd place (21%)	bonding (differences)	Public and social services, administrative services, social tensions, tourism, economic development, entertainment.
Predeal	Fears of the personal and family life = (65%) fears related to social life = (35%)	bonding (differences)	Public and social services, administrative services, tourism, leisure, political administrative services, development.
Codlea	Trust in people =3 rd place (13%) Family safety =2 nd place (16%)	equilibrium	Public and social services, administrative services, tourism, leisure, living conditions.
Braşov	Trust in people =4 th place (7%) Family safety =2 nd place (21%)	bonding (differences)	Public and social services, administrative services, tourism, Economic development, leisure.