ÁGNES UTASI

COMMUNITY TIES

Solidarity Network and Public Life

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PREFACE

As a consequence of socioeconomic changes in the last decades, unemployment has appeared, financial security has decreased and social inequalities have intensified. On top of the social hierarchy a few live in unprecedented wealth, while at the bottom many are destitute. Individualism, aggrandizement and rivalry result in social distrust. Personal and community relations realign or disintegrate. These changes have proved that solidarity disappears without community relations; collective interests cannot be effectively pursued without common action, and the majority are exposed to the decisions of the wealthy influential elite without social collaboration.

It has become obvious that the ignorance of community aims and the exclusive priority of individual ones, i.e. professional competition, the desire for career and purchasing unaffordable consumer goods at all costs, atomizes society and deprives communities and relationships of trust. Under the present circumstances, in this highly individualistic society that lacks the sense of community, the most important social task would be to revive and strengthen individual sociability and the need for community. Community life would later encourage public participation and solidarity towards the socially disadvantaged. The initial hypothesis and motto of our research was the following: the need for community relations enhances the chance of democratic renewal. The two key terms are community life and public participation, and their correlation is discussed in the present book. Moreover, our aim was to describe the degree of community and public involvement of

individuals, in other words, the individual level of social participation.

Based on research data, we present the distinct lack of public participation. However, our conclusions are more promising in connection with communities. First and foremost, the functioning of immediate communities and individual relation structures is not as inadequate as we have assumed from the degree of atomization and general distrust, or as public opinion supposes consequently to the rapid social changes. The overwhelming majority of the society live in solidary families. Although family itself has undergone radical changes as well, its members retained a strong sense of cohesion and solidarity.

Almost three quarters of the society is attached to groups of friends, some people to several similar groups simultaneously. Three quarters of the members of these groups believe that they would receive help from at least one of the other members in case of need. Mutual trust and assistance are important in these groups; common identity and the sense of belongingness result in everyday solidarity which multiplies the members' resources. However, only every fourth respondent is attached to organised civil communities. Apparently, small communities work considerably well in the society, and they provide security for the majority of the population. It is obvious, nevertheless, that the level of organised civil collaboration that could easily lead to public participation is insufficient compared to the proportion of small communities.

Only every fifth respondent participates intensively in public life. They are people with at least high school diploma who live in financial security, or at least not in grave poverty, and who are open to social problems. Low-educated people whose financial situation is insecure relinquish public participation; in fact they 'voluntarily' hand over the right of

taking public decisions to the wealthy upper fifth with higher status and educational attainment. If the population is characterised by highly unequal levels of education and extreme differences in socioeconomic situation, democracy becomes mere formality instead of representing the majority opinion. Public life requires individuals who possess decently secure financial background and the necessary level of education to acquire and process information.

Furthermore, this book tries to 'find the drop in the ocean' by revealing the characteristics of local groups and public life in village communities. Two categories of villages were distinguished: the first still preserves traditional values and culture of the community; and the second is already losing traditional values due to its advancement in the modernisation process. The community and public life of both village types are presented. The persistent power of the village is strong everywhere: three fourth of the respondents of rural origin has never considered leaving the village permanently. However, livelihood issues are sometimes stronger than the emotional attachment to the home and inhabitants are often compelled to commute or to find a job abroad, yet they continuously plan to return.

The book also aims to draw a comparison between the international levels of public and community participation. Out of 28 countries of Europe, the Scandinavian and the most prosperous Western European countries show an outstanding level of social participation. Southern European countries and the post-communist countries of East-Central Europe had the lowest results. People often say self-deceptively about the societies of former Eastern Bloc states (including the Hungarian) that the deficiencies will soon vanish, because these nations are still 'learning' the democracy. But our research results indicated that active community and public life do not depend on time or on acquisition. To ensure the

independence of personal opinion, financial security is necessary, and to form individual opinion a certain level of education is needed, without these the majority have no choice but to endure the decisions of the people with higher standards of living.

The book seeks answers for questions concerning community, public life and social participation by relying on several research databases. I hope that readers will encounter some conclusions in this book that would inspire further consideration.

The author

I. WITHOUT COMMUNITY NO PUBLIC LIFE

Some of our earlier analyses of human relationships[1] have shown that primarily those people had wider relationship networks beyond family and friends whose living conditions were considerably favourable. In other words, community relations are the privileges and practice of people with advantaged social and economic capital (Utasi 2002). This conclusion was the motivation for our next research: we intended to specify what living conditions have to be improved to foster the need for community ties in wider social strata. We also investigated what changes would be necessary to engage a greater proportion of society in shaping community and public life.

An international examination of 24 European countries (ESS, 2005) confirmed that remarkably lower proportions of the population feel attached to any communities or organisations in post-communist countries than in modern Western societies. Former Eastern Bloc nations comprised smaller numbers of respondents with friendship circles, or any other informal relationships which were reinforced recurrently through mutual visits, whereas a significantly greater number of inhabitants considered their own participation in public life useless (Utasi 2008).

[1] We examined the effects of relationships on life quality and contentment (OTKA, T046301, ESS 2005), and their role in the evolution of social solidarity and in social integration (OTKA, T25584).

International comparative data also revealed that relationships were more intensive in traditional societies and prosperous societies of market economy than in post-communist countries. Why is the community network of post-communist, asymmetrically modernised and relatively poor market societies less dense than elsewhere? The answer is undoubtedly the almost complete disintegration of traditional social groups, while new types of civil communities fail to appear. As a consequence, the majority of the population do not possess civil consciousness and sociability. The incomplete nature of modern civil development and its underlying contradictions increased the lack of relationships and communities, and this caused atomization and isolation.

Although the disintegration of traditional communities started decades ago, the deficiency in relationships has aggravated, and consequently attracted sociological attention only in the past few years (Utasi 2002). Before the political transition, the division of labour depended on state property, and the inevitable collaboration of families and smaller groups sustained the communities that rested on strong and solid relationships. Full employment ensured long-term collegial relations, and combined with interdependency of co-workers, occupational communities were more likely to form. The neighbourhood relationships functioned better than nowadays as well. Mutual solidarity and austerity resulted in instrumental cohesion; the long time span spent together in the living place improved and deepened trust which preserved a community network of strong personal relationships. At that time, communities emerged primarily from traditional motivation, but the next step after the primary relationship network, namely civil groups were not organised. Other communities fell under state control. The communist regimes oppressed personal inclination for creating civil communities.

The state ceased to care for the population in many aspects after the political transition; and market economy inevitably deepened social inequalities, so the need for civil communities, as forums of the protection of interests, grew. Sociological questions were formulated gradually, but more and more definitively: how could social integration be preserved in a society that is adapted to market economy, but lacks resources, how could the society be prevented from splitting into extremely unequal classes, if the majority of the population feels incompetent to intervene in the issues of their immediate communities, incompetent to shape their own lives (Utasi 2002).

The Interaction of the Need for Community Life with Public Life

The interaction of the need for community life with public life and their extreme variation in society have not been closely examined by Hungarian sociology yet. One reason for this deficiency is that many researchers adopted an expectant attitude after 1989. According to their argument, social participation could not reach a general level in the transition period, because the majority needed time to acquire how to deal with the democratic system. It was anticipated that a strong middle class would emerge from the gradual evolution of market economy, and civil consciousness would form simultaneously. However, social trends have failed to meet the expectations so far. Other sociologists have emphasized in the political transition period that social transformation might be delayed for over sixty years after the introduction of market economy, if it could happen in democracy at all. It has been

impossible to trace the slightest sign of social change until now (Dahrendorf 1990, Offe 1992).

After many years, it has become obvious that community life and civil consciousness have not progressed, or what is worse, traditional communities have disappeared. Diminution in the network of human relationships, atomization and the lack of communities do not only endanger social integration, but mean obstacles to the functioning of democratic public life. These conditions hinder the majority in public participation and expression of personal opinions on issues which affect their own individual lives.

International sociological examinations have proved, nevertheless, that the disintegration of communities is evident not only in the former Eastern Bloc countries which have been 'learning democracy' in the last decades, but social bonds are loosening in most of the societies of modern market economy as well (Putnam 2002). It is also true that the deficiency in social participation, the lack of community ties and rapidly changing society constitute a more acute problem in the post-communist countries, as the governments that have been functioning with market economy for decades, or centuries, are capable of mobilizing a greater deal of financial resources for the preservation of formal elements of democracy.

The Formation of Communities

The examination of the interaction of community with public life requires an exact understanding of both elements. Max Weber derives the description of community relations from the definition of social action. According to his theory, community relationships come into being, if individual actions with identical rational content are directed at one another.

Relationships are shaped by various motivations, thus community relations can emerge from dominantly traditional, emotional, value-rational or instrumental motivation. Communities motivated by tradition have the least significant role in the foundation of public life, while communities with other motivation types apparently take a decisive part in it (Weber 1987).

The motivational factors which the community rests on change the common aims and/or collective values of the participants and determine their common interests. These factors constitute the basis of common consciousness, called the community identity, which furnish individuals who are drawn towards each other by their similar motives with the capability to act conformably and share solidarity (Hankiss 2004).

Formation, functioning and sustainment of a community do not require the simultaneous presence of all motivation types or aims, though apparently the more types of motivation connect the members of the community, the stronger the sense of cohesion becomes. In the ideal situation, different motivations and common action establish *spirituality*, a solid emotional and psychic foundation for community identity.

The members of communities with different motivational factors often know each other, or at least many of them are in direct and regular contact. This can be equally true for macro-communities, like nations, or for smaller communities, like the inhabitants of a town. The traditional motivation of common origin of a nation creates cohesion which is reinforced by their shared culture and language. Culture and language facilitate direct communication between the members of the macro-community, even if they did not know each other or were not connected before their encounter, such as in the case of fellow countrymen meeting abroad.

People living in the same town are bound together by common past and tradition, many of them are in everyday contact; thus they experience belongingness to the same place. The existence of this kind of emotional attachment is confirmed by the accidental, but joyful encounters of ‘compatriots’ in a foreign city, country or even on another continent. The cohesive power of communal spirituality is easily perceived on occasions, such as international sport events when the national flag is raised, or on national cultural contests when a competitor living in or coming from our town, ‘one of us’ wins. There is still hope that small local communities or even public life can be revived by relying on the mostly dormant or latent communal identity described above.

Nowadays quasi-communities, whose members never meet personally, but virtually, tend to form more and more often. There is no traditional motivation or source of their affinity, the community is motivated by a common value, interest or goal. However, online communities might evolve into groups of direct and personal interactions; members of virtual communities occasionally express their mutual solidarity through concrete actions. National or international demonstrations of solidarity are organised more and more frequently via the Internet. It is still a question, though, how real the collective identities of online communities are, or how sufficiently they can fulfil the criteria of community and where the limits of the members’ solidarity lie.

Despite the fact that there are some similarities, the common identity and spirituality of the communities which operate on direct relations and the identity and spirituality of the indirectly–mainly online–organised communities differ significantly. Members of direct communities, or at least many of them, know each other personally, hence their strong trust, and the information flow is relatively rapid and reliable which strengthens solidarity. However, various international

examinations have drawn attention to the contradiction that the number of direct civil communities is low and even dropping in technologically advanced societies, meanwhile the manifestations of virtually organised communities multiply, demonstrative events that mobilize a growing number of people, i.e. 'Critical Mass', are more and more frequent (Putnam 2002).

The actions of virtually organised quasi-communities raise many questions, such as whether these communities are able to function similarly to direct communities, and if yes, under what circumstances. What is the probability of the transformation of online connections into direct relationships, into a direct community? How real is the danger that participants of virtually organised manifestations who do not known each other become victims of manipulation, or misuse? Are the virtual communities capable of systematic solidarity, can they behave as a real community with collective identity, common goals and values?

Dynamics of Continuous Disintegration and Formation of Communities

The sense of belongingness, the 'we-consciousness' is essential both to social integration and to the security of individuals. In our view, it cannot be ensured by online relations, only by the involvement in direct communities. It is also true, on the other hand, that changes in individual life path or in the society sometimes alienate and replace people who were members of the same community with common goals by radically modifying their values and interests.

As a consequence of these changes, the collective sense of former relationships ceases, and the solidarity and trust towards the members of the former community disappear as well. Individuals, nevertheless, follow their basic need for community life and try to attach themselves to new people with similar values and interests, to adapt to the new circumstances and form a new community.

Community relations influenced by life circumstances repeatedly disintegrate and emerge with new members even without massive social trauma. In this way, social integration remains uninterrupted; individuals do not drop out of every surrounding community simultaneously. However, dynamic and rapid changes in society cause quicker oscillation of individuals between communities, more dramatic ruptures, and faster disintegration and emergence of communities (Hankiss 2004).

Experience confirms that those communities endure whose motivations include traditional factors. The members of communities that rest on traditional motivation are bound together by such a strong connection that frequently remains constant throughout a lifetime. If these communities do dissolve due to a radical impact, the lack of traditional bonds weakens the identity of the person, and this hinders his/her integration into new groups organised with other motivational factors. This difficulty leads to deficient relationship network that is observed for example in the case of immigrants, or the status-free countrymen who moved to a city (Bordieu 1978).

Rapid changes that affect the entire social structure are the major causes of ruptures in community relations. In Hungary, the value system and interests realigned very quickly according to the new property relations in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Consequently, many of earlier relationships and communities vanished. The hasty conversion of the production system crumbled former communities of people with

homogenous social status. Former collegial ties loosened or broke up, the political transition pluralized political values; groups of political interests were restructured. Neighbourhoods disintegrated due to the migration and geographic mobility; and the polarization of incomes destroyed friendship circles.

The structural changes radically modified social relations, and former communities disappeared as a consequence of the individual aims and value preferences which were adopted under the new circumstances. People sought and organised new communities and new groups. However, many of them were not able to keep up with the remodelling and could not compensate for the loss in their relationship network, the number of their connections decreased, and their social ties were limited to the close family, or they even became isolated (Ferge 2000, Utasi 2002).

Socio-psychological studies suggest that the lack of relations increases the chance of several illnesses and shortens life expectancy. Some researchers even assert that the changes in the mortality rate in Hungary, and especially the low life expectancy of men, is directly related to the diminishing relationship network of people (Kopp-Skrabski 2001, Ferge 2000, Castel 1993).

Effects of Globalisation on the Community

The main motive for global capitalism is the establishment of a supranational economic alliance and unity by abolishing the borders of national economies, so as to facilitate the free flow of national capital. Globalised society emerges from the fusion and expansion of European labour and consumer market, and this commercial and financial space is sometimes called ‘community’. We cannot accept this concept. The global

society might be a union which ensures some kind of economic integration, but it cannot become a community, since it does not possess the fundamental criteria described in our definition of community: direct solidarity, 'we-consciousness' and sense of mutual responsibility of the members. The dominant motivational factors of the international market in European global capitalisation are the temporary economic interests which cannot correspond to the national interests of all participating countries simultaneously. This is clearly illustrated by the transnational conflicts of interests because of the differentiated financial support for agriculture, or by the currently aggravating problem of banks and their subsidiaries. Short-term and profit-oriented economic interests cannot provide lasting international reciprocity, which would neutralize the conflicts of interests; they rather depress solidarity and escalate the disagreement. Every nation pursues their own interests, after all, which implies contradiction with others, and so do the recurring demand for harmonization of the interests. Transnational unions of market economies lack communal identity; and without identity they are mere alliances or collaborations. While consumer culture becomes more and more globalised nowadays, protective reactions of nation states intensify. The homogeneity of values and/or interests of the members as a motivational factor is absent, so the common identity, the solidarity and spirituality cannot develop at an international level.

However, international or world-wide communities with shared values that are independent of or directed against the profit-oriented world of globalisation follow a different pattern. These are, for example, peace movements, environmental organisations, international charity organisations and religious groups serving a transcendent power. They have universal and general human objectives as motivational factors which are more comprehensive, and

represent more than local or national interests. In this case, the shared value or interest of the transnational community does not contradict the national identity. Members of value-communities working for universal aims in a transnational framework are not compelled to ignore the interests and values of another, smaller (national or local) community which is based on traditional motivation. For a greater purpose, the participants embrace the joint and wider solidarity in addition to their already existing solidarity network.

Modern mass production with its short-term rationality rends the network of relations and attacks the norms of communities continuously and inevitably, as it strives for immediate profit. Thus, production sites and employees are moved from one place to another, and companies prefer dismissal to innovation. This policy ruins collegial groups, or sometimes even informal relationships. Some workers are always on the move or even professionally neglected which destroys their relationship networks (Fukuyama 2000, Korten 1996, Beck 2005).

The Change of Community Values and Norms

It was demonstrated in the last chapter how globalised market economy undermines social relations, but it is also true that it initiates new ones by changing former values and norms. It urges people to form new communities whose motivations correspond to the demands of the actual production structure. The new communities with altered norms and short-term rationality entail rivalry and individualization which weaken, or sometimes destroy trust; the members' altruistic solidarity and sense of mutual responsibility which was characteristic for traditional societies also diminish. Because of the dynamic

improvement and modification of production technology, collegial communities are designed for short-term periods. Labourers adjust to restart, fluctuation and to the repeated leaving of collegial communities. Erosion of values, trust and responsibility comes first, so the continuous remodelling takes place without any difficulty.

It is obvious, nevertheless, that the isolated people who recurrently abandon their communities cannot become 'individuals', as the notion of 'individual' exists exclusively in relation to the community. Community life is indispensable to the realisation of individual goals. "It's useless to bathe in yourself, wash your face in other faces" as Atilla József, the poet expressed (transl. Péter Hargitai 2005). In this interpretation, the lack of community does not only cause isolation, but it deprives individuals of the opportunity for personal perfection. Leaders of economic production recognise, of course, that results cannot be optimized by isolated individuals, community cooperation is more efficient. To fulfil the demands of production, they build communities artificially and temporarily through professional trainings (Korten 1996, Sen 1999, Szalai 2006).

The norms widely accepted nowadays are believed to have developed gradually after the introduction of large-scale production many decades or in some more advanced countries one and a half century ago. Industrial production replaced traditional family farming, and combined with market competition it reinforced individualism and instrumental rationality, and confused the people's social network. The moral that had relied on mutual trust, familial care, the sense of duty and responsibility collapsed (Weber 1982, Hirsch 1977).

The preferences of large-scale industrial production, such as cleverness, smartness and individual competition, became highly esteemed. The new value preferences displaced the moral compulsion often maintained through religious faith

earlier, secularisation spread and the traditional values and principles of communities gradually disappeared. Mechanical solidarity of the communities and honest mercifulness towards the disadvantaged lost their roles. The change of the community moral is, therefore, the direct consequence of the technological and productivity improvement, since personal advancement, competition, individual aims and rights cannot be pursued without harming others' rights and interests. Instrumental rationality, unrestricted enforcement of individual interests strengthened by the change of values and morals prevailed over former traditional community values. Traditional communities were conjoined by altruistic solidarity and by traditional principles expected from and imposed on the members, but groups formed under the new circumstances of mass-production are prompted by instrumental rationality and self-interests (Beck 1999, Lorenz 2002, Weber 1982).

The Development of Solidarity Networks

Solidarity, responsibility and belongingness are concomitants of community life. It is questionable, though, whether traditional ethics and value system could be sustained despite the changes of mass society. As it has been noted earlier, communities might have various motivations, since people pursue more values and interests at the same time. They enter, therefore, different communities that grow concentrically in size (family-friends-co-workers-hobby/value/political organisations-local/national/transnational-universal), but they might belong to various groups on every horizontal level and adopt more communal identities simultaneously.

Relationships evolve into communities less and less frequently in globalised economic environment which

encourages competition and rivalry. It is hard to admit that the choice for long-term interests and general values is more beneficial than instrumental rationality. Globalised market economy generates such rapid changes that prevent communities from developing long-term interests and trust which would be essential for solidarity and altruism. Thus, only the strong ties of family and communities with traditional motivation provide people with mutual solidarity and long-term reciprocity in the actual economic system. Self-sacrifice hardly occurs outside family or friendships. Communal solidarity lost its importance; it is actually 'imprisoned' by instrumental motivation (Fukuyama 2000, Utasi 2002).

Despite the destructive effects of market economy on traditional norms and values, different forms of communal altruism and solidarity do appear outside family and groups of friends. After having succeeded in their own goals, more and more people realise that it is a necessary commitment and a general human duty to support the disadvantaged in their own communities or even in the wider society. Members of solidary communities possibly arrive at the logical conclusion that the present social circumstances, including high risk, insecurity, profit-oriented attitude, rapid social changes and unpredictable conditions can force anyone to ask the help of others (Beck 2003).

Natural disasters are the most common cause of the realisation how necessary solidarity and charity would be on the macro-social level, but the quick and unexpected status loss of groups or peoples also contributes to the attitude change. Manifestations of communal solidarity are often organised online, or the Internet is the medium of information exchange and mobilization where the intention to help is conceived. International solidarity and charity are quite commonplace as well (aid for helpless people, for victims of earthquakes, tsunamis, wars, diseases and for refugees).

Solidarity network based on the exchange of work also aims to reduce risks. However, its current nature differs from the earlier forms of village collaborations which were initiated by mutual help and trust amongst the members of traditional communities. In modern solidarity networks, people who help other members of the community get their salaries in a symbolic currency (a specific object used as money within the local community, like poker chips) or their work is simply recorded. Later, the helper can rely on the compensation. In other words, charity work, like an abstract form of community cash is deposited in the 'solidarity bank' which is ready to loan its customers in case of need (Beck 2005, Giddens 1999).

The community cooperation described above is apparently a reciprocally functioning market-network, especially in the case of cities where strangers cooperate, but it might evolve into a new form of spontaneously and voluntary organised web of solidarity, or community production. Informal sales associations of agricultural products and economic partnerships emerging in some regions are even more promising. These organisations are initially motivated by predominant economic interests, but the members know and possibly trust each other, so there is a chance that later they adopt a collective identity, the sense of mutual responsibility and the need for public life.

The reason why solidarity materializes in small communities more and more frequently is the recognition that anyone can drop out of the system of global capitalism, and fall back on direct community solidarity and altruistic help. People start to understand that temporary cooperation and the community's easily available solidarity are indispensable. Shocking events, tragedies, and natural catastrophes raise public awareness and create solidarity even towards strangers. In these cases, instrumental rationality, egoism and individual interests are neglected for a short while.

The development of solidarity networks is inhibited by the lack of resources, or by the fact that resourceless societies are cleaved in two. All who have lodgings and are able to finance it, belong to the upper class. They have paid workplace, professional skills, or physical strength that ensures their continuous employment. This upper segment of the society does not rely on the community's help, on solidarity. Reciprocal solidarity of the wealthy amongst each other is designed to multiply their resources.

It is usually the shock of personal tragedies or frightening social catastrophes that alarm members of the upper class and raise their awareness of the fact that they are not fully protected against social insecurity. Probably these experiences imprint the belief that solidarity towards the disadvantaged and altruistic help are long-term interests of the macro-community, as anyone can be compelled by changes in circumstances, life cycle or social structure to rely on the support and solidarity of others at least for a certain time.

The 'shadow-society' of the lower segment consists of the people who have difficulties with housing (they do not have their own homes or they have barely enough money to maintain it) because of their inability to work (caused by the lack of qualifications, illness, age or restructured and shrinking labour market). Many of them live day by day in absolute insecurity, as they do not possess supplies or exchangeable goods which would provide them with the possibility to participate in the pursuit of common interests or in the protection-oriented community organisations. The inequality between the two layers of the society is so significant that the discrepancies in the values, interests and aims shaped by individual life circumstances preclude people of different status from merging into mixed communities. These factors intensify homogenous and caste-like organisation of formal and informal communities.

Solidarity from the Micro- to the Macro-level

The need for urgent re-democratization is commonly emphasized in present societies (Giddens 1999). This statement implies the notion that the actual form of democracy fails to ensure majority engagement and to meet most citizens' requirements. Modern market economy has unquestionably expanded individual autonomy, independency and legal freedom. However, economic competition has significantly intensified the social inequalities both on the individual and on the community levels. Market economy diminished the solidarity emerging from the interdependency of traditional communities, so basic principles of humanism would require that the state, as the macro-community, cared for its socially disadvantaged members. This recognition and the process of institutionalised individualization urged societies to expand the solidarity network from the micro- to the macro-communal level (Durkheim 1986, Fararo és Doreian 1998).

