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COMPLUTENSE

The 21st century community: an interpretative framework from a social work perspective

Martín Zúñiga Ruiz de Loizaga [1]

Abstract. The article addresses the concept of community in order to clarify and define what is meant when this concept is used across various fields as a theoretical reference point or object of intervention. It begins by setting out the main ideas underpinning the modern concept of community. A total of twenty-two definitions are provided, identifying the elements of consensus that are present among the different approaches for the purpose of proposing an operating definition that can serve as a basis for social research and intervention. Finally, there is a consideration of the potential implications of working with this concept of community, at a time when the literature highlights individualist trends in contemporary society.
Keywords: community; social intervention; community work; social work.

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Introduction

The dominant social work models of intervention that are of an individual nature are now being questioned due to their inability to respond to the emerging social problems (Karagkounis, 2019), while community-based methods and practices have been attracting growing interest (Pastor, et al., 2019). In fact, community participation is seen as the only way to respond to these emerging needs and problems (Hawes et al., 2019), like for instance in the area of care (Kumar, 2020). However, because the concept of *community* is imprecise, ambiguous, and vague, it is not surprising that the so-called *community practice* or *community studies* have aroused strong controversy. This study addresses the concept from an operational perspective, the

aim being to make a theoretical-conceptual contribution to the practice of different disciplines, such as sociology and social work. First, we briefly present the main ideas that founded the contemporary concept of community, and we compare them against the reality of our century. Next, we discuss how this concept is currently used, and highlight the need to review and rework the definitions so that the concept is scientifically and operationally useful. An exhaustive review is then carried out of the different definitions that have marked the development of this issue, our objective being to extract the common elements on which there is the greatest consensus. The idea is very simple: our aim is to provide a definition that sheds light on how practice can be further developed. Finally, we reflect on the foregoing and also on the impli-

[1]   Universidad de Deusto, Bilbao, España
       martin.zuni@deusto.es

cations our research may have for community work and studies in the 21st century.

1. The myth of the community

The concept of community has been an essential part of sociological and political debate since the late nineteenth century, in which it has been recognized as a reality that frequently occurred in the past, some of the most known historical settings being the Greek polis, the monastic communities, or colonial America (Keller, 2003). From the Western perspective, despite the fact that these and other structures or past realities have been used as community references, can we consider the community as a structure that only worked in the past? Or is the community merely a desired reality, a theoretical approach, which has become relevant because of the problems and inequalities caused by the unstoppable advance of modern capitalism? This leads us to ask ourselves whether it was modernity that made communities disappear or, on the contrary, was it modernity that created the idea of community as a kind of desired reality in view of its challenges?

The likelihood is that both of these things occurred, and it is indeed possible that different types of community relationships were eliminated, while myths such as that of community were exaggerated in response to the new world that was emerging. Taking as reference the discourse of some of the classic authors in sociology, there are at least two particular questions in this debate that stand out as having historically guided the discussion in the Western context. We specifically refer to the narrative of loss, and the parallel construction of the concept of community, which was intended to be an alternative to this loss.

The narrative of loss refers to the fact that communities predated the arrival of private property (Nogueiras, 1996), and that industrialization emerged like a whirlwind that dismantled the existing forms of production, relationship and social cohesion. As a consequence, commons were eliminated as a political-cultural category endowed with constitutional dignity (Mattei, 2013) and along with the invention of the *state*, the dialectic between the private and the public was destined to occupy the entire social sphere (Esposito, 2018).

On the other hand, the second characteristic of this debate concerning the community was that it was built on dichotomous and exclusive logics, as previously pointed out. This seems to be evident when we refer to "classics" like Tönnies (community *versus* society), Redflied (folk societies *versus* urban societies), Weber (communalization *versus* grouping), Durkheim (mechanical solidarity *versus* organic solidarity); since, as is widely known, the community has been defined as something that emerges in opposition to something else, and not as an entity that appears on its own account.

Whether the concept of community was recovered or invented, this debate contributed to understanding the change that the arrival of modernity meant. Delanty (2010) classified the conceptions of community that emerged throughout the nineteenth century according to three major discourses: a) the discourse of community as something unrecoverable, which is a predominant idea in the romantic criticism of modernity; b) the discourse of community as recoverable, which represents most views of modern conservatism in this century; and c) the discourse of community as something still to be achieved, as expressed by communist, socialist, and anarchist narratives, where the community is something to be built rather than something to recover from the past.

