

CoMMunicational Basis of Social Networks

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Abstract:

The study is coordinated by the communication-oriented Social Network Analysis. First, it explores the communicational fundamentals of the social network. Then downgrade highlights the communicative power of social networks emerging establishment. Also it brings some clarification i) the essential elements and processes that occur in networks and ii) the structure of the network as a social system.

The investigative approach is meta-analytical. To prove the thesis emergence of social network communication and thesis of communicational basis of social networks are brought arguments psychological, sociological, and logical.

Keywords: communication, social network, elements of social network, structure of social network

1. Globalization and Network Society

Manuel Castells considers that the principal feature of globalization is retrieved in fulminatory appearance of networks. It is constituted a „Global Network Society”. „Network society is to the Information Age, stipulates Castells (Castells M., 2009, p. 12), what the industrial society was to the Industrial Age”. To understand social network concept it is necessary a complex approach. As Thorsten Quandt shows “the network” is a central concept of social sciences” (Quandt, T., 2008). First of all, social networks are fundamental forms of social structuring. Their crystallization mode is represented by communication (Enăchescu, 2013; Frunză, 2011). In their case, communication doesn't take place direct, but mediated.

A specific form of social network was developed after Internet appearance (Freeman, 2004). Now, as technical report social networks are shaped as computer-mediated communication and consist of on-line applications, that allows make contact with communicators. In other terms, more persons that make contact through computer, using an on-line application to communicate compound a system named social network. Within this communication system are performed communication processes. Social Network is a communicational social system. As Rolf T. Wigand shows “essential functions of any social system are accomplished through processes of communication” (Wigand, 2009, p. 18). Communicational process elements are, at the same time, social actors and communicators, interactants and tranzactants. Communicational interaction-transaction of social type takes place in according to a specific communication contract and it is performed in the limits of a special communication situation. In network, it is defined

by direct exercising of a role and its manifestation in a identifiable location and place. The contract and situation complexity come from actants multitude, of dyads roles, triads etc. that these play and also the various relations that subsist between these. A social network has a structure and exerts some functions (Wellman & Berkowitz, 1988; Aligică, 2007). The structure is composed of communicational agents (named nodes) and of relations between these, appointed as connections, association (Perks, 2007; Bădescu, 2010).

2. Dimensions and levels of the Social Network

The network is not a homogeneous and uniform construction. Its aspect uni-plan is the result of a conjecture on horizontal dimension. But on vertical dimension of the network are identifiable three levels of functioning of social mechanism of interaction-communication that appears as network. The first level is individual one, of actor and of relationships that this maintains with the others actants individual considered. The second level is that one of structure/structures which actor belongs of (family, group, clique, clan etc.). Finally, the third level is represented by social network, totality. The network is configured as a totality that includes and crosses relational individuals (Scott & Carrington, 2011; Kadushin, 2012).

In network plan, we have, in fact, to associate with two components: the part (actor and social micro-structure of membership) and totality (social network). As part, actor is defined through role and concrete relationships that he develops with the others actors. On systemic-abstract dimension, the actor appears as appointment, arrival, “departures” of some connections, bridges, contacts. On the other hand, also as node is profiled also sub-structures of

which individual actor takes part (organizations, associations, groups, etc.). In function of relationships between actors, we can associate with random contacts, friends, relatives, business partners, members of concernment groups (cliques, clans, coteries, factions, etc.). These relationships are reflected in systemic plan as weak or strong connections. Sub-structures, on the other hand, appear as subsets of nodes existing in hard connection (Granovetter, 2005; Martin, 2009). Inside of network, the actors develop between themselves subsumed interdependence and constrains to some ideas, objective values, financial changes, friendly specific relationships, animosity, hate, violence, trade etc. As totality, the network, appears as board of nodes and connections that represents abstract the actors and relevant relationships between them (McDevitt, Kiouisis & Wahl-Jorgensen, 2003; Marin & Wellman, 2010; Dima & Vlăduțescu, 2012a). The principal elements of a social network structure are the actor and his relationships, the node and its connections.

3. The actor and his relationships

At least according as the actor is integrated in a social network he is a competent human being from point of view social. Social competence is that one which assures the success in society. The social actors, competent people from point of view social, are capable to produce expected effects about some congeners. The effects can have personal motivations (to go current, to go down etc.) or assigned to another (developing acquiring, recovery or working); they can be objectification of some attributes or materialization of some responsibilities (Vlăduțescu, 2013a). The social actor is defined by attributes (aptitudes, skills, customs, attitudes, disposals, addictions) and by responsibilities (sets of tasks that derived from objectively required roles or auto assumed). According to attributes and responsibilities, social actor is defined as node in a social network. His social aptitudes allow social customs installing, understood as patters of social behavior (Preda et al. 2012). The social customs are behaviors that make visible capably individuals from point of view social. In day-to-day live, the social activities, generally, populate first plan, and professional those, the second plan; they constitutes

also a model of social behavior that uses the analogy between social performance and motive components, as for example, driving. The social customs constitutes the basic behavioral aspect of social competence. Beside social skills, in social competence contents are communicative component, relationships, knowledge, understanding, absence of apprehension. The social competence evaluation of somebody is made by his linguistic, corporal and actionable manifestations examining in context of different social, standard or specific situations, named or unnamed, of generic various conduct and different behaviors specific verbal, actionable, expressive (Dima & Vlăduțescu, 2012c; Vlăduțescu, 2013b). Speaking about “psycho-social competence” of individuals, composed of “home area, work area, school area, public area and others formal and casual institutions”, Petru Iluț shows that, on this domain, even common individuals are compared as some “little scientific peoples” (Iluț, 1997, p. 12).