The need for community support depends on individual wealth and resources, as well as on the individuals' cultural, communal and material capital. However, the resourceless the macro-communities (i.e. the states) of market economy are, the less capacity/intention they have to support the disadvantaged. The states of modern market economies are expected to take two, seemingly contradictory actions: ensure individual autonomy; and show solidarity, help the needy. The state as the macro-community has to provide its citizens not only with the maximal freedom and independence, but with social protection. While autonomy is obviously an individual demand, social welfare is the long-term interest of the community.

Modern societies are usually aware of the fact that economic competition and large-scale production entail inequalities and unpredictable risks, thus there are always citizens who are not able to stay competitive and self-

sustaining. Governments usually accept this necessity, but they tend to neglect the double task of macro-communities in times of recession. The institutionalised organic solidarity of the macro-community is deliberately minimalized in these cases (Durkheim 1986, Esping-Andersen 1990).

Most theorists of sociology assert that the maintenance of social integration cannot rely solely on the citizens' self-support in globalised market economy. Because of the rapidly changing economic situation, it is essential that the state, the macro-community, has reserves, or takes resources from productive members of the society in order to avoid unexpected individual and community risks. The current financial crisis convincingly verifies the indispensability of macro-communal solidarity, since the most influential businessmen, banks, bankers, asked and received support from the government funds in the whole world.

It has become obvious recently that the resources of macro-communities in the globalised world have to be occasionally supplemented by financial reinforcement of supra-governmental and transnational banks. The loans whose burdens and interests rest on the macro-community are profitable business, and by no means manifestations of communal solidarity.

Participation in Direct and Representative Democracy

Democracy was originated in the ancient city-states, the *poleis* where it meant the political practice of the people, the *demos*. It is a system of self-administration that involves the active participation of free citizens, and its operational principle implies majority engagement in the decision-making process. The *polis* comprised a countable number of citizens, so its

direct democracy was a political structure that relied on the network of more or less direct acquaintances of the free. This kind of democracy was an exclusive one: non-native men, slaves (not regarded as humans) and women were not allowed to participate. Athens is commonly regarded as the most democratic Greek city, but solely one quarter out of its 300 000 inhabitants had the right to vote as a result of the selective system (Sartori 1999, Aristotle 1984).

Later in history the authorities did not concede participation in public affairs to the social majority, not even after the abolition of slavery. The proportion of electors increased especially from the 19th century, and universal suffrage was introduced in modern industrial societies by the beginning of the 20th century.

Formal equality in political and legal terms was extended firstly to all male, later to all female citizens as well. However, leadership always had measures to manipulate legislation: to limit or extend people's possibilities of interfering in social decision-making. It has to be added that local communities (free towns) occasionally and sporadically were able to assign direct public participation to a quite wide range of the members.

As a consequence of population growth and urbanization, the number of citizens in modern market economies became unsuited to direct democracy, thus current civil democracies function predominantly through elected representatives. The opportunity to directly intervene in public life and democratic issues is granted to the majority of the citizens only once in every few years on the occasion of elections (Utasi 2002). The proportions of directly participating citizens could be increased, if the communities would be built on each other as concentrically growing circles which would facilitate information flow. But information exchange is usually interrupted between the different levels of hierarchy in

the societies which have deficiencies in the community networks. Moreover, it is impossible to prevent the concentration of property and commodities, and the concentration of the concomitant power in competitive industrial societies. In other words, the efficient formula for reviving public life and for the renewal of democracy does not exist (Lorenzo 2002).

Some sociologists believe that self-administration of the community is to be improved by 'electronic democracy' in the future, and a greater part of the population, if not the entire, will be able to take decisions through the Internet and complementarily to elections in issues concerning the macro-community. Cyberculture can indeed enhance the human aspects of direct democracy, since it accelerates civil information flow and the spread of necessary knowledge for taking decisions (Molnár 2003)

Internet and computer are believed to bring a breakthrough in the formation of communities, democratic attitude, public life and orientation by offering new ways for the establishment and maintenance of human connections (such as e-mail, debate forums, social networks, newsletters, blogs etc.). Although it is still impossible to predict exactly how the world-wide web will influence public activity and relationships of people, the last results of international examinations indicate that the Internet has not increased significantly the number of communities of civic participation (Putnam 2002).

Putnam's widely-known research has demonstrated through the empiric data of 30 years that in the United States, where the number of value-based civic communities was supposed to be rather high, civil relationships and social capital had decreased. Putnam pointed out that people's relationships and communities were significantly weaker and less trustful, moreover, civic society of the macro-community functioned apparently worse in the 1990s than earlier. He concluded that

the chance of civic participation lessened due to the declined intensity of community relations. In the 1990s US citizens signed fewer petitions than 25 years earlier, people were less likely to join civil organisations or association, and those who did join, met the fellow members less frequently. According to Putnam, the shrinkage of human and community relations is a factor beyond human will, since it is caused by the system of modern market economy. The phenomenon arises from the changes in labour division, family structure, life expectancy, lifestyle, female roles, technology (such as the invention of television and computer) and other macro-communal processes in the society. In post-communist countries a similar trend was discovered as far as communities and relationships are concerned, but the deficiency in relationships beyond family was even more severe in these societies than in the American case (Angelusz és Tardos 1998, Utasi 2008).

Basic Criteria of Democratic Public Life

Theoretical questions and different aspects of the 'democratisation' of democracy have caught the attention of many scientists, including sociologists (Habermas 1971, Bourdieu 1999, Putnam 1995, Arendt 1998, Riesman 1983, Almond and Verba 1963). We also intended to study the interaction between community and public participation, thus we had to examine the elements of democracy and formulate an acceptable theoretical framework for our research.

Dahl, the most well-known theoretician of pluralist democracy lists some crucial prerequisites for the ideal functioning of democracy (Dahl 1989). First and foremost, it is essential that all citizens *effectively* participate in the decision-making process; therefore the right to vote has to be granted to

the entire society. Secondly, voters have to be informed about the public issues prior to taking their decisions, since they cannot form their opinions and cannot reach consensus without the necessary information. Thirdly, the education of citizens has to be ensured and improved continuously (schools, civil education, trainings), so as they become able to understand and process the information. Lastly, full civil control of the social agenda is crucial.

In our research, we have applied Dahl's view of the democratic criteria by adjusting them to our possibilities and aims, since the focus of our research was put predominantly on the analysis of preconditions and on the discussion of the attitude towards public life that emerges from the existing community relations. It was assumed that the expansion of communal relations might lead to a growing demand for civic participation. Instead of the elitist democratic theory of Schumpeter (Schumpeter 2012), our research adopted Barber's approach which claims that democracy requires social participation, exchange of opinions, community dialogue and interest in social affairs. Community actions of active citizens with relationship networks are indispensable (Hoskins and Mascherini 2009). Only these factors can turn citizens into democrats. Development of relationships and interests in community issues are basic criteria of democracy (Hoskins 2006). In Barber's view, the community life itself is the essence of democracy (Barber 2004).

Political Community and Public Life

Market economy is the dominant subsystem of the modernised social system which is based on individual competition and intensifies inequalities. These inequalities were supposed to be

offset by other subsystems, especially by the institutionalisation of organic solidarity and by the political plurality, or multi-party system which articulates the values and interests of every social stratum (Münch 1984).

However, there is a widespread disillusionment with the political plurality, or more precisely with the multi-party system. Only a low proportion of the society is affiliated to any political group. According to the data of a comparative international research (ESS 2008) involving 24 European countries, the average of the sample was fairly low (4%), but the number of members of political groups was the lowest in Hungary (0, 7%) and in Poland (1%). In these two countries, the social disappointment is growing and the respect for political parties is shrinking. Parties are exclusive and elitist, and instead of representing the interest of different social groups, they prioritize their own ambition for power and the interests of those elite and economic groups who support them (Schumpeter 1950, Szalai 2006). The most important accomplices of the parties are the media; the majority of people mean only statistics or supporting cast in the play. One part of the population accepts this low-prestige role in politics, as their lack of information and knowledge makes them impressionable. Political statements are designed to be confusing, since the majority do not possess the necessary level of education and understanding to recognise, comprehend and solve contradictions. The majority live in insecurity with a low demand for civic participation. These citizens tend to underestimate their own social importance, so they distance themselves from community issues and back out of politics.

Similarly, an immense disillusionment with politics characterises the small group of people who are indeed engaged in public life. This group emphasizes their political neutrality and accept only civil assignments. Every level of public life, especially the assessment of decisions concerning

the surrounding environment, should rely on small communities, since these are the basic components of political structure and public life (Giddens 1999).

In Hungary, as well as in every resourceless country, the number of small communities who are motivated by the improvement of the surrounding social environment is distinctively low. Public awareness emerges under resourceless and disadvantaged life conditions very difficultly. Most citizens are deprived of the financial stability, the necessary level of education, and the essential quantity of information which would enable the understanding of the circumstances, opinion formation and participation in the self-administration. Empiric data indicate that civic participation and social activity are the privileges of people who are better qualified and more affluent than the average (Putnam 1995, 2000 and Utasi 2008).

Many sociologists believe that the most urgent political tasks of recent times would be to improve democracy and to intensify community and civic participation. This process is hindered by the fact that citizens have been recurrently deceived in the course of history by governments that defined themselves as democratic systems. Dictatorships that annihilated thousands or tolerated only a minimal level of civil participation were called “democracies” by their founders. Political systems, even if they are declared to be democratic, easily turn into extreme dictatorships without civil communities, public control and community solidarity (Sen 1999).

The extension of individual freedom co-occurs with the decrease of traditional communities and social atomization in globalised market societies, so a great proportion of the population becomes socially passive. The isolated individual does not develop the demand for community relationships or cannot acquire enough information to form an opinion, thus the freedom of speech remains unexploited. In this situation the

government does not consider majority interests, as it is not compelled to do so. According to the TÁRKI/ISSP survey in 1996, the privatization of banks was opposed by 70% and the privatization of the electric power distribution by 93% of the population, yet the government disregarded the public opinion and carried out the sale (Utasi 2008).

Representatives of the authority often refuse majority opinion as being the will of the empty-headed mass, so closed power groups associated with the elections gain authorisation to follow their own interests in decision making; sometimes they even utilize the media for self-affirmation. Actions of the leaderships are entirely determined by the ambitions of pressure groups, and without the benefits of community existence the majority of the population become bystanders in public life (Bibó 1957, Utasi 2008).

The Levels of Sociability and the Concentric Circles of Communities

Living conditions form human needs. As the discrepancies in social circumstances dictate, the most disadvantaged often lack the need for wider community and for civic participation; for them close family is the only source of contentment. Improvement in living standards enhances communal and public activity.

An earlier research found that family was considered as the fundamental unit, and the groups of friends were the second in the hierarchy of communities that contributed decisively to people's contentment. Relatively fewerrespondents regarded groups united by a certain kind of hobby or values as necessary elements of their general sense of well-being. One fifth of the

population also felt readiness to serve public interests of the macro-community (Utasi 2008).

Our former survey indicated that the family as the basic community is of primary importance in Hungary, but it was satisfactory on its own only for one tenth of the population. If we follow the increase of the need for public life through the concentrically growing communities, we find that it reaches its peak by the most affluent one fifth of the society. Despite the fact that one fifth of the people are characterised by the highest levels of interest in macro-community issues and universal values, the need for public life manifests itself in reality, in actions and becomes practice only by some percentage of the population (Utasi 2008).

Based on earlier research results and on the hierarchy of needs, we firmly believe that the improvement of living conditions intensifies the need for wider communities (Maslow 1954, Allardt 1993). Financial stability, community dialogue, communication, high level of education to comprehend information are the objective factors in an individual's life that contribute to the development of the need for civic participation. Family is the foundation of the need for community life. In this primary group of community coexistence, traditional values and family interests generate uniting aims and in the ideal case spirituality, family identity and altruism as well. As the second most important informal groups after the family, circles of friends provide the basis for social integration and rehearsal for community life. People whose need for community was shaped by well-functioning family are more likely to join friendly groups. Relationships with small communities in the immediate surrounding (neighbours, colleagues, clubs, hobby or value groups) constitute the next level of the sociability. Groups and circles motivated by the awareness for local issues have a crucial role in the formation of people's attitude, since their patriotic 'we-

consciousness' might become a catalyst of a more active public life. Global and macro-communities with a sense of responsibility for the whole humanity and with a certain kind of universal identity constitute the widest circle of sociability. The different levels of sociability rest on each other in a hierarchy where the wider communities encompass the values and needs of the smaller ones, thus various identities, solidarity networks and belongingness to more groups can coexist, and the individual is not compelled to give up any of the communities.

Sometimes the need for communities is not fulfilled through action. Sociability and public practice do not co-occur simultaneously, because some dimensions of living conditions prevent the individuals from the pursuit of their needs. Family issues, illness, restriction in mobility due to age, or everyday struggle for subsistence usually reduce the possibility and the determination to engage in public life.

The former thoughts on community relations and public life were intended to summarize the basic principles and to raise questions about the topic. As there are many possible directions in the research, our examination was not capable of providing all the answers. We aimed to determine the central issues, because their detailed discussion would present an overview of community life, social structures, sociability, social activity and civic participation in the contemporary Hungarian society.

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Three databases and samples are analysed in the present volume. The development and functioning of communities, the attitude towards public life and civic participation were observed through the data of a national representative survey carried out in 2009 (N=1051). The research questions in regard to local communities were investigated in seven villages in

three different countries through a sample recorded in 2011 (N=814). The specific features of the interaction of trust with the community, and the characteristics of Hungarian civic participation were considered in a European context through the data of the *European Social Survey* of 2008 (record of the file=2010, N=54454).

II. PRIMARY GROUPS

Sociability is already established in childhood by the family structure and the circle of close relatives. The composition, functioning and the role of the family have been radically altered by the civilization process and by the disappearance of traditional system of family farming, yet family is the primary environment for the acquisition of basic social patterns. Although the influence of the family on later community life is decisive even today, it would be insufficient on its own to the preservation of societal networks, or to the macro-communal integration and to community practice. The effects of children's groups, child care and educational institutions are indispensable to the successful socialization.

Children's Communities

Children learn the basic principles of community life beyond family in the institutions, such as nursery schools and primary schools, and also through extra-curricular activities, summer camps, through participation in gangs or in children's organisations. According to the data of our nationally representative sample, smaller proportion of the youngest respondents (aged 18-29) used to engage in children's organisations or to participate in camps in their childhood than the older age groups. The discrepancy between the age groups

indicates that the political transition meant a break in the continuity of the institutionalised community education of children. The reason for the dramatic decrease is the almost complete disbandment of the pioneer movement that had mobilized earlier the vast majority of children by relying on the existing framework of education (Szabolcs et al. 2010).

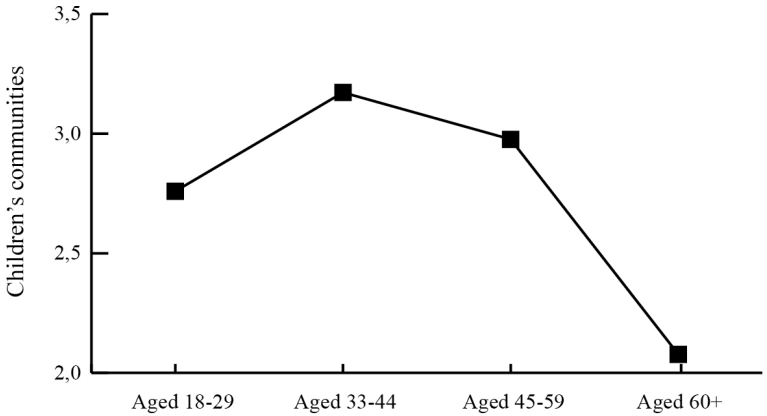
Children's camps that had been free of charge before 1989 became the privileges of those families who could afford the fees, moreover, many children's organisations ceased, and this clearly afflicted the camping habits The comparison of the answers of different age groups affirms that institutionally organised practice of community education was the most general by the respondents who had attended primary school during the two decades preceding the political transition, but also a higher proportion of the 45-59 age group used to participate in children's communities than people who were educated after 1989. Involvement in extra-curricular activities during the school years was also more common by the presently middle-aged group than by the youngest respondents. Workshops and study circle were organised by schools mainly gratis before the political transition, nowadays community and supplementary education of children follows the rules of the competitive market, as private lessons and tutorials have been turned into consumer goods. On the other hand, members of the 18-29 age group were more likely to join children's gangs or sport clubs or to participate in trainings than the older respondents. In sum, sport clubs, trainings and gangs were the predominant forms of children's communities after the political transition, and the significance of extracurricular activities and children's organisations has diminished.

The 5 variables of childhood community relations and practice (children's organisations, extracurricular activities, sport clubs, children's camps, and gangs) were synthesised into a 5-level scale (0-5) which confirmed that the secondary

socialization of the 18-29 age group was less effective than that of the respondents who had attended primary school before the political transition. However, the results revealed that people who were over the age of 60 at the time of the survey used to have the fewest opportunities for community life in their childhood.

The comparison of the organised community education of different age groups shows that community practice of children beyond family was the most intensive in the two decades preceding the political transition, or in other words, the society prepared the now middle-aged people for community life the most successfully.

Figure 1:
The averages of the synthesising scale of childhood community relations by age groups (Renewing the Democracy through the Need for Community Ties/A közösségi kapcsolatok igénye a demokrácia megújításának esélye, 2009, N=1051)

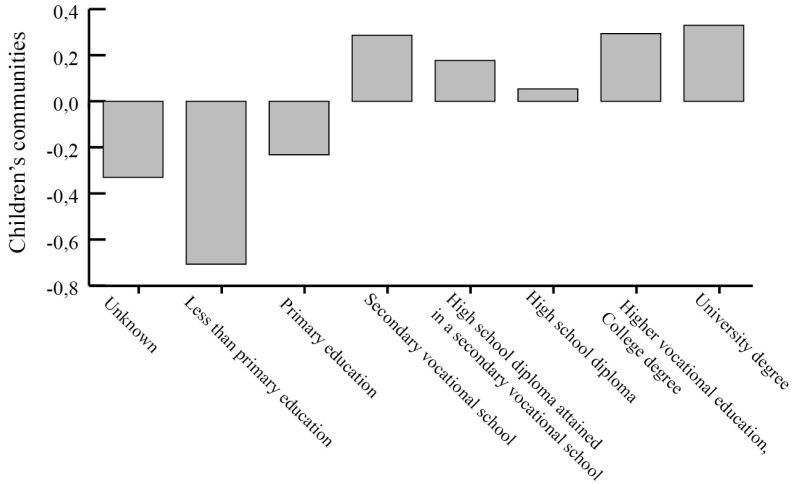


The data of the community education in childhood collected in different age groups signify the stream of commercial factors in the socialization process, and consequently the community education of children takes place in accordance with social

stratification (Inátsy-Pap 2010). The community participation and its intensity depend on the financial situation of the parents. Wealthier parents can ‘purchase’ supplementary education and community experience for their children, while the children of disadvantaged families miss these opportunities, and are ‘compensated’ by gangs or sport clubs. Moreover, the inequality is also aggravated by regional and demographic differences (Gazsó 1995).

Parents with higher educational attainment tend to spend higher sums on the community education of their children. Correlation diagrams of the fathers’ qualification and the intensity of children’s relationships revealed that the community participation of children grew significantly by the families where the fathers had at least vocational qualification. Unqualified parents with lower incomes and insecure workplace cannot afford their children’s supplementary education and community activities, or the family does not develop the values which would require to do so, or both at the same time.

Figure 2:
The averages of the synthesising scale of childhood community relations in relation to the qualification of the fathers (Z-scores[2])
(Renewing the Democracy through the Need for Community Ties/A közösségi kapcsolatok igénye a demokrácia megújításának esélye, 2009, N=1051)



The correlation between the childhood socialization and the qualifications of the respondents and that of their fathers confirm that people with vocational qualification and working as skilled workers possess the lowest degrees of sociability. As it has been mentioned above, the proportion of those who were socialized through secondary relationships in childhood starts to rise dramatically by the respondents with vocational education, and continues to increase with the educational attainment. It was striking though, that the differences were much less significant between the groups above the vocational level.

[2] Z-scores allow calculating how many standard deviations make up the distance between the variable and the mean. Diagrams using Z-scores reveal the characteristic for groups, categories or countries so that 0 stands for the mean of the sample, the positive values signify more favourable and the negative values less favourable characteristics than the average.

The number of youngsters who were involved in extracurricular and institutionally organised community activities has decreased in the last twenty years; middle-class parents are more and more willing to spend on those possibilities that promote their children's future social integration and ensure a more successful community practice.

According to the respondents of the older age groups, girls and boys used to participate in the activities organised by schools approximately in the same proportion in their childhood, but the younger age groups reported a more intensive female presence. Due to the differences in the educational attitudes of parents towards the two genders, girls are more sociable, hard-working; their achievements are better, and this corresponds to the requirements of the parents better, thus they join children's communities more willingly than the boys do. Before the political transition, the participation in the institutionalised communities of children was obligatory for both sexes, but the freedom of choice or refusal grew in the childhood of the youngest age group. If they were not motivated by individual ambition or by the deliberation of their parents, boys opted against communities which obviously entail obligations and duties.

In contradiction to childhood community practice, the proportion of men in adult communities, and especially in leading positions, is significantly higher. The asymmetry between the two sexes grows further, if the community practice is combined with power. As it will be discussed later, it is nevertheless the secondary socialization through children's groups or communities that decisively influences the later civic participation and community practice. Based on theories of socialisation, we strongly believe that socialisation takes place through community patterns, communication and interaction, and this process is determined by the quality of interactions in the family and in children's communities (Csákó et al. 2010).

Family Patterns of Community Life

Community Patterns of the Family of Orientation

In our view, the dominant agent of childhood socialization is the family, or more precisely the community practice of the parents. The respondents of our sample evoked that their parents had met their relatives the most frequently in their childhood. We observed a clearly distinguishable downward trend in the intensity of the relations with the neighbours in relation to age groups, as the older respondents reported regular visits. It has to be added though, that a great proportion of the older age groups came from rural settlements or traditional villages where community life of neighbourhoods was a common practice. In other words, the families of the respondents had the most intensive informal relationships with relatives and neighbours, then friends followed, and the informal visits of colleagues were remarkably less frequent.

Traditional relationships are gradually diminishing due to the civilization process and urbanization, thus the intensity of the relationships and the frequency of the meetings apparently depends on the degree of urbanization. It was also striking that, except for Budapest, neighbours played the second most important part in the community life of the family of orientation in every settlement type; moreover, these relationships were predominant in the smallest villages. Similarly, collegial relations were described as the weakest of strong ties in every settlement type.

The intensity of the interactions with the strong ties in the family of orientation decreased with the respondents' and their fathers' educational attainment. This trend indicates that the well-qualified people of high social status build more secondary relations, thus they (can) expend less time on their

primary relationships. It can also be concluded that the number of social activities of parents grew with the educational attainment. These kinds of occupation increased the number of secondary relations, and consequently people again had less time for their strong primary relations. In addition, respondents with a high educational level, but coming from villages were often compelled to leave their homes due to the push-pull factors, and consequently the traditional relationships of migrants often loosened, or even broke. The collected data also suggested that social mobility or migration of the parents disintegrated traditional relationships, as friends, neighbours and co-workers were replaced by new ones.

The Change of Preference for Different Relations with Age

The relationships between different generations are usually intense, but their quality change in accordance with the age. The decrease of the intensity is the most remarkable in the case of the young generation that experiences the separation from the family of orientation and the start of an economically independent life (people aged 30-39). Our data indicated that around this age the connection with the family of orientation and with other earlier communities became less important. The intensity of these relationships stagnated for some years or decades, until people in their fifties 'rediscovered' their families and distant relatives, their visits became more frequent, whereas the social interaction with friends and colleagues decreased. Work and workplace start to lose their roles in the social integration when people enter their sixties; and consequently collegial relations diminish. At this age other

factors, such as declining health, restricted mobility and decease of friends reduce the number and intensity of strong relations.