2. The 21ˢᵗ century community

If we bring the debate to the present day and with due respect to the current research on this issue, one could say that it has not changed much since the three discourses remain relevant. In fact, as is the case also today, when the debate on the concept of community began, it was in times of crisis, either to claim for it or to criticize it. Throughout the 21st century, the concept of community can be described as "ready-to-wear", to use a metaphor from the world of fashion, in that it is a "garment" that fits an infinite number of concepts and realities. And, despite the repeated use of this "garment" and its faded color, it continues to be worn everywhere. Nobody knows why, but everyone likes it. The problem is that it has been used so much that in the end it is difficult to know what or who is wearing it.

In this regard, the thinking behind Esposito's study (2018) is fundamental to the contem-

porary debate about communities. According to the author, from the perspective of classical thinking, communities draw lines that limit who is part of them and who is not. In contrast, nowadays, the community is considered as a process that does not create barriers, but cuts through them and allows different parts to mix. The fundamental difference between modernity and the present day lies in the fact that the lines dividing dichotomous models have become blurred, and the false dualism of society/community and tradition/modernity has been relativized (Delanty, 2010). As Gómez (2000) argued, when following the modern approach, we attribute a *natural* quality to the community's bond, whereas to the bond of society, we attribute a somewhat *artificial* quality, or rather forced character (if we dare say so), since it is based on convention. Although in the classic debate these concepts have been put forward as opposites, they can in fact be understood as complementary. In Europe, in the 19th and 20th centuries, a dichotomy between the two apparently opposed concepts was established, but nowadays, societies are considered as a vector or embryo (Gurrutxaga, 1993) of communities. The question today, therefore, is not whether we want a community or a society but what type of community is actually possible in the (post) modern urban context?

One of the main difficulties is that the term *community* is almost always used as if it were evident what should be understood by it, or it is used arbitrarily and mixed with other terms (König, 1971). This "uncritical" (Canals, 1997) use of the term, from a highly operational perspective, "*based on a minimum reflexivity that would allow its rapid practical projection*" (Pastor, 2015, p. 39), has also contributed to the general vagueness with which this concept is defined. Hence, in consonance with Canals (1997), who claimed that the community is like a metaphor of human nostalgia and desires that should not be used for scientific purposes, our aim here is to provide this concept with an operational definition so that it is a useful and valid approach for practice.

3. Methodology

In order to obtain the results, we undertook a document analysis, selecting texts published during the second half of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st century, in which defi-

nitions or explicit statements of the elements that make up a community are given. When searching for the documents, priority was given to those studies from the area of social work and in Spanish. Thus, a total of twenty-two works were selected: Ander-Egg (1980), Campo (1979), Del Fresno y Segado (2012), Evans (2009), Gianbruno (1961), Gurrutxaga (2010), Hillery (1955), Keller (2003), Kisnerman (1990), König, (1971), Lesta (2001), Llena, Parcerisa and Úcar (2009), Machin (2003), MacIver and Page (1958), MacQueen et al. (2001), Marchioni (1999), Nogueiras (1996), Oré and Seguel (2010), Pastor (2015), Rezsohazy (1988), Sánchez (1991), and Ware (1965).

To analyze the data collected, we followed a thematic analysis approach. We first selected the extracts in which an explicit definition of community was given. These extracts provided a set of data which could be then analyzed. In the first stage of the analysis, the different elements were classified or grouped by themes or emerging categories, while in a second stage, a hierarchy was established for the different concepts within the same category, identifying the ones that best captured and brought together the other definitions. Next, a hierarchy among the categories was once again established to be able to identify the main elements and their position or relevance. The categories that stood out were the ones in which a significant number of authors (approximately a minimum of 25%) coincided in certain elements.

4. Results

Following the above criterion, the elements on which there is the greatest consensus are: a) *space or territory* (18); b) *interaction/relationships* (12)*;* c) *the psychological component* (12), which is defined in different ways, such as the feeling of belonging, the feeling of identity, the feeling of community or community spirit; d) *participation* in a range of *common activities and interests* (10)*;* and e) *grouping or* the existence of a *population* threshold (6). Let us review these different elements:

4.1. Space/territory

The territory or space is the first element that has been identified by most authors as a defining feature of communities. Thus, based on the consensus on this element, which was

particularly highlighted by Nogueiras (1996), we can state that every community refers to a system of social relationships in a defined area. Nevertheless, despite this high level of consensus, it should be noted that the central role of spaces, and even more so of territories, is currently being questioned as a condition upon which a community can exist, and there are reasons to argue that indeed it is not a necessary requirement. In fact, according to Del Fresno and Segado (2012), a *shared contextual space* exists*, although this does not imply that it has to be physical or a territory. Therefore, the debate should not be about whether a space is a requirement or not, which it is, but rather about the nature of that space; in other words, whether this space is physical/geographical, as it was assumed when the analyzed term was first coined, or if it is a virtual place, given the existence of spaces opened by the new technologies and the development of social networks within them.