4. Actant (actor) as node, and relationship as connection-contact

At the system level named network, the most important factors are the elements and relationships between them. Concrete, the elements and the relationships constitutes the system structure. The structure elements, that is networkers, actors, agents are also named “points, nodes, or vertices”; relationships between elements are assigned as “lines, edges, arcs, or connections” (Quandt T., 2008).

The node constitutes the actor representation at network level as totally. It makes visible the actor as generator and/or receptor of interaction. Herewith, it defines its performance to create, to maintain, to consolidate and to develop relationships.

The connection emphasizes anonymously the interactions and the relationships of actor-node. If in traditional communication the actor was primordial, in communication performed by social networks basically is the connection. In social networks, where the number of actors-nodes is great, disappearing of an actor doesn't represent an existence condition, only an efficiency condition. For a social network the maximal exigency and herewith the existence and functioning condition is

constituted by connection. Without connections an isolated actor-node will disappear (Novicka-Skowron, Dima & Vlăduțescu, 2012).

The node has local features and global features. The first local feature is represented of connection with adjacent node which are generic named neighborhoods. A node without vicinity is an isolated node. A feature of the node that immediate derives from actor's attributes we retrieve it in type difference (different of qualification). This is determined of manifestation as connection of individual attributes from virtual relational portfolio (Ciupercă, E. M., 2009; Ciupercă, C., 2012; Ciupercă, Ciupercă, Niță & Stoica, M., 2011).

An actor can be capable of financial, commercial, professional, religious, etc. relationships. In network, he is only operating, let's say, religious element of his relational potential. Therefore, he will appear as node in religious connections plan. If he is operating also financial relationships, he will be registered also as node of financial connections plan. The actor's node will be populated, hence, of two types of connections representing relationships: religious and financial. In this way, the actor translates in node an attribute of relationship difference that is retrieved as difference of node type (Morozan, Enache & Purice, 2012).

Another attribute node we identify in difference of quantity. The functional content of this attribute consist of number of marked manifestations in network in relation with type difference. In other terms, it matters not only that an actor is registered as node with financial relational presences, but it is important also that the financial iterations number is lower or higher. The difference attributes qualitative and quantitative reflects attributes inherent of individual actor. On the other hand, connection, as representation of actor relationship on entity level named network, marks in parallel also interactions that are substantiated on performed relationships by actor-node. Similar to node, connection has qualitative attributes (of type difference) and quantitative (of number difference) (Smarandache & Vlăduțescu, 2012).

If for individual, as actor, element of social system, relationships are substantial, for a communication structure as social network, substantial seems to be

connections. Some are involved in relationships of a type, another of other type.

Connections give coherence and cohesion of a network. The differences of connection of actors are capital for their attributes, responsibilities, conducts and behavior understanding. Taking into account that any connection can mark a flow of cognition (informational and knowledge), results that more connections denote the node-actor display to more and, often, more various information (Cojocaru, Bragaru, & Ciuchi, 2012). A higher level of connections of a node-actor shows, on the other hand, also a power, a higher influence. The difference between nodes results from connections analysis. The actors-node and relationships-connections are automatically in circuits of information. The actors better connected and better "localized" in network are more capable to mobilize the resources, to generate new perspectives in ideas debate, to produce solutions more adapted to induced requirement by current issues. They arrive rather, more and more capably and more performant (Nicolaescu, Cace, & Cace, 2012).

In terms of set of individual relationship, this, beside to be element-node of network, he belongs also to some sub-structures, to some parts of macrostructure- network. Therefore, an actor can cumulate a set of relationship which, within the network, is distributed on different zones and makes him "member" in more sub-structures. These sub-networks can display marked substantial differences, they can have in foreground strong elites, central and clear hierarchy and with vast connections. Around elite can gravitates a mass composed of persons with a reduced portfolio of relationships-connections. Differences of quality and quantity of connections indicate the stratification of network and of sub-networks representing individuals groups (Bat'r, 2003).

The constructive property of a network is the connectivity. The individual attributes of actors-nodes become visible and get value only within network. The elements (actor-node, relationship-connection) achieve importance according to arrangement in network, of layout in relation with network coordinates. Two are the presence attributes in network of node actor: Location (connection + distance) and power (centering +

hierarchy level). The power in network means connectivity, and connectivity is seen by centering (Dima & Vlăduțescu, 2013b).

The node location is fixed according to centering. Three are the criteria of centering: the grade of connection, connections (bridges) and neighborhood (distance). The nodes can be connected between them direct or through another nodes. Appurtenance to sub networks and layout in hierarchy/mass of these, as well in elite/mass macro-network fix the actor-node in a certain zone – this is his location (Vlăduțescu, 2012a; 2012b). Location represents positioning of actor-node according to number and connections importance in center or to periphery of the network. The higher power have the central actors that become central nodes and are assiduous cultivated (Dima & Vlăduțescu, 2013a). Certainly, it is admitted that in network there are also actors that have power in network or without network, but which they hide it or is not made visible. The relationships from network, as it is known, are based on trust and opening. Therefore, the hierarchy network is constituted on trust requirement.

When an actor “is hiding”, he will remain without of “formal” hierarchy of the network; he will avoid some connections or he will mitigate another, such as to make not visible. Anyway, constructed on trust and information, the network designates automatic the leaders through location: who is in center, who mediates and generates more connections, that one has centering. The power in individual plan is given by relationships, in network plan; the power is given by their connections, quality and quantity (Sandu, 2011).

The connection emphasize to anonymous node the interactions and relationships of actor-node. The connections give coherence and cohesion of a network. According to the set of relationship of individual, this, beyond to be element-node of network, it belongs also to some substructures, some parts of macrostructure- network. The location of a node is fixed cording to centering. There are three centering criteria: connection grade, connections (bridges) and neighborhood (distance). The nodes can be connected between them direct or through another node.

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