Due to the limitation in the scope of social action, local relationships, especially with neighbours, gain in importance with ageing. The revaluation of the relationship with the neighbours is also noticeable when people enter their thirties, since people usually become parents at this age and spend more time at home with their small children; but these changes are usually provisional. However, social interaction with the neighbours intensifies strikingly over sixty, as the scope of social interaction shrinks with age; relationships become limited to the close family and to the immediate surroundings.

The correlation of the intensity of primary relationships (except the relations with the neighbours) with the level of qualification could be modelled by a cope. Respondents with high school diploma were characterised by the strongest primary relationships. At the same time, social interaction with the neighbours decreases precipitously, if the educational attainment increases. Age-group trends suggest that the primary relationship networks of the graduates shrink mostly with age, and they try to compensate the loss with other types of community relationships.

The results indicated that the size of the settlement decisively influences human relationships, as the respondents from the smallest villages were characterised by the most intensive social interaction with relatives and neighbours. The capital remained competitive only in the case of friendly and collegial relationships. A surprisingly great degree of isolation was discovered in the large villages where the intensity of relationships with friends, as well with colleagues was found to be weaker than in other types of settlements. A possible explanation for this anomaly is commuting to work and the concomitant changes in the lifestyle. In the large villages,

people communicate predominantly with relatives and neighbours, but their social network often lacks the relationships with friends and colleagues. This peculiarly restructured community network is the consequence of their specific time schedule, isolation or seclusion. The asymmetrically modernised state of large villages generates an unconventional pattern of relationship networks which is neither urban, nor rural. Urbanization and the fact that a great number of the people is compelled to commute destroys traditional relationships, but commuting lifestyle precludes the emergence of trust in their relationships that they build in the cities of their workplaces.

The intensity of the interaction with the strong ties in the respondents' families of orientation and the intensity of the respondents' interactions with their own strong ties were compared, and the results decreased with age. With the exception of the interaction with friends, the intensity of the relationships in the respondents' family of procreation was weaker than it used to be in their families of orientation. The proportion of those who 'never and/or rarely' meet their primary relationships also increased. The comparison of the data of the two generations has confirmed that the intensity of the primary relations decreased by the second generation. This means that those family patterns of socialization that reflect and might result in community cohesion are not reproduced in the younger generation's families of procreation.

The proportions of primary relationships characterised by rare or frequent interactions in the family of orientation and in the family of procreation

Relationship type	The intensity of interactions			
	never and/or rarely		at least weekly	
	in the family of orientation	in the family of procreation	in the family of orientation	in the family of procreation
With relatives	5,9%	< 9	49%	> 42
With friends	12%	= 12	43%	< 52
With neighbours	16,6%	< 31	56%	> 45
With colleagues	36%	< 49	29%	> 24

Family and Relatives as a Community

The present study examines primarily the dynamics of relationships beyond the family, but as the social network of the family and relatives mean the first step in the development of individual sociability and community practice, it is necessary to outline the ongoing changes in the family structure. It is obvious that the wider social practice of the respondents was essentially influenced by the intensity of interactions with their family (such as with their parents, children, siblings and distant relatives). The variation in the intensity of certain relationship types was analysed in that segment of the sample where the respondents still had the studied ties at the time of the survey. (Faragó T. 1983, Cseh-Szombathy 1979, Litwak and Szelényi 1969).

Our results suggest that family meetings are mainly organised by women, they are responsible for the preservation of

family cohesion (Utasi 2008). This indicates that women interact with family members more often than men do. However, our data did not show significant discrepancy in the frequency of face-to-face interaction with relatives in relation to sex. The intensity of the relationships depended rather on closeness, in terms of emotion and kinship distance. The respondents had the firmest connection with their (adult) children; interactions with the parents and siblings were less regular, and relatives beyond the nuclear family were rarely met.

Apparently, the respondents' relationships with their (adult) children are distinctively intensive, but the reverse was not true, as the respondents met their own parents much less frequently. There are usually various explanations for the divergence: alienation from one of the parents due to their divorce, conflict with the parents over the choice of marriage partner, or re-division of time between own parents and in-laws. Another less possible explanation would be that children are the most important for parents, and this logic replicates itself in every generation. Additionally, age-group characteristics generate contrasting changes in the two generations' community practice: the younger generation still expands their relationship circles and supplement them with secondary ties, while the range of relationships of older generations starts to shrink above a certain age.

The decline of the family as a community is escalated by the increase of the number of singles. Our earlier research on the social networks in 1986 confirmed the prevalence of traditional family and relationship models, but the proportion of people living alone was significantly higher in the present sample, while the proportion of respondents living in romantic partnerships dropped. The reason for the change is most possibly the impacts of modernisation, especially the individualization process and the gradual disappearance of traditional values. Consequently, people get married later, or

change their partners more frequently, and the divorce rate is rising as well. The proportion of single respondents in the sample of 1986 was 27%, this grew to 42, 2% in 2009, while the proportion of divorced and single respondents doubled (from 3, 8% to 9, 5%).

The evaluation of the family as a social entity remained consistently positive and the intensity of the family relationships endures. However, the notion of the family life has changed: nowadays it implies the interaction with the upbringing parent(s), the sibling(s), the grandparent(s) and later with the child/children in the family of procreation. Previously, the unity of parents and children constituted the nuclear family, but fluctuation, dissolution and deficiency of relationships reshaped the family structure, and the cohabitation of single parents with other family members (children, grandparents, siblings) became the most prevalent form. The changes have also had an impact on the practice of social interaction between the members. However, the size of the network did not shrink, nor did the intensity of social interactions, as the familial community was supplemented by an increased number of secondary members. Although the family persists as the most common and most active group of interpersonal relationships, it apparently closes up: the intensity of the communication with the distant relatives (i.e. beyond the immediate family) decreases, and these relations are nowadays considered peripheral in the network of primary relationships.

The separate analysis of the data of different age groups reaffirms the trend described above. The social interaction with relatives diminishes with age, partly because of the decease of family members, and partly because of restricted mobility. Usually, there are two radical drops in the intensity of relationships: the first occurs at the age of 30-44, and the second over sixty. Only the relationship with the children

preserves its strength, if there is no objective difficulty in the interaction.

Other factors, such as the size of the settlement or distance, influence the frequency of interaction with the family members as well. The strength of family relationships is inversely proportional to the size of the settlement: the smaller the respondents' living places were, the stronger relationships they had. Only the parent-children interactions were not affected by the settlement type, though residents of the capital and large villages did diverge from the rest of the sample, as the families were characterised by looser social ties in their cases. As a consequence of the rare interaction with the family, inhabitants of cities lose the social capital of everyday assistance, in other words, the solidarity deteriorates. The family relations of the inhabitants of large villages followed patterns similar to the social practice of the cities' population, for this again their isolated and transient lifestyle, and the advanced degree of urbanization of their settlements were responsible.

The level of qualification influenced the intensity of family interactions as well. The sample segment of people with secondary qualification had the most intensive relationships, while graduates and low-qualified people showed comparable degrees of activity, and communicated with their family members less regularly. In the case of the unqualified respondents, it is usually the lack of resources and financial stability that disintegrate family cohesion, while migration and status shift reduce the opportunities for family interaction by the graduates.

People, who have small families, or whose family members have already deceased, tend to complete their networks of primary relationships with their friends. It is confirmed by the fact that their interactions with friends are much more intensive than with their distant relatives. It was

observed in relation to settlement size that residents of villages and cities had the most coherent relationships with friends. In the capital, the social interaction with friends was the second after the connection with adult children in terms of intensity, and this means that friends preceded every other type of primary relations.

Mechanical Solidarity and Hope for Support

Solidarity is a decisive criterion of communities. Macro-communal solidarity has theoretically expanded as a consequence of globalisation in the last decades, and the importance of solidarity in directly interacting communities within certain nations has simultaneously increased as well. Direct interactions lead more frequently to the emergence of mutual trust, and later to solidarity. Due to the crises of welfare states and social insecurity, organic solidarity is losing its stabilizing role, thus more and more people have to rely on the mechanical solidarity provided by their primary relationships (Durkheim 1987, Smelser 1994, Fukuyama 2000).

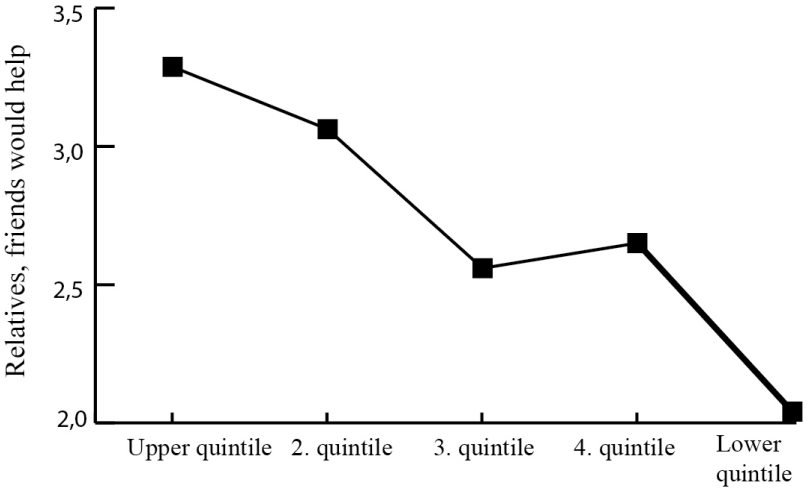
The cooperation and mutual assistance of the members of direct communities effectively ensure subsistence in case of difficulties. In small communities of traditional societies, mechanical solidarity is expected and conventional, it is the natural form of collaboration. Due to the effect of mass production, urbanisation and disappearance of family economy, organic solidarity was necessarily developed in the macro-community, in form of the institutionalised social service. However, the help and the altruistic support of small communities with traditional motivation are often crucial even nowadays, especially in the deprived societies where the state cannot help the disadvantaged, not even with the basic

necessities (Durkheim 1986, Fararo és Doreian 1998, Utasi 2002, Janky 2005).

The majority of our sample presumed that they could rely on the support of their primary relationships in their everyday struggles. Answers were quite optimistic, since almost four fifths of the respondents believed that their strongest ties would help them with 1) finding difficultly procurable commodities or services 2) administrative tasks 3) financial problems and to a varying extent with 4) finding medical assistance in case of illness. Almost one third of the sample thought that somebody of their primary relationships would assist them in 5) finding an employment. With the exception of the last question, similar proportions of the participants expected help in every option from the people in their primary relationship network. Unemployment is one of the greatest social problems nowadays, so support would alleviate the most urgent problem in this case, yet respondents trusted their solidarity networks the least in the fifth question.

Solidarity means mutuality and reciprocity rather than altruism in strong relationships and in the small communities as well. Accordingly, the more resourceful individuals are, the more confidently they can rely on the support of their acquaintances. Individuals strive for reciprocity even within the circles of their primary relations, even in trouble, and they expect help from a group of people whose economic situation corresponds to their own. This is a particular type of demand for reciprocity, since it is not generated by selfishness. On the contrary, nobody wants to remain indebted, so they refuse to ask help, if they would not be able to return the favour in the future. The proportion of respondents who hope for support increases with educational attainment: it is low in the most unqualified segment of the sample, but it starts to rise by the respondents with vocational qualification, and it reaches its peak by the graduates.

Figure 3:
The degrees of solidarity (0-5) which is expected from the primary relationships in the different income groups of the sample (Renewing the Democracy through the Need for Community Ties/A közösségi kapcsolatok igénye a demokrácia megújításának esélye, 2009, N=1501)



It could be also concluded that the degree of solidarity (with the exception of the support in finding an employment) grows as population density decreases. Although it drops dramatically in the large villages, the inhabitants of the villages show again a high degree of solidarity. The five dichotomous variables measured by the five questions of mechanical solidarity were synthesised into a 5-level scale (support from relatives, friends 0-5), so we were able to demonstrate the extent of the dependence on solidarity in all income groups.

According to the data of the 5-level scale of mechanical solidarity, the residents of the capital and the large villages were the less interdependent, while the inhabitants of other settlement types relied on the support of their acquaintances more confidently. City life reduces the chance of support from everyday relationships, and especially those people are affected

who devaluate their own resources and do not trust their capacity to reciprocate. Consequently, the resourceless residents of cities hardly hope for any help from their primary groups.

The low level of trust and mechanical solidarity is caused by different factors in the large villages. Traditional community ties have not vanished entirely in these settlements, but commuting to work or to school hinders the sustaining of relationships and the consistent practice of reciprocity. Thus, residents of large villages, similarly to the isolated inhabitants of cities, refuse the idea of interdependence, even if they could actually ask for help. The population of the villages still characterised by traditional relationship networks has more confidence in the support of the primary groups, they ask and offer help more willingly, or in other words, the degree of mechanical solidarity reaches its highest point in the small settlements.

The composite index of the degrees of the five areas of mechanical solidarity drew a V-shaped figure in the age stratification. The results of mechanical solidarity reached the nadir in the 45-59 age group. A higher percentage of the eldest than the elderly middle-aged respondents believed that someone from their primary group would help them people, possibly because of their increased level of dependence. In contrast, the resourceful, competitive and mainly active middle-aged tend to rely exclusively on their immediate family, they do not ask and do not offer favours outside the family circle. It was also obvious that the youngest expect and receive the most support of their primary groups. At the same time, this age group is the most capable of returning the favours with time; this is why the youngest respondents were the most confident of their capacity for long-term reciprocity.

Networks of Patrons and Clients

In the present society that is simultaneously deficient in civil and charitable organisations, and affected by the declining economy, the disadvantaged can barely lean on the institutionalised forms of organic solidarity. It is not unusual, therefore, that they are compelled to ask help of the more resourceful, more affluent in their direct environment. Because of the hierarchic structure of society, the patrons themselves fall back on the help of others occasionally. In this way, an extensive network of favours develops in which a great part of the society is involved with such a high degree of interdependence that it prevents people from leading an economically independent and autonomous civic life. The most extreme form of patron-client relations is usury that precipitates the destitute into modern debt slavery. The lack of resources, after all, forces people to reconsider the importance of their patrons' (such as affluent relatives, friends, acquaintances, etc.) support (Beluszky 2000).

The most beneficial relations are evidently those that are built on long-term, even intergenerational reciprocity, altruism and solidarity, in which the patron does not act as a usurer and does not harm individual autonomy. Those respondents who had affluent, influential or high-status acquaintances assumed that these people would lend them effective support or useful information in case of need (Neuhauser 1958).

A fairly low percentage of the respondents was associated somehow with powerful people in the national media (8, 2%), in national politics (6, 6%) or in scientific life (6, 2%). A higher proportion had connections with well-known, influential entrepreneurs (13, 8%), and even higher numbers had acquaintances in the local authority (14, 8%).

Leading positions are mainly occupied by people who are better qualified than the average. It is also a well-known fact that groups of friends are usually homogeneous in terms of educational attainment and financial situation of the members. Our results indicated that the chance of having influential connections is three times as high in the case of graduates as it is in the case of the respondents with primary education. Accordingly and also as a consequence of the strictly hierarchical society, the percentage of respondents with influential connections grew with the educational attainment. The trend broke by the group of respondents with high school diploma, since it mainly consisted of women. Women are less likely to have influential connections, as they obtain high-status positions less frequently than men.

Most of the respondents with influential connections belonged to the 30-44 age group. The possible reason for the age group differences is that people under 30 rarely occupy important positions, while people in their late fifties are gradually replaced by their younger colleagues in leadership, and after their retirement, their social status and personal prestige start to sink, and so does the number of their influential acquaintances. Our data confirmed these assumptions, since the proportion of respondents with powerful connections proved to be the lowest in the age group of respondents over sixty.

Power and prestige are normally concentrated in the cities, and accordingly, residents of cities have the greatest, and residents of villages the lowest chance to know powerful people. The percentage of respondents with influential connections clearly reflected the national hierarchy of the settlement types and the regional inequalities in the distribution of high-status jobs and in the division of labour.

In everyday life, having acquaintances in the local authority is usually more important than knowing

representatives in national politics. More than a half of the sample had powerful local connections in their hometowns. Our hypothesis is that influential local connections and the information that is acquired through them very frequently enhance the civic participation and local patriotism of individuals. To the question whether they had any suggestions how the circumstances in their settlements could be improved, one third of the respondents answered positively. In our view, the people who have influential connections are more active in public life, or in other words, having acquaintances in the local authority intensifies the individuals' civic participation.[3]

The three dichotomous variables of the inclination for local civic participation (influential connections + suggestions for improvement + cooperation with others to improve circumstances) were synthesised into the index of inclination for local civic participation, and we found that it showed a significantly positive and strong correlation with the index that measured the influential acquaintances in the local authority. We also found that almost all respondents who had suggestions were willing to collaborate with others for improvement. The strong correlation between the suggestion for improvement and the civic participation reveals the most significant anomaly of the local community cooperation and civic participation. One third of the respondents had ideas for improvement, but communities usually lack the organisers. If they were asked and if there was someone who coordinated the execution of the plans, almost all respondents would participate in the realisation of their suggestions. Mostly the initiator of the cooperation is missing, or there is no consensus about the most

[3] We used three dichotomous variables to measure the inclination for local civic participation. (1) Do you know someone directly in the local authority (1=yes, 0=no)? (2) Do you have any suggestions how to improve local circumstances? (3) Would you cooperate with other in order to improve your local environment?

important local tasks within the community, and without an active organiser-coordinator the population can be barely mobilized.

The influential connections obviously cannot be identified with the ancient patron-client model. The relationships of the people, who have powerful connections, with their 'clients' operate mainly with mutuality and long-term reciprocity nowadays. The 'real' patrons are mostly strangers, not relatives, who offer their mediation, altruistically or for future compensation.

The Network of Ritual Interactions

Rituals are customs, behavioural patterns that provide a significant cohesive power in the relationships and in the life of the communities and institutions. Religions and nations organise ritual events deliberately, but rituals work in the life of small communities habitually and usually attached to an occasion. Ritual manifestations are to preserve and strengthen relationships, communities. In interpersonal relations, the simplest forms of rituals are greetings. Members of communities memorize each other's personal events, anniversaries, they know who and when they have to celebrate, since they want to experience belongingness, and try to reinforce the community ties with mutual attention, respect and awareness (Collins 1987, Assman and Czaplicka 1995).

Greetings are more than courtesies; they express the importance of the relationship and attachment, or the wish for the sense of belonging. The majority of the sample reported that the members of their communities, such as their relatives and friends, had remembered their name days, birthdays, individual or family success, achievements or other special

occasions in the year preceding the survey. On average, the respondents had received greetings from seven relationships. Postcards are going out of fashion, but the elderly who appreciate traditional forms of greetings still tend to use them. Technology is nevertheless gaining ground in greetings: primarily phone calls, text messages and less significantly e-mails. In the social network of the survey participants, greetings were general. Personal greetings were the most frequent in county towns and the least frequent in the capital. In small towns, people tend to make phone calls, while residents of the capital opted for text messages and e-mails.

The differences of practice by age groups are relatively insignificant in the case of phone calls and personal greetings. Postcards were sent by the elderly, and the use of text messages and e-mails clearly revealed the dynamics and path of the modern technology's expansion, as these two greeting forms were more and more frequent with every ten-year decrease in age. The youngest age group had received greetings from 6 or 7 people in text message or e-mail, but it was still a rarity in the case of the respondents over sixty. It has to be added that the eldest participants themselves rarely utilized modern communication facilities.

Respondents with high school diploma constitute the segment of the sample that is remembered by the most people on special occasions. This means that this group had the widest community networks both in face-to-face interactions and in greetings. The discrepancies between age groups were the slightest in the case of phone calls and personal greetings.

In order to demonstrate the extent of the interaction ritual networks of the respondents, we synthesised the data of the frequency of greetings into a scale. Considering the high number of the received greetings, we surmised a wide network of relationships, or at least the wish of respondents for interconnectivity. On the synthesised scale the percentage of

those who had not received greeting from anyone on any occasions was distinctly low (2, 7%).

By adding up all communication forms, the average number of received greetings was quite high in the sample: twenty. In the amplitude of the ritual interaction network, the most significant divergence was caused by the age differences. The number of received greeting was the highest in the youngest age group (28), over fifty it dropped dramatically (18), and even reduced further in the age group over sixty where it was less than the half of the results of the youngest. The data indicated clearly that the network of ritual interactions is normally wider than the network of everyday face-to-face interactions.

The population size of the settlement had relatively insignificant influence in this aspect. However, it was observed that the average number of received greetings was lower in the smaller than in the larger settlements, and this means the reverse of the trend observed by the direct interactions. As far as gender is concerned, women had more relations than men in their networks of ritual interactions. The number of received greetings confirmed that the respondents with high school diploma had the most active network of relationships (26), a slightly lower number was calculated by the graduates, and the least qualified had the lowest results.

We are of course aware of the possibility that the answers of the respondents might have represented their wishes and not the reality. It is possible that they had not received greetings from all their friends and relatives in every year. They might have been remembered by one person in several ways. Even if we consider the possible proportion of exaggeration, the ritual interaction networks of the respondents remain considerably wide.

People in the network of ritual interactions are not necessarily members of the same community, like relatives,

friends or neighbours; they are individually connected to the respondents in the most cases, thus they do not share the same sense of belonging, or solidarity or the same community identity. These people do not constitute a community in the traditional way of understanding. However, the number of people in the ritual interaction network implies many aspects. It indicates how willing individuals are to join communities, how successful their integration is on the micro-or macro-communal level, whether they feel motivated to be part of others' lives and to be accepted by others. In this way, ritual interactions and their manifestations are important signifiers of community practice.

III. COMMUNITY IDENTITY

Micro-Communal Identity

Communities 'of Primary Importance'

In our research definition, we considered identity essential to the community. We presumed that there were at least two identity levels: micro-communal (i.e. self-identification with the immediate or direct communities) and macro-communal (i.e. self-identification with a wider community).

In order to reveal micro-communal identity, we asked the participants of the survey to classify communities as most important, important or less important in regard to the significance of the time spent together. For the overwhelming majority, family was on the top of the scale, and it usually maintains its role over the entire lifetime, but the proportion of the respondents whose contentment rests solely on the family was remarkably low in the sample. The answers implied the respondents' wish, need and appreciation of belonging to other micro-communities as well.

The degree of self-identification with a certain community was measured on a scale that signified the appreciation of the time spent together. We examined the respondents' assessment of the time spent with the family, with friends, with fellow club members or with the fellow members

of a civic organisation by using a 5-level scale ranging from ‘no importance’ (1) to ‘primary importance’ (5). Family occupied the fifth–the highest–place on the scale by the distinctive majority of the sample (81, 4%). Every second respondent put friends on the fifth scale (50, 0%) as well. A remarkably lower proportion regarded fellow club members (18%) as very important, and only 7, 6% of the respondents thought the same about fellow members of civic organisations.

Every age group had a distinctive preference for the family, but especially the respondents in their late fifties. The scale clearly shows that family identity is strong and general in the society. The time spent with friends loses its importance with ageing. Civil communities are relatively devalued in every age group, but their assessment is more positive in the age group of the professionally active middle-aged, and becomes the most positive in the sample segment of the respondents in their early sixties who are close to retirement or already retired. Finally, the majority of the eldest did not regard civic communities as very important.