Therefore, the question now changes, and what matters is to find out whether interaction in this virtual space is sufficiently intense and stable for the interaction to be a constituent element of the community and, consequently, what is the role of that space created *ex novo* for certain types of relationships to be built.

On the other hand, the increasing labor mobility and migration can produce a feeling of rootlessness in individuals, as well as fostering a sense of cosmopolitanism that makes people feel detached from their surroundings. Consequently, Bauman stated: "Places as such seem to have lost their importance for the flying elite, who are now able to view all places with detachment and from the distance" (Bauman, 2003, p.134). Based on a literature review, Sánchez (2001) reported that although the territorial component is still present in the subjective perception of the community, it is no longer the main reference since communities have become increasingly relational (Evans, 2009).

Without denying this fact, Nettleingham (2018) brings a different perspective, which may be that of the majority as shall be seen further below. This author expounds that although all communities can to a certain extent be *imagined*, when these communities are promoted, they become territorialized in different ways. Therefore, despite the fact that territories no longer hold a central role, it seems more than appropriate to question whether these virtual spaces are in truth constituent

elements of communities. Baringo (2013) argues that co-presence, which is a barrier that virtual spaces cannot overcome, continues and will continue to be an essential condition for social life to survive and develop in cities and as a result, for urban communities to be created. In the same vein, O'Reilly (2010) states that virtual communication cannot satisfy the needs of face-to-face contact, especially for certain groups of people who find it difficult or are unable to move around due to physical or economic limitations.

According to Keller's (2003) line of thought, the term *community* is not suitable for virtual communities, since the latter lack the characteristics attributed to the community's reality. Furthermore, this author maintains that communities create norms and an environment of mutual respect, something which is notably absent in the virtual community. In conclusion, an operational or functional community needs a physical anchorage to be able to develop. What this means is that territorialization is not only a geographic fact, but an attribute that provides depth to the communitarian reality. Moreover, it is possible to assert that, within the same space, diverse communities of different sizes can coexist, and that it is even probable that some are integrated into others. By means of example, a neighborhood, which is an entity that has often been equated with community (Castro-Coma & Martí-Costa, 2016), or used in an intuitive sense (Morales & Rebollo, 2014), is not in itself a community, but rather within a neighborhood there could be more than one community. Thus, even though geographic delimitation may be relative, as Kisnerman affirms, no population can be kept in a hermetically sealed territory (1990), and local environments remain distinctive places for building and maintaining the community's identity (Allan, & Phillipson, 2008).

4.2. Community interaction

Moving on to the second of the elements identified, we find the system of social relationships which are part of the community. In the opinion of Sennet (2000), sharing our daily lives or the usual living environment facilitates the creation of day-to-day relationships, or we could even add, it forces us to establish these relationships. One particular concept that can be useful to understand the

type of interactions that take place in communities is *reciprocity*. As Fantova (2014) explains, community relationships are governed by a reciprocity norm. This does not imply that they follow market logic or principles, or even a market solidarity rationale, but it does not mean either that those community relationships are not linked to any underlying interests or needs, as in truth they historically have been. Reciprocity implies that mutual recognition exists, the recognition of a need that can be satisfied through the community. However, we should not consider reciprocity as a logic that leads to the kind of interaction which lasts for the entire life of individuals, and that commits them *in perpetuum*.