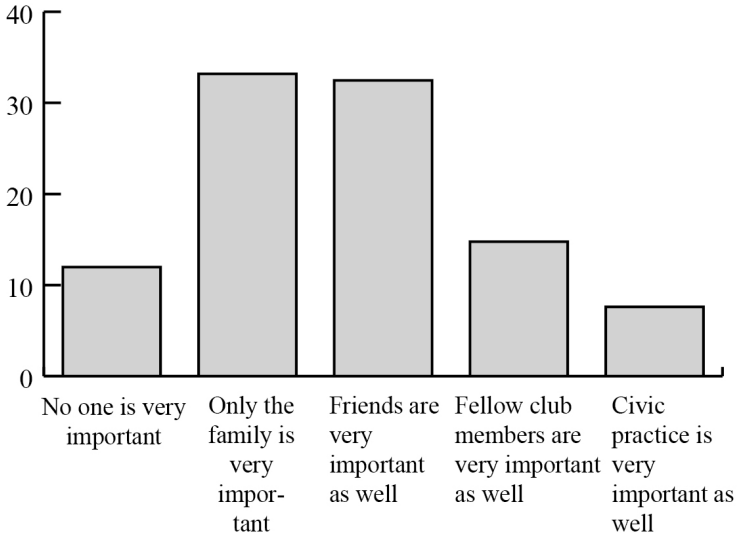
The significance of family identity decreases with educational attainment, whereas the preference for friends, hobbies and fellow club members shows a reverse trend. The time spent with civic participation was the most highly esteemed by the graduates.

We expected a cumulative trend between the forms of community practice and the importance of time expenditure. We discovered that family is the foundation of community participation in most individuals’ lives, and other micro-communities are built on the family. In our research, the presence of double/multiple identities on the micro-communal level was considered and recognised.

Accordingly, a scale was created (with additive index) on which respondents who did not find any community very important in regard to time expenditure (12%) constituted the

nearest end. Participants whose preference was exclusive for family followed (32, 2%), then the third column was constituted by the answers of preference (both) for family and friends (32, 5%), the fourth column represented those who considered fellow club members very important (as well) in regard to time expenditure (14, 8%), and in the last place we indicated the proportion of those who found the time spent with civic practice very important as well (7, 6%).

Figure 4:
Micro-communal identity demonstrated by the proportion of respondents according to their preference for different communities 'of primary importance' in regard to time expenditure (Renewing the Democracy through the Need for Community Ties/A közösségi kapcsolatok igénye a demokrácia megújításának esélye, 2009, N=1051)



The group with no preference for any micro-community was heterogeneous in terms of educational attainment. Respondents without community identity were found in similar proportions on all three educational levels. Introverted

personality, psychic or other health problems might be the reasons for seclusion and self-isolation from community life.

The sample segment whose preference was exclusive for family consisted mainly of respondents from the low-qualified group. The family, friends and/or fellow club members double identity was the most frequent in the middle group of educational attainment, amongst the respondents with high school diploma. The graduates were the most likely to consider civic participation (very) important as well and to adopt multiple identities.

In the stratification of settlement types, the residents of Budapest were the most isolated: every sixth respondent (16%) thought that none of the mentioned communities was important. Residents of county and small towns were likely to choose both the family and friends (31%), and the time spent with fellow club members was appreciated mostly by the residents of cities. Respondents who chose both civic and family identities were predominantly residents of the capital (8, 6%), whereas this choice was the least likely in small villages (4, 7%).

Civic Identity on the Micro-level

The research was focused on the correlation of community with civic participation; therefore a special attention was paid to the proportion of respondents whose preference for micro-communal identities included civic identity as well. As it has been indicated above, the percentage of people who regarded the time expenditure on civic participation as a very important part of their lives was quite low in the sample (7, 6%). However, we are aware of the fact that the need for civic participation characterises those respondents as well who described it as ‘important’. This triples the number of participants who have some kind of secondary identity, and

means that almost one fourth of the sample considered civil community important/very important (23%). Presumably, one fourth of the sample has or would have civic practice under the appropriate conditions. Educational stratification revealed that vocational qualification was a landmark in the positive assessment of civic engagement: this was the point where the proportion of respondents for whom civic participation was important (too) started to rise dynamically, while under vocational qualification the same percentage was considerably low. In the upper strata of the educational attainment, civic participation gained further importance: one third of the respondents with 4-year college degree (35%) described it as very important/important, and almost half of university graduates (48%) did the same.

As it has been discussed earlier, vocational qualification was a boundary in the community education of children as well. This means that the secondary education, and the corresponding income level, is the minimum which is necessary for the development of sociability and civic practice.

Macro-Identity

Dominant Communities of Identity

In the last chapter, the micro-identity was examined which means the self-identification with those immediate communities that are built on the individuals' primary relationships. The macro-identity signifies the interiorized community cohesion and a strong cultural bond, even if it does not always mean a

source of contentment. In this case, the communal identity is not attached to particular people, groups or smaller communities; this type of identity is imprinted in the personality, preserves the cultural origins and the emotional charge of the socialization process. It manifests itself occasionally, even if respondents do not usually interact with other members of the identifying community. Micro-identity was observed with the respondents' assessment of time expenditure which indicated the strength of the bond, thus a hierarchy of immediate communities could be established based on the respondents' preferences. In this chapter we attempt to unveil the features and degree of the macro-identity which is deeply enrooted in the psyche through cultural values and customs.

The analysis of community identity has attracted more and more sociological attention in the last decades. N. J. Smelser emphasized on a sociological conference in Bielefeld in 1994: there is an ongoing revolution of solidarity and identity, or more precisely the subnational solidarities based on region, religion, race, ethnicity, language, gender or lifestyle are strengthening at the expense of national solidarity. In our survey, we asked the participants about their sub-and ultra-national identities as well. We focused on the interactive identity concept, and defined the macro-community as the mental reflection of the interaction-based self-identification with certain communities (Hall 2003).[4]

In our analysis of the macro-identities, we predominantly aimed to identify the respondents' origin-identity or status-identity. We created a list of 10 macro-communities, and the respondents were asked to choose three options in order of their own preference, in order of importance. We paid a special attention to the communities that were put on the first three places. The sequential choice might imply inner compulsion, since the individuals are integrated

[4] We applied Hall's interactive identity concept.

into more communities at the same time, they have various identities simultaneously; social or individual circumstances might change preferences temporarily and compel the individual to abandon the identity which is normally predominant over the longest period in life. We accepted the concept of double identity, thus both the first and the second choices were seen as identity indicators. Our primary aim was to reveal the communities of the respondents' self-identification. Family was included in the list for methodological reasons, but we did not define it as macro-community.[5]

As primary and secondary choices of the respondents (and allowing double identity) family was paramount (71, 2%), occupational identity had the second greatest proportion (32, 1%), then identification with the hometown community followed (30, 2%), national identity was the fourth (22, 1%) and respondents selected local identity (of the living place) in a significant proportion as well (21, 3%). Other options had strikingly lower results.

Primary or secondary choices of community identities in the entire sample:

Profession, occupation, work position	32, 1%
Nationality	22, 1%
Religion	8, 7%
Place of birth, hometown	30, 2%
Political party	2, 4%
Social status, class	7, 9%
Local, living place	21, 3%
Minority, ethnicity	3, 4%
EU citizenship	2, 4%
Role in the family	71, 2%

[5] Family was included in the list as a generally preferred community which the respondents could opt for, if they did not identify themselves with any of the macro-communities.

If the identity variations are classified according to their implied and analogous value-content, the birth place- local-nationality triad represents the attachment to the home country, and also the patriotic identity. The total percentage of those respondents who identified themselves with one/two/three of the 'home country' triad (73%) corresponded to the results of the family as 'home' (71, 2%).

It is remarkable that the occupational identity had the second highest result (32, 1%) in the ranking of preferred macro-identities. The revaluation of work, profession and also of the work community might be a consequence of the high unemployment rates, and this is why occupational identity was so highly estimated by the respondents. According to some theorists, professional communities are replaced by consumer identities nowadays, because identities are communities of experience and rest on the preference for certain consumer goods, thus consumption generates identity more frequently in the consumer society (Hradil 1992). In contradiction, the flow theory, for example, emphasizes the role of work as a source of enduring contentment and describes work as a creative process (Csíkszentmihályi 1997). This would explain the high percentage of preference for the occupational identity in our sample. Gerhard Schulze (2000) also criticizes the theories of experience society, and most researchers of the subjective quality of life have come to the conclusion that the accumulation of consumer goods does not lead to lasting happiness; it only results in the want of further possessions (Diener 1984). In sum, the high percentage of occupational identity implies a surprisingly rational and sensible preference, and implies that occupational communities provide the most people with primary identities even nowadays.

Categories of Macro-identity

Our aim was to differentiate and classify (by using principal component analysis) the predominantly preferred types of identities. Out of the 10 macro-identities that were used in the multivariate analysis, we distinguished 5 categories of macro-identities. As it has been mentioned above, family was the most preferred identity type. It was not indicated as a separate differentiating factor in the model, since it could not be turned into a group differentiator with such generally high results.[6]

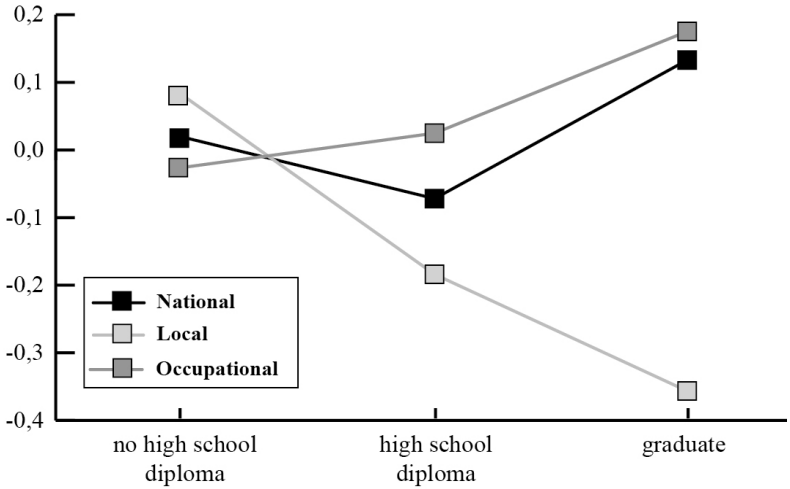
Out of the 9 differentiating value-systems of community identity (without the family) five factors were created, which enabled us to arrange two thirds of the sample (62, 2%) in a hierarchy. National identity factor had the highest proportion (13, 5%); identities attached to the living place had 13%, ideological (religious-political) identity factor was the third with 12, 6%, the fourth was the occupational (12%) and the last the international (social status, ethnicity, EU-citizenship) identity (11, 2%) factors.

The preference for national identity correlated with educational attainment so that a U-shaped graph could be produced, i.e. national identity was the strongest by the least and the most qualified respondents (Tamir 1993). As far as the local identity is concerned, the percentages dropped with the increase of educational attainment. The examination of regional identity was not included in our research (Pfeil 2007). However, it could be concluded that the lack of qualification and knowledge intensifies the need for the sense of security, hence the emotional attachment to the living place; in other words less educated people are bound to

[6] The examination of the respondents who preferred the basic variable of the family as primary and secondary choice revealed that women were more likely to opt for family than men, and also a higher proportion of the inhabitants of the capital chose family than respondents from other settlement types. In the age group stratification there were no distinctive discrepancies.

their homes. The proportion of the preference for occupational identity rises in parallel to the educational attainment; and it reaches the highest results in the sample segment of the graduates. The respondents with high school diploma, whose majority were women, diverged from the trend of occupational identity, as they identified themselves with their job to a less significant degree than skilled workers or graduates. (In our view, this phenomenon was caused by the fact that devotion to the family/motherhood in case of the women was more pronounced, but the option of family covered these possibilities as well).

Figure 5:
The averages of the factor indexes of national, local and occupational identity in relation to educational attainment
(Renewing the Democracy through the Need for Community Ties/A közösségi kapcsolatok igénye a demokrácia megújításának esélye, 2009, N=1051)

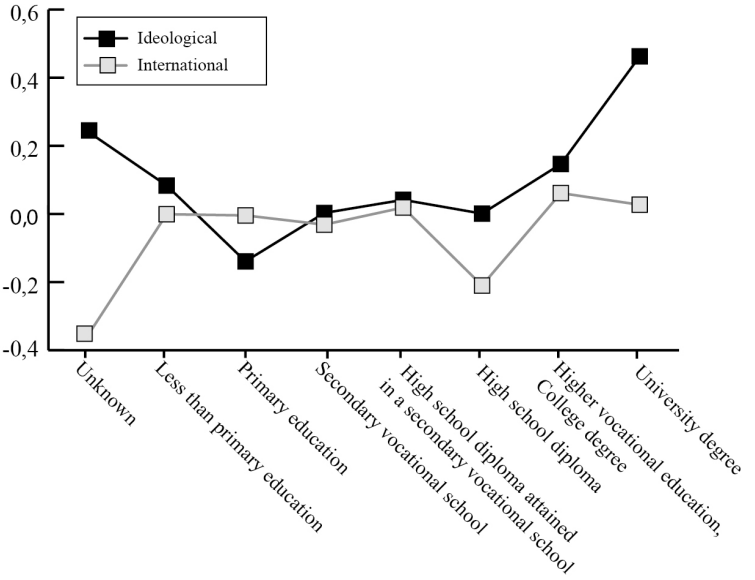


The ideological (political, religious) identity factor was similarly related to the education level as we have presented in the case of the national identity: it was a U-shaped graph with the highest results in the least qualified group, the segment of the

skilled workers and people with secondary education showed a preference under the average, and the results grew again in the group of graduates, but the proportions here did not reach the results of the least qualified group. We assume that the self-identification with an ideological identity is predominantly an emotional affiliation by the least qualified respondents, whereas it has intellectual reasons in the most qualified group.

The international identity factor which consisted of the preference for social status, ethnicity or EU-citizenship showed less significant discrepancies than the previous two factors in relation to the educational attainment. Its proportion was the lowest in the least qualified group; although it increased slightly in the other groups, the proportion remained quite low.

Figure 6:
The averages of the indexes of ideological (political, religious) and international (status, ethnic, EU) identity factors in relation to educational attainment
(Renewing the Democracy through the Need for Community Ties/A közösségi kapcsolatok igénye a demokrácia megújításának esélye, 2009, N=1051)



In relation to settlement size, national identity was preferred mainly in Budapest, and the self-identification with the local community characterised mostly the residents of small villages. The ideological (political, religious) identity was in the capital, the international identity was in the county towns and small towns the most wide-spread.

As far as the age-groups are concerned, national identity was adopted in the highest proportion in the 30-44 age group, whereas self-identification both with the local or ideological (political, religious) community was the strongest in the eldest age group. The professionally active 45-59 age group had the highest degree of occupational identity. International identity was the strongest among the youngest respondents, and for them national identity proved to be the second most characteristic identity.

Community Practice

Building Relationships and the Synthesised Scale of Community Practice

Personality has a great influence on community attitude and practice: open-mindedness and extroverted character enhance community ties, but seclusion and reserved personality might accelerate isolation. Almost one fourth of the respondents (22%) make new acquaintances frequently, but more than one tenth never (13, 4%)

Individuals' community networks diminish with age due to decease of acquaintances, retirement and restriction in mobility, or at least the number and regularity of direct

interactions shrink. Data suggest that ageing hinders the practice of making new acquaintances, as respondents over sixty were six times less likely to build new relationships (6%) than the active younger age groups. Educational attainment also has an effect on this practice, as the graduates, who have indeed more secondary relations than the average, made new acquaintances twice as frequent as the respondents with primary education.

The respondents who never make new acquaintances clearly confirm our hypothesis, namely that the lack of education is a disadvantage in building new relationships: one fifth of people with maximum primary education reported that they never broaden their community network, whereas this practice characterised only 2, 8% of the graduates. Gender had less influence on community building attitude than educational attainment, still it was noticeable. Because of their wider occupational community networks, men have usually more chance to meet new people, but they have more secondary relations as well. In relation to the settlement size, the data showed that the residents of small towns have the most favourable community building attitude, but less than one fifth of the respondents from Budapest reported frequent community building practice. This indicates a quite high degree of atomization in the capital.

In addition to open-minded attitude, receiving guests, participation in a group event, other social events and civic engagement also increase the possibility of building new relationships. Everyday community practice was synthesised and measured by the aggregation of information contents of the mentioned 5-level indexes (making new acquaintances + receiving guests + participation in a large company + social events + civic participation = scales from 0 to 5). A composite index (‘commpract’ 0-5) was created for the respondents who chose “frequently” in the mentioned activities of community

life, and the results indicated that half of the sample participated in at least one activity frequently.

It has to be noted that those respondents who marked "rarely" in the activities of community life are sociable to some extent as well, therefore a second index was created that comprised these participants too. This second index showed that two thirds of the sample participated in at least three out of the five forms of community life. The broader index (=commpract1) showed less significant divergences in the sample than the first, the frequent community practice index (commpract).

The frequent participation index revealed striking differences in the sample that were connected to various dimensions of life. Men were more active than women. Community practice shows a falling trend in relation to age: the youngest age group had the highest level of activity, but results dropped sharply by the middle-aged group, and went further down over the age of sixty. Although the habitual participation decreased with age, occasional, evening community practice was maintained by the majority of the eldest age group.

Educational attainment also affected community practice. A dramatic increase was observed between the least qualified segment and the respondents with secondary education, and results kept rising, but the discrepancy was less definite between the respondents with secondary education and the graduates. In sum, data confirmed that the attainment of high school diploma result in remarkable qualitative improvement of community practice and in more successful social integration.

However, the results of the 'frequent' community practice index and the 'rare/occasional' community practice index diverged. Only half of the sample participated frequently in at least one of the activities, but the more comprehensive

second index affirmed that apart from 1%, the respondents had a more or less frequent community practice. Life conditions might determine individual opportunities, and the level of sociability varies as well, but it could be concluded that the vast majority of the sample broaden/sustain their community network at least occasionally.

Isolating Illness and Loneliness

As it has been emphasized earlier, the need and the importance of the family are so general, and the self-identification with its community is so basic for those who have a family that these concepts constitute the foundation of other community identities. The major part of the sample considered the time expenditure on family very important. The family structures might have altered in the last decades, but the family as the basic community still played a primary role in the integration and identity of the respondents (Mrs Pongrácz and Zsolt Spéder 2003).

The primary socialization generates differences in individual community life beyond the family, and it also determines the prospects and degree of social integration into wider communities. Many researchers, especially psychologists and behaviour analysts emphasized that loneliness can occur even within a community or a family, if other members do not encourage, or even hinder individual actions, aims and values. The lack of supporting home environment might result in social isolation as well. Undoubtedly, there are cases when individuals fail to assimilate into the wider community despite the promising family background, but this problem is examined by psychology and psychiatry, it is beyond the scope of our research (E. Bagdy, 2005, Gy. Csepeli, 2006).

Loneliness, isolation and atomization are characteristic phenomena in consumer society. Every sixth respondent felt loneliness frequently (16%) and every third rarely (34, 7%). 12, 5% of the women were lonesome, whereas this percentage was 19% by men (Castel, R. 1993).

Higher population density intensified isolation and atomization: residents of cities were twice as lonesome as villagers (the percentages were 22, 5% in the case of Budapest and 13% in small settlements). The rootlessness of migrants in the cities probably contributes to the higher rates of loneliness (Bourdieu, P. 1978, Beck, U. 2003). Loneliness was especially characteristic for respondents with unfinished primary education (34%, this means every third person in this category), and for the eldest (23%, one fourth of the participants over sixty). However, half of the sample never feels lonely; this result might imply the benefits of their community network, and it can be seen as a promising sign for future community building and civic participation.

There is no doubt that family is a source of contentment, but it can also become a source of depression, discomfort, or anxiety, and individuals who feel that they are underestimated might experience loneliness within the family. The marital status, cohabitation or romantic partnerships have nevertheless a positive effect: respondents in permanent relationships felt loneliness less than half as frequently as the average of the sample (9, 3%).

In relation to different dimensions of living conditions, data showed that loneliness was the least common in the youngest age group (18-29) and by the respondents in permanent relationships. Not surprisingly, this means that young age and romantic involvement protect individual the most efficiently from loneliness. Moreover, 54% of the youngest and 57% of the permanently engaged never feel loneliness.

Long-term illness might have an isolating effect as well; it reduces community practice and prevents the development of community ties and identity, but 84% of the sample (more than

four fifths) reported no serious health problems which would isolate them from community. But health and loneliness do depend on each other: the vast majority of the respondents who considered themselves healthy did not feel loneliness (92%), whereas this proportion was only 3-5% in the case of the respondents with minor or more serious illnesses. It has to be added that the correlation of community practice with illness can become a vicious circle: the health conditions of people who are isolated from the community might aggravate as a consequence of the mental burden of the loneliness.

Different living conditions influence the loneliness generated by isolating illness as well. The proportion of severely ill respondents was 5% in the sample, but it was 14% (one third) in the age group over sixty. The combination of the lack of education and illness seems to have an even more severe impact than ageing: one fifth (19%) of the respondents with unfinished primary education reported some kind of illness that isolated them from community life. We suppose that the deterioration of health and its negative social effects had accumulated in their case.

It is striking how ageing and the lack of education (hence the lack of knowledge) accompanied by some kind of illness escalates isolation. In some cases, it is not the society that marginalizes the ignorant, ill or elderly people, but the reverse: it is the person who devalues him/herself and voluntarily backs out of community life. Both situations have the same outcome, namely deficient relationship network.

One third of the respondents who experience loneliness frequently (35%) struggled with some kind of illness. Minor health problems are occasionally less tolerated by the direct environment than 'legitimized' and recognised serious illnesses, or the concealment of the symptoms and its psychological effects might cause a more painful loneliness. Whether it is a serious, or a minor health problem, the data proved that illness often deprives the individual of the advantages of community life.

IV. INFORMAL GROUPS OF FRIENDS

In course of sociological examination of the communities and civic participation, much attention is paid to formal civic communities, organisation and especially to political parties, but it is rarely clarified that the conceptualization and formation of opinions on public issues start in primary and informal groups. The first community patterns and experiences, the first impressions about politics, authority, mutual responsibility and solidarity towards the members of immediate communities are acquired in childhood in the family of orientation, and even small children can learn of political preferences from the utterances of their parents.

In adolescence, and later in adulthood, honest and private conversations about the immediate or the wider environment and about social issues in the informal gatherings of close friends are the principal factors that contribute to the development of own and others' opinions, and not the participation in youth or civil organisations or in political parties. Friendly and private meetings are the venues of the exchange of public information and expression of individual convictions, thus they can be seen as the most direct communities of democratic life, as the first steps in civic participation.

Sociological analyses of democratic civic participation, social connections and social capital have failed to recognise the significance of the private and informal communities so far, this is why we found it essential to investigate the actual role of friendship in the development of sociability.

It has to be emphasized that informal groups are not primarily 'schools' for democracy. They perform various functions in individual, as well as in community life. First and foremost, these groups ensure successful social integration and protect the individual from isolation through mutual support of the members. Ethnic origins, financial background, skin colour, cultural roots, age, etc. are objective, but very influential features of individual life, and everybody tries to avoid discrimination. This basic need is fulfilled, apart from family, through informal groups, through friends, where the members consistently ignore every possible reason for discrimination. The happiness of the individuals depends entirely on the happiness of the others, but the democratic nature of the group is feigned, even if it is indeed characterised by social homogeneity. If someone is admitted to the group, the members acknowledge her/him as equal and offer their support if needed (Simmel 1973).

The informal groups aim at social homogeneity with underlying selective mechanisms, thus the chances of entering the 'community playground' highly vary. Selection according to social status is usually achieved in everyday community practice of friends, since numerous signs of meta-communication facilitate differentiation and prestige ranking (Shils 1977, Sennett 2004).[7]

Weber's theory about the social stratification is verified by the community practice of informal groups, as the vast majority of people favour members of their social class, this is equally true for friendships (peer group) and for marriage (marriage homogamy), moreover, for the preservation and

[7] According to Shils, people are able to distinguish between others of different social status based on meta-communication (Shils 1977). This means that individuals perceive social differences which they into account while forming their social network. About the perception and acceptance of strangers see Sennett 2004.

sharing of economic opportunities. The cooperation with members of different cultures or subcultures is merely formal, institutional, organisational or communal. Interpersonal communication with 'others' is characterized by a polite distance. Strong ties, which would later stabilize the relationship and create solidarity, rarely develop between people of different (sub)cultures.

The selective process and the formation of socially homogenous informal groups are simultaneously facilitated and complicated by the fact that exclusion and seclusion work in a bidirectional way between the different groups or classes (Weber 1987, Parkin 1974). Although they do socialize (because of natural curiosity, their multicultural tolerant value system and/or equality ideal), people, no matter what their social standing is, prefer not to mix with others from very different cultural or social backgrounds.

As a consequence of the underlying selective processes, the majority tend to choose friends from classes similar to their own. However, social standing has various dimensions, and joining a community does not require comparability in all of the aspects, it is usually sufficient, if one corresponds. The nouveau riche entrepreneur, for example, is commonly accepted by the 'elite' despite of his incomplete education, or the same can happen with a well-educated, well-bred, but poor person.[8]

The group formation and its selective mechanism lead to exclusion or admission which rarely offends the refused

[8] Mills (1960) explains that the equality of ranking is emphasized in elite schools; this is why the uniform is obligatory. Everybody competes him/herself, not others. Thus, an illusion of democracy is created. Later, the 'old boys' clubs have a great importance where the ex-students can maintain their connections. It does not matter how successful someone becomes, s/he is later admitted to elite clubs, since the school meant the fulfilment of one community requirement. This theory is verified by the example of the Budapest Opera Ball and its elite participants.

person's sensibility or sense of justice, since homogeneity is in everyone's interest. It is undoubtedly more painful, if the most disadvantaged cannot afford themselves to socialize and befriend others, or at least occasionally spend some free time with people from their own social stratum. These people compensate for the lack of the objective preconditions of inviting their informal groups to their homes by meeting their friends in streets, on markets or places; they create a forum for opinion exchange and with it the solidarity and social capital that the community membership ensures.

Most individuals have friends, an informal circle; in other words, a small community beyond the family where the solidarity of members helps to deal with difficulties of life, and offers an opportunity to exchange information, to discuss social or personal questions, in other words it is a preliminary form of civic engagement.

Our previous surveys demonstrated convincingly that atomization in society has accelerated; close family has become one separate unit of solidarity, as the traditional communities gradually disappear due to the effects of urbanization and individualization (Utasi 2002). The present volume intends to prove that family is not the only informal group in most people's lives; groups of friends guarantee solidarity and constitute the foundation of civic participation. In addition, the wide-spread notion, namely that the society crumbles due to the general individualisation, has to be revised as well, since the informal groups are the basic units of social cohesion, and people will always need other communities beyond their families. We could rather say that institutional individualization is accompanied by the individualization of informal groups nowadays. The individual selects and creates his/her own community, the choice is entirely free, but self-restriction, concession and compromise are also necessary to sustain the relationships in the long term.

Why is it then that the macro-community does not function, moreover, the ignorance precludes the democratic public life and the free flow of information in the small local communities? Presumably, financial scarcity and unregulated, non-transparent economy generate distrust of strangers, of people with different social standing or cultural origins. Under these circumstances, community trust cannot emerge, cannot be improved and consolidated, the individual need for civic participation does not even reach the level of civil organisations and associations. The role of informal groups is becoming increasingly important in this situation, since the members already possess the inclination for community life which, in our view, can be a promising starting point for the revival of democracy.

Research Definition of Informal Groups

One of the basic criteria of community is the solidarity, the mutual help deriving from the trust and common identity of the members. Regular meetings and ritual interactions strengthen group cohesion, while the attendance of the members is a way to express the collective identity. The successful and enjoyable gatherings usually generate the spiritual experience of belongingness (Hankiss 2004, Utasi 2009).[9]

Groups of friends and informal communities arise out of repeated interactions of the communities in everyday life (living place, workplace, neighbourhood, school) or accidental encounters. Our research was based on the ego-network. Although group of friends, circle of friends and personal

[9] We determined our research definition based on the criteria of communities of Hankiss (2004)

communities of friends are applied with identical meanings in the present volume, we are aware of the fact that circles of friends are frequently closer and more intimate networks of relationships that the members enlarge with different motivations occasionally.[10]

The personal communities or the circles of friends are primary relationships, connections from life scenes (neighbourhood, workplace, school, accidental encounter, formal institutional relationship, etc.) selected from previous collaborations for sympathy, interest, common aims, or merely for tradition and habit, and which congeal into intimate solidarity circles with time. These small communities are the most direct forms of community life beyond the family on which later community participation is built. The atmosphere is private, the members feel free to talk about personal problems, like happiness and sorrow, they celebrate each other's success, exchange information about questions they consider important (personal, social). Our main research aim was to map the networks of informal communities and groups of friends, so we asked the participants whether they had a community, a circle with whom they entertain, go out, do leisure activities, and discuss their opinions.[11]

[10] On meetings of informal groups the prestige motivation strengthens, thus the members invite 'outsiders' who they expect to be beneficial in the future for the circle

[11] In our nationally representative survey (OTKA 2009, Community ties) our research question was phrased as follows: People usually form circles of friends, companions. People enjoy the time spent in these small groups, the members discuss the latest news, have fun together, stop to talk with each other and exchange opinions. Think about your small informal communities. Do you have a circle as described above from your living place, neighbourhood, workplace, from unexpected encounters, from your school mates, online relationships, cultural activity or ethnic group, religious group or church, hobby, card, sport or any other clubs, from a repeated activity in the street, from a restaurant or pub, or from your distant relatives?

We presumed that there are personal communities which are regarded by the members as 'social playgrounds' designed exclusively for amusement, for social 'game'. In these communities, the members ignore discrepancies in individual financial standing, within the circle there is a (pretended) equality, the members consider each other selfsame in the common play (Simmel 1973).

Sociological examinations seldom focus on the community life of friendships which are in fact ego-network-based communities with members of homogeneous social status. The reason for the deficiency is the fact that these groups are hard to define scientifically; their boundaries cannot be operationalized or described with exact parameters. Scientists usually decide to give a definition valid for one particular research, and this was our intention as well. In sociological research, friend is a person who the respondent considers as a friend. This principle might be extended to the groups of friends, namely the personal community of friends comprises all those relationships that the respondent specifies as friendships. Personal communities of friends can be built on interests and instrumental motivation, or on emotional motivation, but both types have to include trust and mutual solidarity of the members (B. Wellman 1992).

In traditional societies, the friendships of the majority, except the elite, originate(d) in the local communities of the living place. However, friendships emerge from previous relationship network, communities, locations, life scenes, different lifecycles or periods in modern industrial societies. Thus, friendships are multi-local, sometimes multicultural or even international. Technology, as a new way of sustaining relationships is an advantage in contrast to traditional societies. Cars, telephones and the Internet reduce the distance, so the intensity of the relationships can be maintained, even if the direct interactions between the individual and the members of

his/her groups are casual. It is also characteristic for modern societies due to accelerated lifestyle and considerable distances that individuals have to split up their friendship time expenditure between various groups, since it is impossible to meet all members of all communities at the same time.

Individuals have usually various groups of friends, and as a consequence of the multiplication of the informal communities, the members of different friendship circles of the same individual sometimes do not know each other at all. In addition, the frequency of the individual's interactions varies from group to group. It is presumable though, that the individual need for these small informal groups, which have become the second most important providers of mechanical solidarity after family, increases with the disappearance of traditional communities. Informal groups of friends are, just like the family, protection from atomization of the macro-community and from the effects of urbanization.

As a starting point of the research, we examined the ego-networks, the individual-centred relationship structures. It has been mentioned earlier that friendships circles and personal communities of friends are mostly identical, but friendships circles are usually understood as more intensive and intimate ties which are occasionally enriched with formal relationships. Nevertheless, our survey aimed to collect data on the groups which the respondents defined as their closest ties. Thus, the ratio of formal-informal relationships depended on the decision of the participants. In the nationally representative survey, fifteen sources of relationships were listed which we had deemed the most common forms of community and cooperative interactions and which are usual scenes of making friends. According to the data, one fifth (22, 5%) of the respondents had no informal communities of friends at all, another one fifth (22, 9%) had only one such group from one

source, but every second respondent had friends recruited from more than one (previous) sources (54, 7%).

The friendships which are available through the ego-network can have either one source (for example only occupational, neighbourly or school) or numerous sources. However, it is highly probable that the versatility of the personal community of friends and the quantity and quality of information exchanged depend on the number of the relationships' sources.

The data of the representative survey of 2009 indicated that almost four fifths of the sample (79, 4%) had at least one community. This result proves convincingly that the second most general personal community after family are the friendship circles in the contemporary society.

Furthermore, the prevalence of communities beyond family or friends is rather casual. The members of all political parties and political organisations made up 1, 2% of the sample, one fifth of the respondents (21, 7%) participated in some kind of civil associations which is a significant contrast to the four fifths proportion of friendships (OTKA 2009, Renewing the Democracy through the Need for Community Ties/A közösségi kapcsolatok igénye a demokrácia megújításának esélye, 2009, N=1051, own calculation).

International examinations have drawn attention to the fact that the membership of civil organisations has been shrinking in the last decades, even in the USA where civic participation was very characteristic earlier (Putnam 1995). On the one hand, Wuthnow (1994) put the emphasis on the increasing importance of small communities which gravitate towards each other by following a common objective. According to Wuthnow, if individuals gather repeatedly in small communities because of their common interests and amusement, the regular meetings lead to the development of the sense of community with time. People with similar taste

and living conditions seek each other's companionship usually in order to experience the feeling of togetherness and care. Wuthnow interpreted the cohesion of small communities as a proof for people's ability to form alliances of mutual support, and denied the notion that contemporary society is individualistic and predominantly self-centred (Wuthnow 1994).

In our analysis, we applied Wuthnow's concept about the small communities for the personal communities of friends, and regarded friendships as social units of the (quite unequal) re-distribution of social capital and solidarity. The fact that some individuals are able to preserve more of communities, their social-relational sources at the same time, while others have to rely on friendships from one sole source, verifies the inequality.

If we consider the age stratification of the sample, for example, it is noticeable that the friendships of respondents over sixty derived on average from half as many sources as the friendships of the youngest age group did. Higher educational attainment contributed obviously to the increase of sources as well. However, friendship community practice of the high school diploma group was analogous to that of the graduates, since the participants in these two groups had personal communities of friends deriving from more (previous) sources in similar proportion.

The discrepancy between the number of friendship sources in case of city and village residents was less significant, but still similar to the differences between the extremes of age and educational stratification. Although residents of villages have fewer groups of friends, the frequency of traditional family events compensates them for the lack of other communities. Our earlier research showed that family gatherings on weekends, birthdays, or name days are highly esteemed occasions of community life and information

exchange both in cities and in villages, but they are more regular in the smaller settlements (Utasi 2008).

As far as the difference between genders is concerned, results indicated that women had fewer friendship sources than men; in other words, women's community networks are more closed, more reduced.

Friendship circles represent such value and social capital that are highly beneficial to individual life. The social capital obtained through community ties is transferable and enriching; it can be converted into other types of capital. This process is, of course, reversible: favourable living conditions and affluence enable community life which produces social capital (Wellman-Frank 2001).

The social sources, which the friendships are based on, demonstrate the amplitude of the social-communal space surrounding the individual; which tend to shrink with age, and to expand with the rise in social status or increase in wealth. The different social sources might fuse into one heterogeneous community of friends, or remain disconnected and sustained separately by the individual as different friendship circles.

According to the number and nature of the dominant social sources, we differentiated four types of community structure that were characteristic for friendship circles of the sample segment who had friendship circles:[12]

a) The first group was constituted by more than one tenth (13%) of the sample. These respondents had wide friendship network from various sources (workplace, school, accidental encounters, clubs, living place, etc.).
b) More than half of the respondents (51, 3%) developed their friendships in their immediate environment and everyday life (dominantly from the living place and to a smaller extent from the workplace)

[12] The categorisation was carried out with cluster analysis.

c) Every fifth respondent in this sample segment sustained their earlier friendships from their youth, especially from school, and had no other sources (20, 4%)
d) The rest of the sample segment (one sixth, 14, 8%) had friends from the closest social environment: form their neighbourhoods and wider families

Research data also proved that the number of social sources and the geographical scope from which the personal communities of friends derive show a shrinking trend in parallel to the decline of living conditions. The less qualified the respondents are, the higher the possibility that their friendships originate in the immediate environment, especially in the neighbourhood or in the wider family. 90% of the respondents with unfinished primary education, and almost the same percentage of the respondents with primary education had their friendships from such close sources.

Friendship circles which comprised relationships from (previous) communities or collaborations were mostly characteristic for graduates, and they were also the most likely to preserve their school friendships. It is also striking that at least quarter of the friendships was made up of educational relationships above the high school diploma stratum. This means that every form of education above the secondary level generates and strengthens relationships that can evolve into close friendships. We also assume that the years between 15 and 18 had been the most suitable period for the establishment of strong ties in those respondents' lives who had at least secondary education, but the proportion of school friendships usually decreases with time.

In relation to the age stratification, it could be concluded that the youngest respondents had the most versatile personal communities of friends. The cluster variable showed that one fifth of the youngest age group (20%) had various

sources in their friendship practice. However, it does not mean that all of their friendship circles are heterogeneous in status, but it does indicate that their lives are more varied, more dynamic and involves more types of activities than the life of the elderly.

The proportion of the respondents who were able to sustain friendships from many former communities, institutions and sources gradually drops with age. It was only 2, 5% in the age group over sixty, in other words, it was ten times less than the percentage in the youngest segment. This trend clearly signifies the shrinking life space and community network of the elderly which intensifies the social inequality between the extremes of the age stratification.

With the exception of the youngest group, the living place was the source of the majority of the respondents' friendships. It was especially characteristic for the eldest who still maintained personal communities of friends: four fifths of this segment had their friendship(s) locally. In an optimistic interpretation it means that the majority of the eldest are able to preserve their interest in local community life and have the opportunity for information exchange.

School is the major source of friendships evidently in case of the youngest. However, ties between fellow students normally loosen or even vanish with age, and consequently the proportion of school friends falls in personal communities.

Every age stratum had similar percentage of friends from neighbourhood or wider family, but these relationships gain in importance mainly in the lifecycles when people spend more time at home (such as with small children, or in retirement) and hence revalue the neighbourhood solidarity.

Status Homogeneity in Friendship Circles

Our research hypothesis about the socioeconomic status homogeneity of friendship circles was based on Weber's homogeneity theory which also implies the internal cohesion of different classes. The data of our survey confirmed Weber's concepts. According to the subjective self-classification of the respondents, three fourths of the sample had friendship circles where all the members belonged exclusively to the same 'social class' (75%). One fifth (20, 6%) considered their groups heterogeneous where they had friends from their own and other social classes as well.[13]

The percentages of respondents who had friends of lower (0, 8%) or higher (3, 5%) social status are infinitesimal in comparison to the two other results. Accordingly, people opt for friends of higher social status (upwards), if they form friendship circles exclusively of people who come from different classes than their own. This 'upward' choice is aimed at the obtainment of extra information or profit, or it creates the illusion of rise in own social standing.

The degree of social homogeneity in friendship shows a significant correlation with educational attainment. The mixed status-composition has similar proportion in every educational stratum, but the percentages of socially homogeneous friendships are remarkably high on every level. In other words, our survey affirmed that people in every class of social hierarchy, which are most easily describable with educational attainment, stick together, the effects of cohesion and exclusion are significant. This fact points to a strictly hierarchical, caste-like society.

[13] In the questionnaire the respondents were asked about their "social status" which we usually identified with the subjective status-classification.

As far as age is concerned, there were only insignificant differences in the social homogeneity of friendships. Three fourths of every age group preferred friends whose social standing was similar to their own. The voluntary separation of generations, or age strata is also a well-known phenomenon, and combined with the conformability of socioeconomic factors, it leads to more complete group homogeneity; moreover, it doubles the extent of social closure.

The status-composition of friendship circles showed the most significant discrepancy in relation to the settlement types. The proportion of 'mixed social standing' groups was very high by the residents of Budapest (37, 45%), but the extent of homogeneity increased in parallel to the shrinking of the settlement size. More than four fifths of the respondents from small villages had socially homogeneous friendships. It can be assumed that the multicultural population of cities generate varying value preferences, and a higher possibility for friendships of people from different social classes, whereas the residents of small villages are culturally homogeneous and tend to adhere to traditional values more strictly.

It was also characteristic for the sample segment from Budapest that they were more likely to choose 'upward', to have friends from 'rather higher social classes' than the rest of the respondents. 7, 7% of the participants from the capital reported that they had communities consisting of friends with higher social standing than their own, and this is the double of the sample average. It has to be added that this result is still very low compared to the percentage of the socially homogeneous friendship groups. In sum, social status homogeneity is dominant in every settlement type, but a small degree of heterogeneity is detectable in the cities.

Human relationships remain strong and stable when the participants reinforce them with frequent meetings, or interpersonal interactions. If the members regularly seek each

other's company, it indicates that the network works well. The habitual gatherings of personal communities enable the members to talk about everyday problems and to have up-to-date information about each other's lives; moreover, these meetings are opportunities to discuss social or public questions, to assess the processes and events of immediate and wider environment. There are nevertheless personal communities of friends that meet occasionally, for example on celebrations, but the functioning of these groups is rather formal. The majority of the rare meetings are designed to demonstrate the belongingness of the members who with their attendance implicitly convince each other of their mutual solidarity. It is not uncommon, however, that some members, two or three, meet more frequently and the information they exchanged passes to other members indirectly, by causing domino effect.

The survey showed convincingly that the vast majority of the respondents had intensive and regular direct or indirect interactions with their closest communities. Two thirds (63, 1%) of the sample segment who had personal communities communicated with their friends daily or more times a week, while 23, 4% had contact with their friends more times in a month.[14] The two percentages indicate that four fifths of the respondents interacted frequently with their friends, and one tenth (10, 4%) met or contacted their circles monthly. In other words, our examination proved that those people who are members of communities of friends had the need for intensive social life, as well as the practice. Informal community life, beyond the family, and intensive community interactions are concomitants in the lives of the respondents who had community ties, i.e. by three fourths of the entire sample. The research indicated that the majority has the suitable

[14] By the participants who had more than one friendship circles, the questionnaire asked about their closest ties and consistently concentrated on the group chosen by the respondents.

environment for discussing personal and social questions which might be a chance of the enhancement of civic participation.

Our main research objective was to investigate the need for community ties. We presumed that this need motivates people to participate in social and public life more actively. The data proved that three fourths of the society already have the need for wider social life beyond family which might contribute to the improvement of democratic participation in local communities.

People without Friends

In contrast to the respondents with community practice and friendship circles, almost one fourth of the sample did not have personal communities of friends at all. This proportion comprised both the respondents who did not have the need for social life, and those who stayed away from communities despite their affinity. In this sample segment, a remarkably high proportion (67, 1%) considered exclusively the time expenditure on family important. Furthermore, 13, 1% of the respondents without friendship circles reported that nobody, not even their families were important which was higher than the average of the sample (10%). The two latter results indicate that the need for wider community participation had not developed by four fifths of the respondents without friendships (80%), though some of them considered the time spent with fellow club members important. This means that four fifths of the people without friends live secluded in the family, because it fulfils their need for social life; and those who prefer neither friends nor family become isolated.

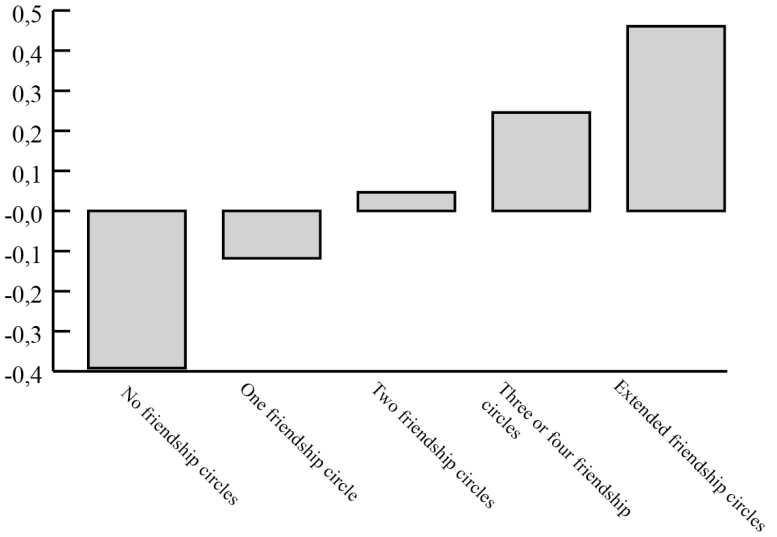
The majority of the sample quarter without friends are low-qualified (60%, under the level of the high school diploma), one third live in small villages (30%), and they are mostly elderly, everyone was over the age of 45. The proportion of women slightly exceeds the number of men. In sum, the cumulating social disadvantages are strongly associated with the low degree of the need for social life and community practice.

Impecuniosity is one of the social difficulties that aggravate isolation decisively. A financial index of 18 assets[15] revealed how significantly economic-financial situation determines the refusal/deprivation of social/community life and practice (friendship circles by asset corr. 212**).

Financial hardship prevents the majority even from socializing with other people in similar socioeconomic status. A fairly high proportion of the needy do not want to develop community ties, because they cannot or are not willing to undertake the social commitment additionally to their own poverty that includes the ethical norm of mutual solidarity. Meagre possessions or shortage cannot be further divided, so social and community interdependence cannot be based on poverty. The impecunious or destitute deal with difficulties in the family, if they have a family, the solidarity extends only to the relatives.

[15] Cable TV, colour TV, landline, mobile phone, dishwasher, automatic washing machine, home cinema system or DVD player, PC, laptop, Internet connection, digital camera, car, art object, vacation property, own house/flat, another house/flat, land/agricultural property.

Figure 7:
The averages of assets in relation to the number of friendship circles (Z-score averages) (Renewing the Democracy through the Need for Community Ties/A közösségi kapcsolatok igénye a demokrácia megújításának esélye, 2009, N=1051)



The positive correlation of the index of assets with the variable signifying the number of friendship circles affirms that the respondents without friends lived in a financial situation worse than the average. The survey revealed that those who had one friendship circles had results below the average of the asset index as well. However, the number of friendship circles grew in parallel to the increase of asset accumulation.

Scenes of Social Life of Personal Communities

The scenes, where personal communities of friends meet, where they can have informal conversations or exchange opinions in a private atmosphere, or do any other activities preferred by the members, vary with the social classes.

Every second respondent with personal communities met their group the most frequently in the home of one of the members. Home is the most guarded private sphere from which people tend to exclude strangers. It is noticeable that visitors who are not included in the personal community (postman, agents etc.) cannot enter the home; people confer with them in the front door or in the hall. However, friends are usually let in the most intimate parts of the home. The memory of the respondents was selective concerning the scene of the meetings: according to the answers, the occasions when the respondents were the hosts were twice as frequent (37, 2%) as their visits by another member of their groups (17, 4%). The reason for the surprising difference is probably the fact that receiving guests is more memorable, since it requires more preparation and energy than the visits by someone else. Furthermore, people tend to forget the less significant meetings when they just stop by their friends for a chat; these occasions are more forgettable than celebrations and feasting.

Almost quarter of the respondents met their friendship circles in public places, such as in restaurants, pubs or cafés (13, 8%) and/or in clubs (10, 4%). Going out was mainly preferred by the single respondents and their friends.

The scenes of meetings, conversation and discussions were for every sixth respondent (15%) a public space, such as stairwells, markets, shops and squares, and this exceeds the proportion of those who met in restaurants, pubs or cafés.

The difference in the quality of the conversations in a restaurant and in the streets, shops, on the market or on a bench in front of the house is perceptible, but all scenes can ensure, probably for different social classes, the usefulness and enjoyment of the time, the opportunity for information exchange and increase the need for community participation.

Living conditions limit the choice of meeting places even by the people who already have the need for social life. The most common scene of the meetings is someone's home, but the people who do not own a flat/house are compelled to visit others, go out or convene in public spaces. Because of the objective living conditions, meeting friends at home characterises mostly the friendship practice of the middle-aged. In relation to settlement type, residents of the capital and small villages are most likely to gather in a flat/house. The majority of the residents in permanent relationships owned a house or a flat, thus they met their friends at home more frequently than the singles.