At this point, it is worth introducing the idea of the "community of limited liability," as put forward by Morris Janowitz (1952 in Leonardo, 1989). This concept implies that participation is voluntary and constrained to one interest (Keller, 2003) and should be understood as a system of relationships that is sustained by action and not as frameworks (Delanty, 2010). From this perspective, involvement is contingent and tends to be based on instrumentality and self-interest, together with rational investment decisions, and not sentimental ties. Therefore, reciprocity must be understood as the logic that underlies the establishment of these relationships, which does not imply that they must be stable, or that sentimental ties or an unconditional commitment exists. In this regard, Delanty (2010) expounds that people's commitment towards a collective cause is based on individualism or on personal interest, as this can be perfectly compatible with collective participation. While in the past this interest might have been more primary or linked to subsistence itself, today it can be identified, for example, as the need to fulfil oneself, to seek recognition or a meaning to life. Nowadays, one of the keys to establishing community relationships or interactions is how to combine individuality and particularism with the need to change and improve the living conditions of one's environment. In the same way, we need to recognize that multiple attachments exist at different levels (local, national or international causes). Hence, community members will need to find a balance between maintaining a certain immunity and their individuality, and taking on specific commitments, which means being part of different causes while not compromising their entire life as individuals.

4.3. The psychological component

The third element refers to the *psychological component* through which people in a community seek their identity and which has been described in different ways depending on the author, such as a *feeling of belonging (*Campo, 1979; Ander-Egg, 1980; Nogueiras, 1996); *identity feeling* (Sánchez, 1991; Llena; Parcerisa & Úcar. 2009); *community sentiment* (MacIver & Page, 1958), or *community spirit* (Keller, 2003). Regarding these feelings, Ware (1965) and other authors have claimed that these kinds of psychological features emerge naturally as a result of interaction and constitute a shared social and cultural heritage that provides communities with an identity and idiosyncrasy. In this sense, Sancho (2009, p.70) pointed out that this identity should not be understood as *"something objective, but"* rather as *"a subjective construction"*. Therefore, the community should not be seen merely as a differentiated geographic place, but as a space which community members adopt as their own and which is a product of interactions that slowly but constantly transmit a feeling of belonging among the community members that makes them want to identify with it. In support of this premise, Giner (1983) argues that the primary groups which exist in these spaces are robust social action frameworks that ask their members for an emotional identification (identity feeling), or often wake this feeling up in them. In addition to these ideas, other authors such as MacIver and Page (1958), stated that this community feeling we refer to is made up of two elements: a) the feeling of *we-ness*, and b) and the feeling of playing a role. Both these elements display their own signs which are a) the communitarian uses and b) an interest in local life (MacIver & Page, 1958,pp. 307-308).

On the other hand, other authors, among whom we find McMillan and Chavis (1986), followed this same idea and claim that the sense of community is a feeling of belonging that community members have, which makes them care about the others, with there being a common belief that an individual's own needs will be satisfied as long as these needs are shared. When trying to describe the specific characteristics of this feeling of community, the previously mentioned authors argued that the community feeling is in its essence a psychosocial experience or perception which ultimately can be *territorial* (local community or

neighborhood), *relational* (social community), and *symbolic* (cultural community) (Sánchez, 2001).

4.4. Participation

A more contemporary view of the community suggests that *participation* has turned into a key element of community. However, this should not prevent us from recognizing that this concept has been, and still is, called by an endless number of other similar names. Hence, for Pastor (2015) it refers simply to the concept of *participation* itself, for McQueen it is a *joint action* (McQueen, 2001), whereas other authors refer to it as *common activities (*Campo, 1979; Gianbruno, 1961; Keller, 2003) and there are even those who label this feature as *integrated actions (*Campo, 1979). But basically, what do all these statements express? The main idea is that they consider the community as something in construction. Kisnerman (1990) argues that the community can be thought of as a process, rather than as something existent; or put in another way, something that is built and that is also the result of this process. This way of understanding the community is very similar to the concept of *commoning,* an anglicism, which according to Subirats and Rendueles (2016), can be understood as a struggle to make something common, bearing in mind, however, that this pursuit should not necessarily be limited to obtaining a physical good but that it should be interpreted as a collective process. Consequently, if we accept the idea of community as a participatory process under construction, it will be more linked to the modes of action than to its actual results. In this sense, the community would not be something prefixed and static; on the contrary, it would be a dynamic, constituent and performative reality of collective action carried out by a group to achieve a specific goal which it deems valuable, and from which it weaves a web of unique relationships. The community would be made up of those interested in defending the common space or resources.