Restaurants and/or clubs are frequented by young adults of higher social status (31, 4%), and by the residents of the capital (33% of them), and in relation to educational attainment, by the graduates (25% of them). Men are twice as likely (32%) to go out as women (16, 7%), and the respondents who live without financial difficulties meet their friends in restaurants/clubs in a quite significant proportion (30% of them). Presumably, people of higher social status and better living conditions can afford to meet their friends in public places of entertainment, this why restaurants, cafes, etc. Are the meeting places in their friendship practice.

The community life of the public spaces, which was a prominent feature of traditional societies, was preserved through the street benches in front of the houses in small villages. Although the benches keep disappearing, there are still people who regard public spaces as scenes of deep

discussions and entertaining social life. Conversations, meetings in front of the house, on the market or after mass were and are wide-spread forms of interaction especially in the villages (17-22%), but they have an important role in the cities as well (though in the capital only 2, 6%). The community life on the outside corridors of apartment houses was commonly described in literary works of art in the early 20th century, and it is revived in a new form: in front of the block of flats, row houses, suburban detached houses, in the streets, stairwells, on the markets and on playgrounds of cities. These are usually meeting spots for the elderly (20, 3% of the age group over sixty), respondents outside the capital (17-22% of them) and respondents with financial difficulties (20% of them).

Cohesive Activities and Value Preferences in Friendships

Friendship circles comprise quite often people with apparently contradictory value systems; in these cases the cohesive power of the relationship is barely detectable. It is also hard to reveal what factors besides solidarity can unite the people with similar living conditions in personal communities, especially those who seek each other's company more or less frequently. Common values, interests, aims, emotion and tradition deriving from the common past are usually the most important cohesive elements of relationships and mostly of friendships as well. These motivation types occur simultaneously in most interpersonal interactions, but one of them usually becomes decisive (Weber 1987).

People who have more personal communities normally differentiate between them according to the motivation factors.

Friendships can rest on similar mindset and common value preferences, or the interaction can be motivated by economic interests and power. If the motivations diverge in different friendship circles of the individual, it is not unusual that the members of certain groups do not know each other and do not meet, but the information flow is still possible.

In our questionnaire, presumed cohesive elements were listed, and most of the respondents regarded the two answers of 'common interests, common attractions' and 'common mindset' (together 78%) as the most important.[16] The high percentage implies the similarity of value preferences within the personal communities. Corresponding values, as it has been explained earlier, are the results of similar educational level and cultural preferences which also produce status homogeneity in the group.

The influence of common interests and attractions and similar value preferences as cohesive powers in the friendships intensifies with educational attainment: every second respondent in the segment of the graduates selected the answers 'common interests' and 'common mindset'. Improvement in educational attainment increases the importance and frequency of intellectual conversations and exchange of opinions for which common interests are preconditions, while the instrumental cohesion recedes. In relation to settlement types, common interests were particularly important for residents of the capital, two thirds of them explained the success of their friendships with this answer.

One fifth of the respondents (19, 4%) opted for the memory of common past which is a traditional cohesive element deriving from shared life situations, such as shared

[16] What ensures the cohesion of friendship in your view? (1) memory of common past (2) common interests, common attractions (3) common mindset (4) common aims, hobbies (5) support, collaboration, common work.

school, or living place, or neighbourhood. This answer was particularly characteristic for low-qualified and elderly respondents.

Decades ago, the majority of friendships developed from common workplace and colleagueship in Hungary (Utasi 1990).[17] The strengthening of personal ties was incidental to common work and extra hours. Due to financial difficulties, most people were compelled to take second jobs, and friendships were concomitant of collaboration, since the work helped to bridge the income gap and the participants got to know each other. Trust emerged from the cooperation and the community of co-workers gradually became a personal community of friends.

In the contemporary market economy, only a small proportion of respondents (4, 2%) thought that functional elements, like common work and support, ensure group cohesion. Friendship circles provide common amusement, enjoyment, idleness, possibility for the exchange of views; common work has lost its expediency and function as instrumental motivation, whereas similarity in values and interests has gain in significance.

The list of activities performed by the friendship circles contributed to the full comprehension of the answers about the cohesive elements. Out of the ten social activity types (frequent, rare, almost never), the majority of the respondents (63%) marked the 'discussion of personal questions' as frequent. This confirms the primacy of common interests and

[17] The activities were following: (1) discussion of personal questions (2) conversation about local issues (3) conversation about politics (4) conversation about national, international and global questions (5) celebration, feasting and tippling at home (6) celebration, eating, drinking in restaurants and cafes (7) common excursion, visiting a sport event (8) visiting cultural events (9) common work (10) else

shared value preferences which was reported by a similar proportion of the sample.

The option of ‘celebrations, feasting and tippling’ was marked as frequent by 28, 3% of the sample.

In contrast to the ranking of the cohesive elements, common work had a surprisingly high proportion of choices as a frequent activity (19, 6%). Moreover, work was one of the most frequently selected options (47, 3%) on the ‘negative extreme’ (almost never), and ‘celebrations, feasting and tippling’ had a slightly less proportion as an activity almost never done (44, 4%). This means that celebration and work was preferred as frequent activities in a great part of the sample, but the proportion of those who almost never do these activities with their friends was similarly high. The apparent contradiction can be solved by considering that these two activities occur in contrasting proportions among the social activities of people from different social classes.

Celebration and amusement in restaurants or cafes as frequent activities were characteristic for the graduates (31, 4%), whereas only 8% of the respondents with primary education selected the same option. Correspondingly, two thirds (63%) of the primary education segment almost never celebrate or go out to restaurant or cafes. Age had a significant influence on activities as well: only a quarter of the youngest age group selected ‘almost never’ in case of the restaurant and café celebrations, while two thirds of the eldest gave the same answer. Amusement in restaurants and cafes is predominantly characteristic for individuals with advantaged living conditions.

In sum, the young, the people with high level of education or/and with high social status (primarily graduates) particularly prefer common amusement and celebrations in restaurants and cafes as social activities, whereas the eldest and

low-qualified people with low social status almost never do the same activities.

Common work as social activity on the two extremes shows a similar trend, but the correlation is more complex. In the segment with primary education, working together is not a common activity anymore, although it used to be in the period of second jobs. In our survey it was marked as frequent activity by only 9% of this group.

It is a peculiar change that common work was frequent by a significant proportion of the graduates (44, 4%). This means that common work as social activity shifted from the lowest to the highest stratum in the social hierarchy. Is it possible that the (mostly) young intellectuals cooperate in the smaller, domestic tasks because of the high rates of services? Are individuals compelled by the modern society to work in community and adopt the 'do-it-yourself' mentality? (Gershuny 1978). Common work was especially popular by the resourceful young respondents, but two thirds of the eldest almost never combine work and social life.

Discussions about Public Life in the Personal Communities

According to our research hypothesis, social, public and political questions are discussed in the personal communities more or less regularly. Informal groups are particularly apt scenes for opinion exchange about public issues; therefore they can become the foundations of the need for public life. The conversations in friendship circles might direct the attention of the members to public questions, and generate the willingness to work for the local community or for the macro-society.

In order to verify our hypothesis, we examined the frequency of the discussions about public issues in the friendship practice of the respondents. The data showed that the respondents had frequent conversations with their friends about (1) local questions (31%) (2) politics (16%) and/or (3) national, international and global issues (21, 7%). These percentages indicate an intensive attention to public life. The exact intensity of the discussion of public questions was determined with an index calculated by the synthesis of the frequency scale of the three public topics. In this way, we were able to measure the proportion of the friendship circles in which discussion about public issues are quite regular. In a wider perspective, it gives us information about the number of personal communities of friends by whom the attention to public life has already developed.

Table 1:
The frequency of characteristic activities in the personal communities of friends (Renewing the Democracy through the Need for Community Ties/A közösségi kapcsolatok igénye a demokrácia megújításának esélye, 2009, N=1051, the sample segment of the respondents with friendship circles, N=815)

Activity	Frequently (%)	Rarely (%)	Almost never (%)
Discussion of personal questions	63, 0	31, 7	5, 2
Conversation about local issues	31, 4	46, 8	21, 8
Conversation about politics	16, 1	47, 3	36, 7
Conversation about national, international and global questions	21, 7	50, 6	27, 7
Celebration, feasting and tippling at home	28, 3	48, 2	23, 5
Celebration, eating, drinking in restaurants and cafes	18, 0	37, 6	44, 4
Common excursion, visiting a sport event	15, 8	44, 7	39, 5
Visiting cultural events	16, 6	40, 7	42, 7
Common work	19, 5	33, 3	47, 2

From the synthesising scale of the three public-life related options, we had to conclude that public issues are not frequently discussed in friendship circles: only every third respondent reported (32, 6%) that public life issues are the topics of conversation.

The primary goal of friendship gatherings is unquestionably not the discussion of public life-related topics, but leisure, amusement and the enjoyment of the time together. Thus, public issues are not ‘scheduled’, not ‘frequently’ discussed on the meetings of friends. Results do not show

significant discrepancies, not even in relation to educational stratification. When the question was rephrased and the emphasis was put on the presence of discussion of social and political issues of the locality, the country or the world in the friendship practice, and not on the strict frequency, it became evident that these topics occurred almost never only by one third of the sample segment. In other words, two thirds of the friendship circles did talk about public life-related questions more or less regularly (frequently and/or rarely).

The data also revealed that the public life-related discussions mean community practice in the friendship circles of those respondents who reported that they 'are not interested and involved in politics' and do not participate in any civil or political organisation.

One fourth of the respondents who claimed to have no interest in politics do get involved in politics indeed, or at least they discuss public life with their friends. Naturally, the respondents with a political attention engage in public life-related discussions in their friendship practice more regularly.

Surprisingly, one third of the respondents with an increased interest in politics reported that they almost never discuss important social or even work-related questions with their friends. We presume that informal groups are rather community 'playgrounds' for the respondents with political attention where they seek primarily leisure and amusement. For these people solving public issues is presumably part of everyday life, social-political debates are included in their work. They want to have fun with their friends, thus they abstain from public topics.

The comparison of the data of different age groups revealed that social-public questions are discussed the most frequently by respondents of the age group 30-44 and the least frequently by the eldest. The correlation of the settlement type and the frequency of the public life-related talks produced a V-

shaped graph: public issues are the most debated in the friendship practice of the residents of Budapest and small villages. The inhabitants of the small settlements, who are in more direct relationship with the members of public authority, have more and more transparent information about the decisions; discuss public topics more regularly than the residents of larger settlements. However, it is true that they focus on local problems; local public life is of primary importance. This proves that the need for democratic civic participation emerges from the attention to local problems.

Social Game and Amusement

On the symbolic social playground of friendship practice the most common activities are the following: (1) common amusement, feasting, celebration, tippling at home, (2) the same in a public facility, in a restaurant, in a café. Furthermore, (3) common excursion, sport, board game, and (4) common visit of a cultural event are also quite wide-spread.

Out of the four mentioned forms of amusement at least one is frequent by one third of the sample (34, 5%). Two thirds of the sample (67, 4%) did some of the activities with a smaller intensity (frequent and/or rarely).

From the information content of the four questions in connection with amusement, a synthesising index (entertain. 0,12) was created, and it revealed a higher proportion of men than women in the 'frequently' category. The difference was insignificant in regard to educational attainment; the low-qualified respondents entertain almost as intensively as the graduates. A similar trend was discovered in relation to the settlement type. The reason for the corresponding data is probably the primary objective of social life. People usually

seek each other's company because of the joy of being together, and for this, some kind of amusement, leisure is a precondition.

The most obvious discrepancy of amusement practice was found between the age groups. The data of the youngest and the eldest age groups diverged the most strikingly, but the value of the distribution was the highest by the most active middle-aged (45-59). The middle generation or 'sandwich generation' is the most occupied, they have the most burdens not only in the family, but in the society as well.

For the vast majority of the respondents, social life is joy and pleasure. The proportion of those who find social gatherings uncomfortable was insignificant. The respondents with an ambivalent opinion, namely those who enjoyed social events only partially, were studied as a separate group. In the capital, the proportion of the ambivalent was particularly high (22%). In the county towns, the group of the 'sour-faced' of social life was half as large as in the capital, and the numbers dropped in parallel to the settlement size (6, 5%). People who enjoy the time with their informal community moderately 'undertake' social events probably because of an interest, or because they see it as a commitment. It is a question though, why the proportion of the ambivalent was so high in the capital. Based on the data of our survey, this question could not be completely answered. The possible reason is the wider range of choices of activity types. Many possibilities for entertainment might confuse sociable people. In addition, the friendship circles of city residents are more complex, more polarised, people enter the groups from various former circles. The residents of the capital have more friendship circles on average than the residents of the smaller settlements. Furthermore, personal communities emerge from various motivations with members of heterogeneous social status more frequently in cities, and it is hard to reach a consensus. The

heterogeneity can occasionally hinder the maintenance of unity.

Solidarity in Personal Communities

Solidarity is the dominant criterion of the development and sustaining of every community and the source of cohesion. The mutual support expected from 'the circles' and solidarity emerge naturally, as long-term reciprocity and trust work between people of mainly the same or similar status easily and effectively. Help within the community strengthens trust as an 'invested social capital', and trust intensifies community cohesion. Research data concerning everyday support, reciprocity and long-term reciprocity have indicated clearly that trust and confidence in the solidarity of other members are particularly strong in the personal communities, almost as strong as within the close family.

According to our research results, the vast majority of the personal communities' members believed that they can rely on their personal communities, or at least someone from them, in case of everyday difficulties. More than four fifths reported that one of their friends would do the shopping for them, if they were not able to leave the house due to illness; or they could entrust the keys to one of their friends, if they would not be able to wait for the technician at home. Four fifths reported that one of their friends would lend them money, if they needed a smaller sum; and a similar proportion would ask advice in case of a problem from a/the member(s) of their personal communities. More than four fifths of the respondents believed that one of their friends would support and understand them in case of emotional crisis.

The scales of everyday solidarity of personal communities were synthesised in a 5-level index. It was noticeable that the respondents expect or hope less support with age. However, the averages of the age groups indicate that even most of the eldest trust their friends in at least two options out of five.

As a consequence of the status homogeneity of the informal groups, the more resourceful the respondents were, or the higher income they had, the more types of support they could expect. The quintiles that were created out of the synthesising wealth indexes revealed how dramatically the expectation of everyday support dropped in the segment whose income was below the average. People with particularly low income do not have supplies; thus they are compelled to 'sell' their free time in order to earn enough money to cover daily expenses. Due to their financial difficulties, the indigent feel unable to support the members of their own personal communities, but they do not expect any kind of help either. In finding a solution to their problems, they exclusively lean on their close families.

Chance of Transforming Virtual Friendships into Real-life Relationships

Every second respondent in the sample (49, 7%) uses the Internet. More and more relationships are built in the virtual space, and some of them can be converted into real-life friendships. One third of the Internet users (35, 5%) joined a real group with the help of their online contacts. However, three fourths of the respondents who entered a new friendship circle through their virtual activity had already had real-life

friends. This indicates that the Internet mainly enriches the social resources of those who are able to build relationships in the real life as well. People unable to socialize face-to-face will not be able to develop personal ties online either. Though, the Internet is still an opportunity to ameliorate the already existing communities with new members, new opinions. In addition, the Internet contributes to the sustaining and strengthening of personal ties. It is also anticipated that the Internet would gain ground in discussions and polls about public issues, but our survey did not examine this question in details.

V. ORGANISED CIVIL COMMUNITIES

Members of Organised Communities

In the personal communities, there are no fixed rules, no maximum number of members, written principles that would govern the function of the group. These parameters distinguish decisively informal groups from organised civil communities (Weber 1982, Kuti 1999). Civil organisations can be motivated by traditional ties, but the development of civilisation resulted in the organisation of an increased number of communities that realised civic cooperation, followed similar values and fulfilled common interests under the transformed circumstances of large-scale industry and labour division. In our research, these communities are referred to as 'organised', 'organic' or 'civil', and the terms are used as synonyms.

According to comparative international surveys, only a quarter of the Hungarian population is member in some kind of civil organisations or associations, whereas this proportion is considerably higher in the more developed countries. The latest international examinations have also emphasized that the proportion of civil organisations have dropped as an 'incidental' consequence of industrialization, globalisation, individualization and atomization, even in those countries where civic engagement was quite wide-spread earlier (Putnam 2002).

Despite the fragmentation of society, the need for community life still exists, and it is expressed through mass gatherings, festivals and mass manifestations which have taken place in increased numbers in the last decades. However, these masses cannot be regarded as communities, since they do not possess the essentials: solidarity, identity and organisation. The mass gatherings are frequently ad hoc manifestations, the number and social status of the participants are not determined, the members do not always know each other, and thus mutual trust cannot emerge. According to our hypothesis, the proportion of organised communities has fallen, whereas the number of mass movements and anonymous virtual communities is growing, but both types lack solidarity and common identity.

In our interpretation, communities are *formalized*, *organised* or *civil*, if they function according to written rules, at least one part of the members meet with a certain regularity and work for the realisation of a common goal and/or value, or share the same interests (Weber 1987). The nationally representative survey of 2009 revealed that three fourths of the respondents did not participate in any kind of formalized community, and merely one fourth of the sample was involved in civic participation (27, 3%).

In order to receive detailed information about the composition and proportion of civil communities, 26 variations were listed in our questionnaire.[18] The respondents who were members of several communities at the same time named the most preferred one, thus communities could be ranked according to their prevalence. Most respondents of the sample segment had joined a sport association (18%) and religious community (16%), but the proportion of members of environmental or animal protection organisations was also

[18] 17% of the respondents who are involved in civic participation belong to more than one community simultaneously.

significant (12%). Charity organisations had much fewer members (8%). 5% of the sample segment participated in a parent-teacher associations, but this kind of engagement lasts obviously for only a few years.

The variables signifying the 26 variations of formalized community membership were combined to a synthesising linear scale of formalized civic engagement.[19] It revealed the proportion of the respondents who participated in formalized communities, what their social status and living conditions were and which part of the sample was not engaged in civic participation.

The respondents of the middle and the upper quintiles of income stratification were the most likely to participate in civil communities. Because of their high social standing, people of the upper quintile are usually expected to play an active role, or at least to become honorary members of formalized communities. People of high social classes normally realise that their voluntary participation in civil groups increases their prestige, and at the same time, the organisation can benefit from the mediation and social capital of high-status members.

Civil organisation had remarkably small number of members in the large villages. Civic participation reached its nadir not in the least developed villages, but surprisingly in the large villages where the population has partially adopted the urban value system. In these settlements the formalized communities that were built on traditional motivation and traditional relationship network have mainly disappeared, but

[19] FORMCOM=environmental protection, animal protection, protection of human rights, women's organisation, Roma organisation, homosexual rights association, peace movement, health protection, elder protection, help for disadvantaged, other charity organisations, religious, cultural-artistic, occupational, trade union, political, scientific, local, youth organisation, sport club, parent-teacher association, other hobby club, preservation of traditional customs, agricultural or other cooperation.

civil communities failed to develop. This peculiar and community-deficient situation is reflected by the data.

As far as the age stratification is concerned, civic participation was less characteristic for the youngest age group. Respondents of the age group 30-44 were the most engaged age group, and the proportion of membership was the lowest in the age group over sixty. The deficiency in civic engagement of the youngest respondents might be the consequence of the lack of organised institutional socialization in childhood which we have discussed earlier. In addition, romantic relationships, PCs and virtual communities can also distract the youth from organised communities.

The proportion of civil community members correlates positively with the educational attainment; the graduates, whose prestige is noticeably increased by participation in civil communities, have at least one membership per capita. It is obvious though, that the average comprises both respondents of multiple membership and respondents without any membership.

Dominant Cohesive Values of Civil Communities

In the questionnaire 26 types of civil communities[20] with separate goals, activity or value system were listed. Our aim was to determine the values which motivated the respondents the most frequently to devote time to organised activities. Five categories were created from the community types with similar objectives. The protective (12%) and hobby (13%)

[20] As it has been indicated earlier, the sample segment included respondents with multiple memberships, thus the proportion of the participation in the five categories showed a higher percentage (39%) than the proportion of the respondents involved in civic communities (29, 8%).

communities had the highest proportion of members in the sample. Charity, religious and age related protective organisations had significantly fewer members than the previous two (8%-8%). The social-geographical composition of the communities confirmed that the preference for similar goals and activities mobilize people of similar social background.

The protective communities comprised respondents mainly from resourceful social classes, possibly with the best chance to fulfil their interests: graduates, and mostly from the 45-59 age group which is the professionally most active and successful life period. The proportion was the lowest in the youngest and eldest age groups, probably because the respondents of these sample segments are not yet or not any more in a social position where the community cooperation would effectively contribute to the achievement of their goals. Furthermore, protective communities had the most members from county towns, and the least from large villages.

In contrast to the previous category, hobby groups (12%) consisted of mainly younger members (of the age 18-44), and their proportion increased with the educational attainment. The correlation between the proportion of hobby group members and the settlement type produced a U-shaped graph: these communities were the most popular in the capital and in the small villages. Hobby circles are usually preferred by the people with advantaged living conditions, since they can afford it. However, the high proportion in the small villages indicates that traditional cultural circles did not cease to function, especially in those settlements where a conscientious leader or cultural manager encourages the preservation of tradition.

The membership proportions of religious communities correlated with educational attainment, as well as with the settlement so that it produced U-shaped graphs: respondents

with highest and lowest educational attainment, and residents of the capital and small villages were the most likely to join these groups. The proportion of membership dropped to the lowest value in the large villages. From the age groups, mainly the respondents over sixty joined religious communities despite the fact that institutional socialization was characterised by an anti-religious attitude in their childhood. However, the religious values gain in importance with age.

In charity and solidarity communities (8%), the presence of the youngest was the most dominant, whereas the eldest showed the least interest. Members were mostly residents of the capital, and least likely residents of large villages. In relation to educational attainment, the proportion was the highest in the high school diploma segment, then in the graduate segment. Based on the result, we can conclude that the higher the educational attainment was, the more likely the participation in charity organisation became.

Age group or generational communities (8%) were also mainly constituted by the respondents with high school diploma, while the professionally most active age group (age of 45-59) tended to abstain. The residents of the county towns were the most, and the residents of large villages the least engaged in age group communities.

Determining the Engaging Aims of Organised Civil Communities

As it has been mentioned earlier, only quarter of the sample was involved in some kind of civil community. We have also discussed the five goal-categories that predominantly motivated the respondents to join the organisations.

It was assumed that the level of civic participation could be increased; more respondents would participate, if they were asked, or they could pursue an aim which is particularly compelling for them. In order to prove this hypothesis, we determined the proportion of those respondents who already possess the need, or demand for civic engagement, and under the appropriate circumstances they would be willing to work for the community.

The respondents were asked to name the objectives or activities for which they would enter an organisation, association or community. To verify the demand for civic participation, fifteen possible motivations were listed which were believed to mobilize a higher proportion of the respondents.[21] The questions addressed all respondents; those who were already members, and those who had not found their motivation or had not been asked yet. Respondents had the possibility to choose multiple options.

The alternatives that were apparently the most engaging for organised community cooperation out of the 15-item list were classified into 6 subcategories based on their similar content:

a) Common pleasure, amusement (49, 3%): predominantly respondents of the lower and the upper extremes of the income groups would engage in organised community life for this reason, and the proportion was the lowest in the middle income segment. Common pleasure was the least popular by the residents of the large villages, while in the age stratification its preference dropped with age. In relation to educational attainment, the numbers of choices

[21] Helping the disadvantaged, protection of the environment/animals, moral commitment, useful leisure time, entertainment, religion, improvement of environment, social-political change, to socialize, financial benefits, patriotism, social acknowledgement, expectations of the direct environment, else.

grew gradually from the low-qualified to the most qualified.

b) Protection of the environment and animals (39, 5%): the proportion increased with educational attainment, but this cause gradually lost its importance with age. As far as the income stratification is concerned, the most respondents who considered this category as an engaging community aim came from the middle income group.

c) Helping the poor, the disadvantaged with community charity (37, 7%): this aim would prompt community cooperation surprisingly not in the higher social classes, but most possibly in the lowest quintile of income segments where people themselves are close to poverty. The respondents of the highest quintile were on the second place in this case. Respondents in 'relative' wealth were most likely to opt for guarding their financial standing instead of supporting the disadvantaged. By settlement types, residents of county and smaller towns and by age the professionally active (45-59 age group) would engage in cooperation for charity cause in the highest proportions. In the educational stratification the proportions show a slightly increasing trend upwards.

d) Interests of the living place, the country (35, 3%): the proportion of preference increases with educational attainment in this case, and it reaches its peak by the respondents with diploma from secondary vocational school and by the graduates. The proportion of respondents willing to work for patriotic interests gives a cone-shaped figure by the income groups: the middle groups would engage the most and the two extremes in the income categories the least probably. From the settlement types, residents of county towns constituted the highest, while residents of the capital the lowest proportions.

e) Commitment, prestige (34, 2%): these two would motivate predominantly the respondents with high social status who believe that community involvement is a social expectation because of their standing. Thus, the improvement of educational attainment which usually implies the social advancement caused an increase in the proportion of the respondents who would undertake community work under inner compulsion. However, the proportion dropped in parallel to the age.
f) Political-social change (23, 0%): the preference for this category increased with educational attainment, though it dropped by the respondents with high school diploma (who were mainly women), and the proportion reached its peak by the graduates. The age groups did not reveal significant discrepancies, but the proportion was slightly lower in the 30-44 age group and higher than the sample average in the age group over sixty. Respondents of the two extreme income quintiles and residents of the county towns were the most likely to opt for this aim-category.

Data revealed that every category would be appealing for more than one third of the respondents–under appropriate circumstances. The results verify our hypothesis, since a significantly higher proportion of people would participate in community life, if their possibilities were not limited by their social conditions. It has to be noted that the social-political change was the category that would mobilize the less respondents out of the six options, though our survey was carried out in 2009, in the year before the parliamentary elections.

Homogeneity of Social Status in Organised Civil Communities

As it has been described earlier, the personal communities were characterised by a high level of status homogeneity (75%). The development of informal groups from members of corresponding social standing was regarded as a natural phenomenon, since it is a well-known fact that the building of relationships normally follows social stratification (Weber 1987, Bukodi 2002).

Our data showed that the proportion of members of similar social status is also high in the organised communities (52%) and combined with the groups of mixed social standing (40, 2%), which include naturally people of similar and different status simultaneously, the level of homogeneity is almost as significant as it is in the personal communities. From the age group communities the groups of the younger respondents (at the age of 18-29) were the most homogeneous, while the groups of the respondents of the age 45-59 the most heterogeneous. The strict social separation was more characteristic for the youngest than for the older age groups according to the data; and the reason for this difference is probably the high level of inequality in the socialization process and in the quality of living conditions of the members of the younger generations which is less significant in case of the older age groups. The organised communities were the most homogeneous in the small towns from the settlement types, and in the segment of vocational high school diploma.

The interaction between the members of the organised communities is regular. Two thirds (62, 7%) of the sample segment of the respondents involved in civic participation (27, 3%) reported that they meet their communities, or at least some

of the members several times monthly. If we add the respondents who meet their communities at least monthly to the previous two thirds, the results show that four fifths of the civically engaged sample segment (82%) socialize on a regular basis. Although only one fourth of the entire sample is involved in civic participation, this small part participates very actively.

As a consequence of the status homogeneity in organised communities, people with similar interests and values interact who possibly knew each other from earlier, therefore the development of trust is presumable. The formalized cooperation and regular meetings might become the starting point for future friendships. It is also common that friendship circles establish organisations, or members of communities invite their friends to participate. These theories are confirmed by the fact that four fifths (82%) of the civically engaged sample segment had or had had friends from their civil communities.

The status homogeneity of civil communities and the social composition of the personal communities verify that community life is selective in the present-day society, because different classes live socially segregated from each other and status groups with their own separate identities set definite boundaries. The survey proved that the social separation is maintained and possibly intensified both by the personal, and the formalized communities. Social boundaries presumably inhibit the engagement of wider public in civic participation, and the democratisation of society.

Solidarity in Civil Communities

Besides common identity, solidarity is a crucial criterion of community life. Solidarity is often the cohesive common aim in the civil communities, if the groups are organised to offer some kind of support; in this case we rarely consider the mutual help of the community members between each other (Utasi 2002, Janky 2005).

The cohesion of the formalized communities usually strengthens, if the members help each other to solve everyday problems, if they show solidarity towards each other. The majority of the civil community members believe that their communities or at least some of the fellow members would support them in trouble. 70% reported that a fellow member would do the shopping for them in case of illness, and 61% thought that they could entrust the house keys to someone from their communities, if they had to leave home urgently. 57% reported that they would receive a small loan, 77% could ask advice and 67% would be emotionally supported.

Although every second respondent in the civically engaged sample segment trusted their fellow members, one fifth (21%) did not expect help in any of the five options. If the money lending situation is excluded, as it is often not the question of will in the period of economic crisis, the data show that two thirds of the civically engaged sample segment feel secure in their communities, and they believe that they can rely on the mechanical solidarity provided by the fellow members.

The general and mutual trust within the organised communities affirms that these organisations are not only the networks of cooperation and pursuit of common values and interests, but they are sources of informal relationships, friendships. In addition, solidarity generated by the mutual trust also results in the improvement of social capital. This process

is facilitated by the homogeneous composition of organised communities, as the majority of civil groups consist of members of similar social status who cooperate more easily.

People without the Need for Formal Community Life

The questions which were intended to study the need for formal community life also revealed that more than one fourth of the sample (29, 8%) would not be motivated by any of the listed aims to cooperate with others and to get involved in civic life, the improvement of their life conditions would not change their attitudes either. The majority of this segment do not possess the need for wider community participation, or their possibilities are limited due to their age or lack of education. More than the half of this sample segment is low-qualified, with unfinished primary school (56%), more than two thirds (40, 5%) were over the age of sixty, 43% came from large villages and 41% of these respondents belonged to the lowest quintile of income stratification.

In other words, the respondents who refused or did not need civic participation were disadvantaged in several dimensions of life. Due to their deficient living conditions, the need for organised community life does not develop as a part of the hierarchy of needs, or even if it does, people in this segment consider their situation such a hindrance that precludes their useful and joyful community participation. In sum, they either do not want to participate at all, or suppress the inclination, since they regard themselves as peripheral members of the society, or outsiders.

Determinant Living Conditions of the Integration in Different Communities

The patterns of childhood socialization set the ground for personal and formal relationships, and also for the need and inclination for community participation. The changing of the living conditions in adulthood has a further influence on the need for community life which normally extends with age. The three most significant determinants of community relations are childhood community practice, educational attainment and age.[22]

Different forms of community ties (membership in organisations, inclination for the same membership, personal relationships) were regarded as dependent variables and we tried to specify (with linear regression) how these three determinant living conditions affected the development of different types of communities. The statistics of linear regression models in which the dichotomous formats of the indexes of different community relationships were used as dependent variables revealed that every community practice type was determined by different living conditional factors. Although the majority of the respondents belonged to wider communities beyond the family, the variation in the significance order of the living conditions indicates that the respondents' attachment to certain communities vary because of the different living conditional factors that dominate their community integration.

[22] The indexes of all living condition variables were dichotomized. The correlation of the living condition variables with the indexes of different forms of community relations was examined: childhood community practice (chilcommdicho 1= 0=) formalized community membership (formcommdicho 1= member, 0=not), personal communities ()

According to the statistics of linear regression, formalized community membership is determined firstly by (1) educational attainment and secondly by (2) childhood community practice. The effects of other variables are insufficient on their own.

To reveal the inclination for organised community participation, we used the answer to the question "Would you join any civil communities?" as a dependent variable. It could be concluded that this need is predominantly influenced by (1) childhood community practice, and secondly by (2) age, or to be more specific, by youth. The inclination for attachment to organised communities which is prompted by childhood community practice is maintained to varying extent throughout a lifetime.

The primary determinant of personal, friendly relationships is (1) age which proves the common assumption that intensive friendship practice is basically related to young age. On the second place was the (2) financial security shaped by the educational attainment. The role of other living condition variables (according to the data of the regression model) is much less significant.

Communities	**Order of dominant living conditional factors**
Inclination/need for formalized community	= (1) childhood community practice + (2) age
Membership in formalized communities	= (1) educational attainment + (2) childhood community practice
Personal community practice	= (1) age + (2) educational attainment

VI. ONLINE AND OFFLINE COMMUNITIES

Our researched was primarily focused on the real-life communities. We assumed that active and well-functioning communities can revive and renew public life and civic engagement. The interaction between communities and public life would later lead to the renewal of democratic participation. We did not intend to study virtual communities in details, since we believe that online groups do not possess all the most significant criteria of real communities (Vályi 2004). However, we did study the proportion of online communities in the sample, their connections to real-life communities and we aimed to identify the differences and similarities between the two community forms.

Common objective, common interests are typical motivational factors for the organisations of both online and offline communities, but the previous has no past, therefore tradition cannot be a motivation in this case. Former relationships (relatives, fellow students, neighbour, fellow villager) are frequent starting points for real-life groups. Traditional motivation and the long time span of the connection provide the strongest trust which stabilizes the cooperation the most effectively.

Borders of Online and Offline Communities: Difference between Anonymous and Personal

The online or virtual community consists of individuals who met through communication in virtual space and maintain the relationship via the Internet. The most popular social networks (e. g. iwiw, Facebook, netlog, etc.) are available after registration without any further difficulties, since they are not closed communities. In this way, the real identities of the users remain hidden; they interact anonymously. In contrast, the majority of real communities have fixed boundaries; the admittance has preconditions, such as acquaintance with the members, oral or written reference, there are usually membership fees and fixed rules. As a consequence, the members of real organisations are available in person, identifiable, refractory persons can be expelled, so they cannot do harm for the community.

The members of real communities meet and communicate directly, they see the signs of meta-communication, so they get to know and understand each other, whereas the members of online communities communicate virtually and they show as much from their real self to the community as they want. In this way, it is impossible to obtain complete knowledge of fellow members and the people whose activity is harmful for the community remain hidden (Suler 2004).

In the offline communities that rest on direct relationships the members engage their entire personality, since they have to reveal different sides of their real selves sooner or later during the face-to-face interactions, but the members of the online communities show that part and as much of their personality as they consider beneficial. If the role they play and the reality do not correspond, the divergence is not as easily discovered as in offline communities.

Partial and Complete Identity

Common identity is an essential criterion of real communities. In real-life communities the members, or at least some of them, know each other directly. The members undertake the continuous membership voluntarily, they identify themselves with the community; the complete collective identity is a precondition of the functioning of real communities. If the collective identity vanishes, the community ceases to function. As far as the online communities are concerned, the collective identity can be only partial identity, since the members do not display their real selves entirely.

As the members enter virtual communities anonymously, they might pose as people of different status or age than the real, even in more communities simultaneously. In this case, the repeated virtual 'role change' is inevitable which might confuse the self-image of the active participants of online communities, and this can even cause personality disorder. It is nevertheless not the fault of Internet technology; it is rather the consequence of deficiency in ethical norms, or of grotesque adaptation to social expectations. Despite these facts, the online communities function with partial or virtually multiplied identities, and the members with shifted identities might play for a long time, as the chance of exposure is slight (Újhelyi 2011).

If the members of the online communities are not identifiable, the rules of the community are not fixed precisely and anyone can join with a simple registration, homogeneity cannot be achieved and trust cannot evolve into solidarity, thus complete common identity of the members cannot develop. In this case, the common objectives do not provide cohesion and mutual trust does not work effectively between the members (Power and Kirwan 2012).

Partial and Complete Solidarity

Another important criterion of communities is solidarity. The availability and contact details of the members of real communities are known, the support is supplemented with reciprocity; the altruistic solidarity is though less frequent. The solidarity-response is to be expected, and if someone fails to repay, the community excludes the careless member.

Solidarity sometimes develops within the relationship network of cyberspace communities as well, but regular support, reciprocity and especially long-term reciprocity are impeded by the distance and the lack of the members' real personal details.

Offline communities can provide the members with solidarity in more dimensions than online communities. The transactions of solidarity with material and immaterial sources are expected in the offline communities. Everyday mechanical solidarity gives a strong cohesion to real communities where solidarity is usually practised by people of identical social status on a long-term basis. In contrast, the chance of the utilization of material and work factors in the solidarity process is extremely low in online communities, instead, intangibles, such as emotional support and information exchange are used. One of the most significant advantages of online communities is this particular kind of solidarity; the altruistic information exchange which does not depend on reciprocity. In real communities the information circulates in time and space more difficultly, and sometimes exclusivity prevents the free flow of information, as details are reserved for the 'inner circle'.

Internet Usage in the Research Sample

Undoubtedly, there are communities in the virtual space that function similarly to real communities, because they possess almost all the criteria. Our research focused on the empirical facts that indicate transferability between real and online relationships, when the virtual relationship is transformed into a real-life connection, or the reverse, when real communities utilize the virtual space to sustain and strengthen their connections. The latter possibility is strongly associated with the part of our research which studies the role of virtual space in the revival of public life.

Almost half of the respondents (47, 3%) used the Internet. The proportion of Internet users grew dynamically in the younger age groups. Approximately one tenth of the eldest age group (13, 5% of the respondents over sixty) were Internet users, while the same proportion increased to four fifths in the youngest age group (83% of the 18-29 age group). From the eldest to the youngest the increase was 20% per age group, and this means that the generational difference is a dominant distributing factor in case of the online communities. Consequently, the majority of the eldest abstain from virtual communities (Dombi and Faragó 2006).

The educational attainment correlates with the Internet usage similarly: four fifths of the graduates do, but merely one third of the respondents without high school diploma do not use the Internet.

Four fifths of the Internet users, irrespective of their age or educational attainment, communicate virtually. The data revealed that primarily the respondents with high school diploma and under the age of 40 used the worldwide web, so they become members of the online communities the most easily. It has been pointed out that the proportion of offline relationships of younger age groups was also higher than that

of elder age groups. We have described earlier as well that the medium of ritual greetings through the Internet is the highest in case of the younger generation; postcards are used by the elderly and in a decreasing number. More than half of the youngest (58% of the 18-29 age group) had received greetings via the Internet, whereas the proportion is only 6% in the eldest age group (respondents over 61). In relation to educational attainment, respondents with high school diploma had the highest numbers of virtual greetings.

Public Life on the Internet

The activity of online public life is still limited. The data showed that only a quarter of the Internet users (26%) had ever expressed their opinions about a public life-related question in blogs or forums, and only 8% did it frequently. The proportion of the respondents who participated in demonstrations or events that were organised through the Internet or the information spread online was very low indeed (3, 8%). It seems that the manifestations that mobilize masses, especially in the capital, affect only a low proportion of the population and a low proportion of the Internet users as well. Respondents with high school diploma were the most, and the graduates the least likely to join these events.

Although the role of the Internet is insignificant nowadays, later it can become a very important medium for opinion exchange in connection with public issues (Szabó and Mihályffy 2009). For referendums on local and national questions it will be surely applied in the near future. One sixth of the Internet users (17, 1%) had already voted through the Internet about a social or public question (Papp 2011). Particularly the youth had used this possibility, as one fifth of

this segment had utilized the Internet to express their opinions on public topics. Surprisingly, the Internet users of the eldest age group had the second highest proportion after the youngest in this case, this means that the eldest are more willing to treat the Internet as a public forum, and probably they have more time to do so, than the professionally most active middle-aged. The data also confirmed that the lowest level of opinion expression on public issues was secondary education. At least one fifth of the Internet users with high school diploma had voted or filled in a questionnaire online, while the proportion was only one tenth in the case of the respondents without secondary diploma.

Online Communities

Two thirds of the Internet users are members of some kind of social network (such as iwiw, Facebook, etc.). This high proportion affirms that the restrictions are quite loose; anyone can be accepted in the preferred online community. At the same time, members of online communities are open-minded, not too cautious, since two thirds of the Internet users had already acquired a relationship that had been transformed from virtual into personal through the Internet. The most adaptable were the respondents with high school diploma in this case as well. The Internet users who had already transformed a relationship from virtual into personal believed that the connection had become ‘strong’ or ‘rather strong’.

Furthermore, the responses confirmed that one third (36%) of the Internet users had already joined a real-life community through online relationships. Educational attainment had a significant influence: only one fifth of the segment with unfinished primary education, but more than the

half of the graduates had found real communities through the Internet.

One third of the Internet community members (35, 9%) were members of a civil community as well. The overwhelming majority (96%) of them used to be members of children's communities earlier, and most of them (93%) had friendship circles at the time of the survey. Moreover, two thirds of the Internet community members belonged to the two upper quintiles of income stratification, the same proportion had at least high school diploma and more than four fifths (82%) were considerably young, maximum in their forties. The distribution of online community members was surprisingly equal in relation to settlement type, since 45% of them lived in the capital and county towns. This indicates that the level of urbanization does not cause significant discrepancies in the geographical dispersion of cyberspace-users.

The survey proved that the members of online communities are simultaneously members of personal and/or formal communities, so the Internet is for them a medium to multiply, sustain or intensify real-life community networks. This means that the members of online communities are included in our research as sociable individuals, and if the positive attitude towards public life and civic participation is characteristic for them, they would be active both in real life and cyberspace.

VII. COMMUNITY LIFE AND PUBLIC LIFE

Community Life

Research Definition of Community Life and its Living Conditional Determinants

Community life comprises all community ties beyond the family, and the need or inclination for belonging to communities other than the family. The definition of community life is interpreted as a form of communal existence (Lukács 1985). According to our hypothesis, community life is more than the fact whether the individual is involved in a community or not; it signifies the need and inclination for integration into communities. Thus, the communal existence incorporates community participation, community practice and community ties, and the need and wish for spending time with others.

The index of community life is a synthesised, numerical measure of different community connections and the need for formalized community life[23] in which organised community

[23] In order to get more information about the living conditional determinants, we created a synthesised linear index of community life that encompassed the different types (formal, informal) of community relationships and the need for community (both the need for formal and

membership, the index of personal ties, and the informational content of common amusement, meetings, and need for organised community participation were included.

In this way, the measure of community life showed the numerical value of the need and inclination for community participation besides all community relations. It is especially important for our research, since our hypothesis presumed that not only the existing community ties, but also the need for community life increases the chance of public participation and of the development of positive attitude towards public life. Thus, the inclination for community life and the community practice are preconditions of communal existence, and might contribute to the renewal of everyday democratic life.

However, earlier research conclusions have indicated that different social classes have divergent prospects for community participation. Our intention was to determine what living conditions intensify community life and which cause isolation or exclusion, or depress sociability and social activity.[24]

The connection between the indexes of community life and relevant living conditions were examined by using simple linear correlation, and the income scale presented the highest correlation (corr. 263**), the second was the childhood community practice (corr. 247**) and the third was the educational attainment of the father (corr. 240**). In other words, the cultural patterns of origin and the actual well-being of the respondents had a decisive effect on their community life. Own educational attainment (corr. 196**) and age (corr.

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informal communities). Its components were: membership in organised communities + inclination/need for joining a community + personal communities + the intensity or frequency of socialization, entertainment. Scale values: 0-52.

[24] The synthesised index of community life (scale values = 0-25) was dichotomized (0= 17%; 1= 83%), and the effects of different living conditional factors were examined by using binary logistic regression.

185**) also had a significant influence on community life. Presumably, the effect of own educational attainment is predictable by studying the educational attainment of the mother/father and the childhood community practice as well. Furthermore, the high values of positive correlation indicated that the community life of the better qualified and the younger (the more resourceful) respondents is more favourable in comparison with the elderly and low-qualified.

Although the simple linear correlation highlights the relationship between community life and different living conditions, it can reveal neither the difference between certain categories of the indexes of living conditions, nor the causality between community life and living conditional determinants. It shows, nevertheless, that positive primary and secondary socialization in the childhood and advantaged socioeconomic situation in adulthood ensure the highest chance of intensive community life. In this aspect the influence of age is insignificant; ergo the beneficial effects of the living conditional factors mentioned above endure over a lifetime. In fact, community life means the accumulation of lasting advantages.

If the correlation between the index of community life (of its dichotomous format) and the indexes of different living conditional factors is examined (by using binary logistic regression), the different categories of living condition variables produce significant discrepancies. From age groups, for example, the youngest had the highest chance of the most intensive community life, and this chance considerably decreased in the next age group. But the trend was not linear, the young middle-aged and not the eldest had the lowest values, as they are usually occupied with work and their small children, so their community ties loosen. However, only the youngest age group had significantly and generally intensive community life, whereas other living conditions enabled or

restricted community participation in the older age groups to a highly varying extent.

The settlement size noticeably influenced the intensity of community life. In contrast to the residents of small villages, the respondents from large villages were less likely to socialize, or they did not feel the need for community life. Residents of the capital and county towns lived the most intensive community life. In other words, the residents of settlements with considerable population were socially more active and showed the strongest need for community participation.

In relation to sex, the data showed smaller differences, but men had slightly more favourable community life than women. Neither of the variable categories was strikingly significant in this case, as other living conditional factors had more decisive influence by both genders.

In educational stratification, the community life of respondents with secondary education was less energetic than that of the graduates, and it barely exceeded the activity of the respondents with primary education. However, the inequalities within the educational groups suggested that educational attainment was not decisive alone, only combined with the additional influence of other living conditions. Still, educational attainment caused less significant discrepancies between the groups than age.

The examination of the role of childhood community practice as the foundation of community life revealed that the high number of formal and informal relationships in childhood predicts intensive community life in adulthood; moreover, active childhood community participation enhances the chance of future community life, increases individuals' inclination and their activity, and in this case we were able to determine significance in the categories.

The correlation of the 5-level income scale with the intensity of community life suggested that respondents of the middle income category had remarkably deficient, or insufficient community life, the results were barely higher than in the lowest income quintile. Supposedly, the middle income group stays out because of their temperance and the intention to find the golden mean, whereas the lowest income group is deprived of intensive community life due to their financial difficulties, since community practice is often time-consuming and/or expensive. Statistical significance between the income scale and the index of community life was discovered only in the extremes: in the highest and lowest income quintiles. Correspondingly, the community relationships of the affluent accumulate and expand which intensifies the need for community as well, but the poverty of the lowest quintile might result in the deficiency or even the lack of community life.

Public Life

Attitude towards Public Life and the Indicators of Public Life

Both sociology and politology provide various definitions of public life. The differences between the variants are not analysed in this book, our intention was to find a research definition. The term is freed from its connotations of party politics and studied as an everyday practice. In our interpretation, public life comprises all manifestations and all activities when the individual acts in the interests of an immediate or wider community, and his/her function is important for that community. People in public life are willing

to take action on behalf of others in their direct environments, of their communities. Our initial concept was that the civil society consists of citizens who are interested in public issues (Hoskins 2006, Kalocsai 2012, Széll 2012), and anyone can participate in public life (Ferguson 1996). As it has been emphasized earlier, work for fellow citizens or for the public interest is important/very important only for a small number of people. It was also concluded that the pursuit of public interest requires financial security and at least secondary education, but a significant proportion of the society do not possess these two living conditional factors.

Consequently, the interest in public issues and public action cannot be expected from the entire society. It is also assumable that only a small proportion of the people in public life undertakes this 'service' because of altruistic motivation, and favours others' interests generously. The majority of people in public life work for self-realisation; try to serve the right moral cause, or long for acknowledgement related to their status (Sennett 1998).

Our survey was primarily designed to find the respondents who were willing to cooperate for the public interest. The questions were apt for studying the attitude towards public life; our survey did not verify whether the respondents realised the actions or not. Two supposed types of attitude towards public life were differentiated with the help of the indicators: we classified the respondents' attitude altruistic, if they (1) help others, even if it means hindrance for them, or (2) usually subordinate their own interests to the interests of others.

As it has been mentioned earlier, we believe that public action is usually not motivated by altruism and self-sacrifice, but by inner ethical inclination to help others and/or by external expectations. These two can have various sources, such as the confidence in the high level of own competence, the sense of

responsibility for the members of the community, or the 'unselfishly selfish' desire for recognition and appreciation of the community. Respondents impelled by such motivation are (3) ready to speak up for the interests of others in case of problems, or (4) ready to take steps to help others. Both possible answers imply the self-presentation as mediator to gain the community's approval in an 'altruistically egocentric' way (Sennett 1998, Sellye 1988).