Here we should recall Bauman's (2003) view of the 21st century community as a fundamentally *artificial* one. This "artificiality" should, nonetheless, not be interpreted as something imposed, or devoid of meaning; quite the contrary, it means that communities are the product of a deliberate and reasoned action carried out by a group of people because they deem it necessary, but this need exceeds, so to speak, the primary sources of subsistence and must be seen from the perspective of the Maslowian process through which the achievement of individual and collective self-fulfillment becomes the primary objective. Or as Rezsohazy stated, *"the task that awaits us consists in creating a community, that is, establishing links between the different groups of people and raising awareness of the sense of common belonging"* (Rezsohazy, 1988, p. 61) around that which unites people and is not based on historical reasons or pre-existing structures. This idea of community as a process also leads us to Turner's concept of *communitas* (Turner 1988, in Canals, 1997) and to the moment of liminality which is typical in times of change, when people often feel that hierarchies, norms and social barriers are dissolving and a perception of a fraternal, egalitarian and solidary encounter among people is likely to occur. Delanty (2010) proposed several appropriate examples of these kinds of moments: carnivals, rites of passage, or other kinds of celebrations.

4.5. Grouping

Regarding the importance given to *grouping* as a constituent element of the community, it can be said that many of the definitions do not explicitly acknowledge the existence of a population or group of people, although it is clearly a *conditio sine qua non* for the existence of any community. As to the size of the group or population, which is a common issue identified in the definitions analyzed, a current debate that should also be acknowledged is the one concerning the delimitation of its size, both in terms of its geographical dimension (i.e., the physical boundaries of the territorial community) and in terms of the number of its members. From an operational perspective, based on the paradigm of intervention or community work, Lesta (2001) recommends working with populations that do not exceed 20,000 inhabitants, since a larger size can make it difficult for the elements which have been defined as essential to emerge or to be created. Rather than establishing a specific size, the basic idea is that it should be small in relative terms. This issue is fundamental, since if we understood the community as a reality that can only emerge in relatively small human groups, this could lead us to disregard the possibility that, for instance, a

national community which is linked to a wider territory could exist. From our point of view, a clarifying element is that there must be the possibility of face-to-face contact in communities, as has been repeatedly pointed out. This means accepting the thesis that a community can only be built when physical contact is possible and relatively easy, which does not occur in larger human groups.

The concept of *diversity* is also linked to population, with some authors (for instance, MacQueen et al., 2001) having identified it as a determining feature for the meaning and role of communities in the contemporary world. And although it is not an aspect repeated in the previous definitions, it should be taken into account in any debate or reflection on the concept of community. Indeed, diversity is a typical feature of today's communities that clashes head-on with the idea or concept of homogeneity. Yet most definitions, either explicitly or implicitly, presuppose that all communities form either a large or small but relatively homogeneous entity. It is for this reason that communities have often been described as something essentially exclusive, that is, realities that clearly distinguish between *us* and *them*. This has led to an intense debate in social theory, especially since community affiliation always goes hand in hand with a certain degree of willfulness. In fact, people belong to communities because they wish to do so and because through them they can either try to satisfy their needs – increasing their sociability, intensifying their relationships, etc. – or participate in this collective reality because they view it as something positive and desirable. But what is the modern social theory's most common argument for rejecting this division between *them* and *us*? The answer is that when the purpose is of an exclusive nature, i.e., phylogenetic importance is given to the characteristics of both poles, instead of differentiating them by their respective functions. As Esposito (2018) recently pointed out, it can no longer be considered a basic principle, at least, if the reasons for exclusion are race, ethnicity, gender, or sexuality.

4.6. A definition of the community today

Following our above review and discussion about the various aspects related to the concept of community as proposed by different authors, we offer a definition of community, which can serve both as a guide for further theoretical debates as well for intervention and practice. Nevertheless, before going any further, it must be emphasized that despite having selected a set of common aspects, this does not mean that a consensus exists concerning the definition of community. By gathering the overlapping aspects among the different approaches and definitions, our intention was not to demonstrate that one single morphology exists, but rather that communities should be understood as realities with varying geometries and contents. And therefore, what we put forward is not a rigid framework, but rather a set of basic characteristics which will enable us to develop an interpretative framework.

Recalling the elements on which there is a greater consensus, i.e., a) the existence of a territory or space, b) interaction, c) the psychological component, d) participation in common activities, and e) a group of people or population, a definition of community could be the following:

> A process (or several processes) of participation that takes place in a given physical space in which people and groups of people interact and develop a psychological sense of belonging or reciprocity.

Consequently, the key concept in this definition is *participation*, which should be understood as a liminal and limited participation. Here, we propose to interpret the community as a reality that necessarily requires the participation of people and groups in one or several processes and that, as a result of this participation, the members of the community involved develop a psychological sense of identity or belonging. Although this means that only those who participate in the community will be part of it, it does not imply that this participation always has to occur with a certain degree of intensity, but rather that there can be very different levels of involvement or commitment, and that these levels can change or fluctuate over time.

Consequently, the community will not be a stable or immutable structure but instead, we must think of it as a network of social relationships, which are formed and broken. Furthermore, as stated before, these relationships must be linked to a specific physical environment, which is generally the normal or everyday living space. Without ruling out that these

relationships and processes can occur without being linked to this living environment, face-to-face contact does seem to be necessary. And although there is no local space that represents the personality of the residents on the whole, even today, local areas do seem to provide a fundamental place for intimate relationships to be established (Leonardo, 1989), and therefore, also for different types of loyalty and solidarity to be developed, which can lead to the creation of a community. Finally, we would also like to underline the concept of *limited liability* previously mentioned, since we understand that it helps to characterize the type of community relationships that societies today can support. As stated by Leonardo, this approach highlights the premeditated, voluntary nature of the residents' participation in community tasks. Indeed, as opposed to spontaneous participation, interested participation emerges as the result of reasoned individual decisions.

5. Discussion

In the current context, the reorientation of *social work* towards community intervention models is becoming crucial, whether it incorporates community intervention formulas, methods of community action research (Suarez-Balcazar, 2020), emerging models such as co-creation (Osborne, 2018; Zuniga, *et al*., 2019) and co-production processes (Bell & Pall, 2018; Ward, *et al*., 2018), or cooperative forms of management for needs such as care (Vega et al., 2018). And although this task is a complex one, apart from the debate over its conceptualization, there are several reasons why it is pertinent. If we look at the approaches developed by some of the most notable thinkers of our time, in today's society where citizens have withdrawn from civic life (Putnam, 2003), there seems to be little room left for community dynamics. However, a second reading may lead us to think, as Keller (2003) rightly argues, that those who predicted the end of communities with the arrival of modernity, should reconsider these predictions since, as Sennet (2000) or Bauman (2003) himself pointed out, one of the unintended consequences of capitalism is precisely the pursuit of safety and reliability in a hostile world. In Delanty's (2010) opinion, a community can offer what society or the state cannot: a sense of belonging in an uncertain world. Beyond

the validity of the idea of community in itself, i.e., as an abstract and metaphorical concept, we can conclude that communities, as tangible realities that operate in everyday life, have never really disappeared. Moreover, we could draw a comparison with the current situation of family structures in Western societies. Nowadays, kinship relationships may not be constituent parts of a family, but nobody denies their existence. Communities, like families, are changing realities. Furthermore, in our view, to have an essentialist vision of communities and to provide them with a superior moral status is clearly a mistake, since communities can be as good as they are bad. Everything depends on the reason for their existence as communities can have an exclusively instrumental nature and certainly, in some of the best examples found of communities in the 21st century, benevolence is not the main characteristic.

Whether the community works for a common good or not, we can affirm that it does so in various ways and to different degrees in everyday life, and thus, it could be recognized and acknowledged as a useful element for welfare systems. In this study, we propose to interpret communities as dynamic relational processes, instead of as static entities, where participation in them is an excluding (and including) element, and which are guided by a norm of reciprocity that is based on satisfying the interests and needs of its members. This implies reviewing and rethinking the concepts of community that have frequently been compared to neighborhoods or a group of people, or that have considered physical elements or resources as parts of the community, among many other aspects.

Similarly, different views can be taken regarding the role of communities in the 21st century welfare systems, which provides a good starting point for further discussion. Undoubtedly, community is a multifaceted concept operating in a hyper-complex reality, which has been both idealized and greatly simplified (Machin, 2003), and achieving the type of community that the current society and contexts demand and can facilitate is a task which requires much effort. For the time being, we must take on the challenges faced by communities concerning the survival of the welfare state, the dynamics of individualization, the phenomenon of social atomization, and the impact of the technological revolution on human relationships. In keeping with Zubero's

(2012) thoughts about the common good, and as this author points out, the community can help us to think of society as a relational project; and in this sense, we should also think about professions in the social field from this logic, moving away from the theoretical simplification and bureaucratization of praxis, and accepting the complexity and creativity that is required to build a welfare system according to the reality and needs of the 21st century.

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