The four scales described above were combined in to a synthesised linear scale of individual attitude towards public life (publif4= 0-16). We intended to map the tendency for public participation in different social classes of the sample with this composite scale. In addition, we were able to answer the research question whether the intensive and regular community participation and positive attitude towards public life correlate.

The synthesised scale of attitude and the composite index of community index showed a significant and strong linear correlation. In comparison with the other living conditional factors, the degree of correlation between these two indexes (Publif4 + Community life) was higher (corr. 237**). The results proved our hypothesis, namely community relations and public life (or attitude in this case) are strongly connected, while other living conditions have a less decisive influence on the attitude towards public life. Less significant, but a positive correlation was discovered between the composite index of attitude and educational attainment (corr. 118**), and also between attitude and childhood community practice (corr. 177**). Accordingly, it is obvious that attitude towards public life is determined by community life, educational attainment and childhood community practice.

The average of the synthesised scale of attitude was higher in the female than in the male sample segment. In relation to settlement types, residents of the capital showed low

average, but residents of large villages had even lower results. From the age groups, the youngest (18-29) were on the first and older middle-aged (45-52) on the second place. The average of attitude scale grew with educational attainment.

Altruistic and Prestige-oriented Attitude towards Public Life

In order to get a more detailed picture about the social trend and distribution of the linear index of attitude towards public life, the altruistic and prestige-oriented attitude-variants were examined separately as well. In other words, the effects of different living conditions both on the altruistic and prestige-oriented approach were studied in details.

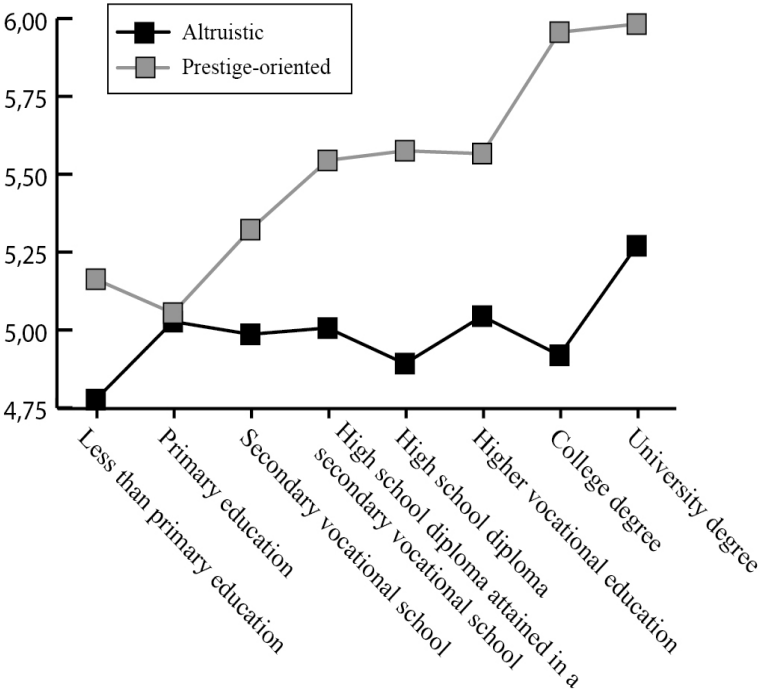
Altruistic attitude had lower averages in relation to all living conditions than prestige-oriented attitude did. This means that lower proportion of the society is willing to participate in public life for altruistic reasons, and self-realisation and self-representation are more common sources of motivation as far as the intervention in the interest of others is concerned.

The lowest levels of both attitudes were discovered in the capital and in the county towns. It is striking though that the discrepancy between the averages of prestige-oriented and altruistic attitudes was the most significant in the county towns, possibly because the number of high-status people, who are 'externally controlled' and aspire to meet the community's expectations, was the highest in the public lives of these settlements (Riesman 1983).

The averages of prestige-oriented public participation increased with educational attainment which is closely associated with social status, and the average reached a prominently high value in the group of the graduates. In the

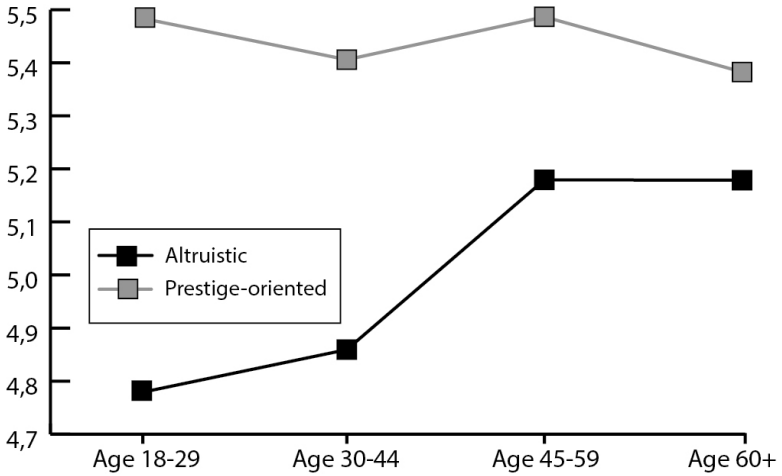
group of the respondents with primary education, the averages of the two attitude types were almost the same, but the average of the prestige-oriented attitude started to rise dramatically above the primary education level, while the value of the altruistic attitude stagnated. Thus, altruistic public participation did not show significant differences in the age groups, but its average was slightly higher by the graduates.

Figure 8:
The averages of the scales (0-8) of altruistic and prestige-oriented attitudes towards public life in relation to educational attainment (Renewing the Democracy through the Need for Community Ties/A közösségi kapcsolatok igénye a demokrácia megújításának esélye, 2009, N=1051)



The trends of altruistic and prestige-oriented attitudes diverged in case of the age groups as well. The average of the altruistic attitude was very slow in the younger age groups, but it started to rise dynamically by the age of 45 and stagnated in the elder age groups. Contradictorily, the average of the prestige-oriented attitude reached its highest level in the youngest age group (18-29) where altruistic public participation had its nadir, so the two averages showed the most prominent discrepancy by the youngest respondents. However, the composite measure of the two attitude types was the highest in the younger age groups. Above the middle-aged stratum, the two averages started to gravitate towards each other, and they reached similar values in the eldest group.

Figure 9:
The averages of the scales (0-8) of altruistic and prestige-oriented attitudes towards public life in relation to age
(Renewing the Democracy through the Need for Community Ties/A közösségi kapcsolatok igénye a demokrácia megújításának esélye, 2009, N=1051)



Women showed stronger tendency towards public participation, since they had higher averages of both attitude types than men. It has to be added, though, that the prestige-oriented attitude was more characteristic for the entire sample and for both sexes.

The coefficients of the two attitude types with the indexes of childhood community practice and adult community life had a strong correlation, and grew in parallel to the latter index. The correlation between the index of community life and the index of prestige-motivated attitude was significantly stronger (corr. 282**) than the correlation between the index of community life and altruistic attitude (corr. 133**). Correspondingly, the social life of the individuals and the intensity of their community relationships have less influence on the altruistic attitude than on the prestige-oriented attitude. Moreover, the prestige-oriented attitude significantly and strongly correlated with childhood community practice (corr. 239**), whereas the altruistic attitude did not depend on the childhood socialization.

In sum, the altruistic attitude towards public life was connected neither to high status nor to self-confidence, the intensity of community life outside the family and friendship circle did not influence it either; it was shaped by the ethical norms of everyday solidarity, helpfulness and sacrifice rather than by the wish for positive feedback and appreciation of the community.

Public and Political Manifestations against the Abuse of Authority

Civic-political participation comprises the activities and the actions taken in the interests of the public. The survey data enabled us to measure only the willingness of the respondents

to participate and to determine the activities that were regarded as acceptable by the sample. Thus, civic practice consisted of the actions that the respondents would accept and undertake in case of the abuse of authority.

Our questions concerning the civic practice studied the inclination of the respondents to participate in different types of public manifestations against the authority, such as (1) sign a petition, (2) join a permitted protest or (3) participate in an unannounced demonstration.[25]

All of the three indexes of civic practice correlated with the index of community life positively. The number of the respondents who would participate in an unannounced demonstration was the lowest from the three options, and this index correlated the least significantly with community life (community life by petition corr. 248**, community life by permitted protest corr. 269** and community life by unannounced demonstration corr. 127**).

It was also remarkable that the two dimensions of public life, namely the civic practice (designed to measure the willingness to take steps against the abuse of the local or national authorities) and the attitude towards public life (numerical data of activities and interceding in the interest of others, of a community in everyday life) showed insignificant correlation (civic practice by attitude corr. 026). In other words, the readiness to act against the misuse of political power and prosocial behaviour in the immediate community are rarely concomitant.

[25] All three questions collected answers concerning 'corrupt leaders of local government', 'corrupt politician in national politics', 'negative discrimination in the workplace', 'extremity of salaries', 'negative discrimination against the living place' and 'negative discrimination against the country'. 38, 2% of the respondents would not sign a petition, 75, 1% would not join a permitted protest and 93, 3% would not participate in an announced demonstration.

The data indicated that the intensive community life is not a precondition of the radicalism of remonstrating manifestations. This assumption is verified by the results of the participation in an announced demonstration which is evidently the most radical form of opposition to the authority. The willingness to join illegal demonstrations correlated predominantly with the two other options of protesting, namely with the permitted protest (corr. 450**) and with the petition-signing (corr. 202**), but it had a much less strong connection with the index of community life (corr. 127**).

The relatively weak correlation between civic practice and community life proved that the civic practice that would imply radicalism is mostly rejected by the sociable respondents with wide relationship network, but it is accepted by the politically attentive and committed individuals. Community life primarily enhances the moderate, everyday civic engagement aiming at social improvement in the existing legal framework, but it rarely encourages extremist actions which are rather the practice of individual revolutionists.

The Averages of the Attitudes towards Public Life and Civic Practice in the Hierarchy of Community Life

As it has been concluded earlier, the different communities that are comprised by community life are determined by different living conditions. We presumed that public life is influenced by living conditions on different levels of community life as well. The index of community life (calculated with cluster analysis) was divided into five categories, five levels of community life and we attempted to identify the averages and describe the trends of civic practice and attitude towards public life on each level.

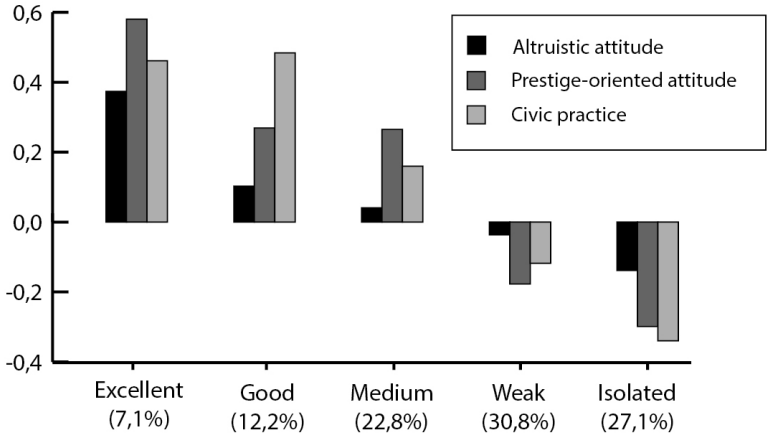
With the help of the 5-level index we were able to rank the respondents according to the quality of community relations and the degree of the need for community, from the category of isolated people with low level of need and weak community ties to that of sociable people with intensive community life. The averages of civic practice grew in parallel to the hierarchic categories of community life (excellent = 7, 1%, good = 12, 2%, medium = 22, 8%, weak = 30, 8% and isolated = 27, 1%). However, not only the average of civic practice grew with community life, but its distribution as well. Our results showed that both the average and the distribution of the index of civic practice were remarkably high in the top category of community life in which the respondents were characterised by high level of need and intensive ties. In this way, there is a huge difference between the two types of sociable respondents who would undertake remonstrative manifestations and those who would not. The respondents with wide social network who engage in civic participation do it much more frequently and intensively than the average, but the other part of highly sociable respondents do not get involved in public manifestations at all.

The averages of the index of civic practice are very high both on the 'excellent' and 'good' levels of community life, but respondents in the 'good' category were slightly more active in civic practice. The proportion of civically engaged respondents fell with the decrease of the quantity of relationships and the need for community life. At the levels below 'medium' quality of community life (weak + isolated), which comprised more than half of the sample (58%), all three indexes of civic practice dropped below the average.

The index of the attitudes towards public life increased with the quality of community life as well, but the distribution of the index was the opposite of the trend discovered in case of the scale of civic practice: the index of attitude had the lowest

value on the lowest level of community life. The possible reason for this phenomenon is the social-demographic determination of two attitude-types (altruistic and/or prestige-oriented). The socially isolated are mostly characterised by altruistic attitude, if indeed they have the energy to care about public life, whereas people with advantaged living conditions and wide community network adopt prestige-oriented attitude motivated by the desire for self-realisation. From the two attitude-scales, the scale of the altruistic attitude showed the slightest discrepancy between the highest and lowest levels of community life. This conclusion reasserts that the proportion of altruistic attitude is much less significant than the proportion of prestige-oriented attitude in the society.

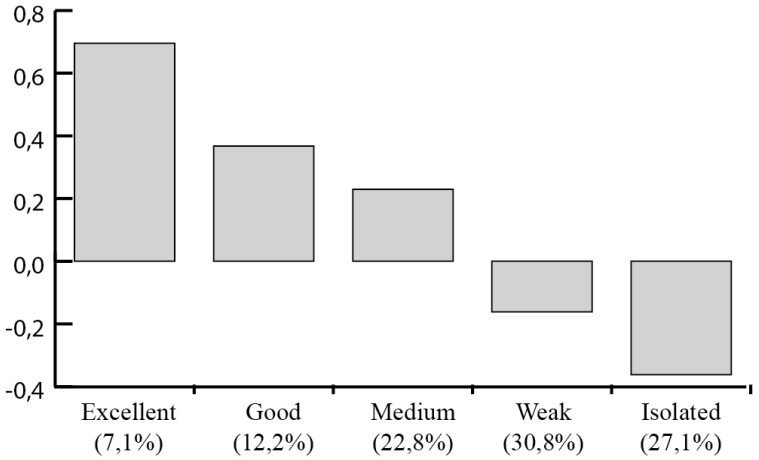
Figure 11:
The averages (Z-scores) of the indexes of the altruistic and prestige-oriented attitude and the civic practice on the 5-level scale of community life (Renewing the Democracy through the Need for Community Ties/A közösségi kapcsolatok igénye a demokrácia megújításának esélye, 2009, N=1051)



The Averages of Synthesised Index of Public Life on the Hierarchic Levels of Community Life

The projection of the community life on the linear scale of the synthesised public life (attitudes towards public life + civic practice) revealed that the linear index of public life had a higher value on the first levels of community life (excellent + good + medium= 42%) than the average of the sample, but it fell below the average on the lower levels (weak + isolated = 58%). In other words, the tendency for civic participation decreases with the decline of the quality of community life. Accordingly, civic participation is the privilege of those who have community ties, need for community life and some kind of attitude towards public life.

Figure 12:
The averages (Z-scores) of synthesised index of public life on the 5 hierarchic levels of community life (Renewing the Democracy through the Need for Community Ties/A közösségi kapcsolatok igénye a demokrácia megújításának esélye, 2009, N=1051)



According to the analysis of the relationship between the synthesised linear index of public life, community life and the living conditional determinants, the indexes of civic practice and community life correlated the most significantly (compcivpract by community life corr. 322**). The composite index of civic practice and the childhood community practice had a strong relationship as well (civic practice by childhood community practice corr. 192**). However, the educational attainment had a less significant, but still positive correlation effect (civic practice by eduatt corr. 140**). The results of the civic participation and the indexes of other living conditions were insignificant compared to the previous ones (by income corr. 094**, by age corr. -041 and by educational attainment of the father corr. 0.49). In other words, civic practice and community life depended on each other the most strongly in the model.

Although the correlation analysis verified the strong connection between civic practice and community life, the linear correlation does not specify the causality between the variables. It is obvious though that the effects of living conditions are complex. For example, the childhood community practice, which heavily influences the civic practice in adult life, is shaped by the need for community life within the family, the educational attainment of the parents, etc. Childhood socialization affects personal relationships, as well as the formalized community ties in adulthood, thus it might draw attention to public life. The process of effects and counter-effects is very complicated in this case. But the strong correlation between public life and community life was evident based on the data. It is presumable at the same time that community relationships react with and enhance everyday civic participation. In other words, community life and public life are mostly interdependent, and reciprocally intensify or abate each other.

VIII. SOCIAL PARTICIPATION

Inequalities of Social and Community Participation

In the last chapter, our hypothesis about the interdependence between community life and civic participation was described. It is assumed that this strong relationship sets the ground for the resolution of social problems which is usually achieved through social participation (Pateman 1975). Social participation is the cooperation and involvement of community members in the management of public issues, in the preparation and execution of decisions.

In the multi-party political system and indirect democracy, individual participation is realised through representatives, even on the local level. The underlying danger of the system is the fact that the majority of the people are not continuously informed about their community's problems, thus they do not feel competent to express their opinions, become ignorant with time, and apart from the elections they stay away from public life. Our research aimed to determine what proportion of the sample participated in the resolution of the problems of a closer or wider community, in everyday public life, and what proportion was able to influence the decisions concerning the entire society.

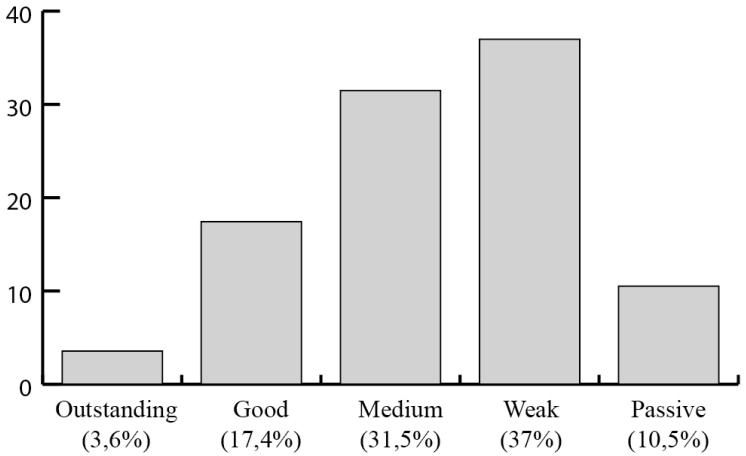
The efficiency and success of individual civic participation depends on the communities where cooperation and information exchange take place. It was assumed that the

individual social participation can be described by the scale created with the synthesis of the indexes of community life, attitude towards public life and civic practice. With the help of this scale, it would become possible to identify the proportion of the population who are prepared to renew the democracy and to understand the social-demographic features of this proportion. We would be also able to describe the living conditional factors which intensify the community and civic participation, or in other words, the democratic participation.

The factor (principal component analysis) comprising the indexes of community life and civic participation was applied as the scale of social participation.[26] The scale was divided into five levels with cluster analysis. Only 3, 6% of the sample reached the highest level (intensive and outstanding social participation), and this means that only a fragment of the respondents lived frequent and intensive community life and participated in public life actively at the same time. Contradictorily, the 'passive' category which was characterised by isolation from community and from public life comprised 10, 5% of the respondents.

[26] The principal component analysis created by the synthesis of the indexes of community life and civic practice produced a scale that encompassed the information content of the community relations, civic practice and attitude of the respondents. The single factor generated in this way (its own value = 1, 33) arranged two thirds of the sample (66, 8%) into a hierarchy. Then, the continuous factor variable was divided into five categories with cluster analysis, because it facilitated the description of the social and community life, and their correlation with the living conditional determinants.

Figure 13:
The distribution of the sample on the 5-level scale of social participation (Renewing the Democracy through the Need for Community Ties/A közösségi kapcsolatok igénye a demokrácia megújításának esélye, 2009, N=1051)



One fifth (21%) of the sample occupied the two top levels (outstanding + good) of the index of social participation. These two levels collected the respondents who participated in community and social life the most actively. According to the participation index, every fifth respondent is a socially and communally active citizen. (Earlier a similar proportion of the respondents reported that they considered public life important besides their strong community ties).

The upper fifth of the sample would be able to shape, improve and renew the democratic framework of the society with their active social participation. The two living conditional factors that determined the composition of the two top categories (according to the linear regression analysis) were the childhood community practice and the educational

attainment of the respondents.[27] Thus, adult social participation is established in childhood, and its intensity increases with educational attainment. Consequently, people, whose childhood socialization process was based on strong community ties, and later reached higher educational level than the average, have better chance to influence their social environment through their active civic practice and inclination for social participation.

One third of the sample (31, 5%) had medium level of social participation which means that these respondents were occasionally willing to take part in the public life of their communities.

Almost the half of the sample was distributed on the two lowest levels of the scale (weak + passive = 47, 5%). The members of these two groups did not benefit from the possibilities of socialization in wider communities, and the highest educational level was primary school here. From these respondents, social activity, community participation and collaboration for common aims cannot be expected, since they do not possess the necessary preconditions: community ties, financial security and the level of education which would facilitate the comprehension of information about public issues.

The data suggest that only the upper fifth of the society is capable to form the social circumstances of their community with active civic participation. One third gets involved occasionally, and every second respondent lacks the need and inclination for community life and consequently abstain from it. The latter half of the society mostly has no choice but to endure the public decisions which are decisively influenced by the civic participation of the upper fifth. Due to the deficiencies in their social network, their attitude, financial situation and

[27] Explanatory variables included in the analysis were the educational attainment, the childhood community practice, the settlement type, the age and the educational attainment of the father.

education, half of the society does not play any role in social development, and relinquishes their right to interfere.

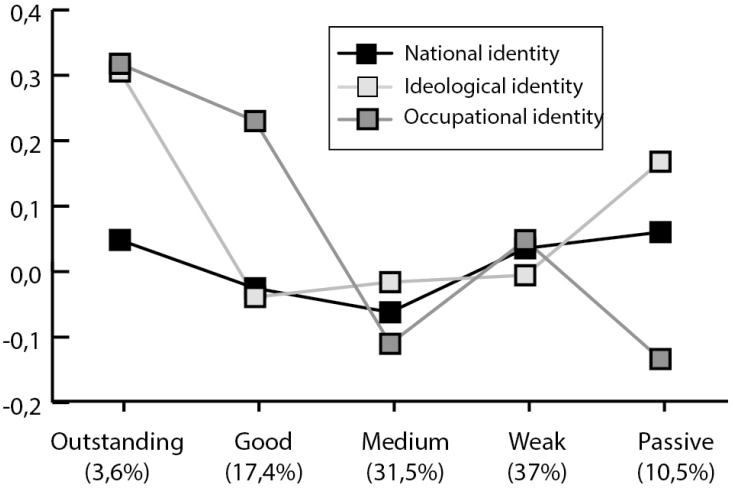
The relationship between the index of social participation and different living conditions revealed the social and demographic inequalities. Every respondent in the top category of participation index was socialized in childhood communities, without exception. In relation to the own and the father's educational attainment, it was obvious that the respondents with at least secondary level of education were more likely to participate actively. The examination of the settlement types showed that the outstanding participation category consisted mainly of residents of the county towns. Furthermore, the proportion of the affluent respondents in the most active one fifth was remarkable, and the chance of participation decreased with the level of income. The youngest respondents were characterised by the most positive civic practice and attitude, while the members of the age group over sixty barely took part in public life.

Macro-communal Identity on the Highest Levels of Social Participation

Based on the distribution of the index of social participation, it seems highly probable that the community identity of the upper fifth is crucial to the future of the society, as this fragment of the population has a strong influence on the decisions about social issues. In the third chapter, five types of macro-communal identities were differentiated (the prevalence of double identity was accepted): national, local, ideological (political-religious), occupational and international (class, ethnic, EU).

In our research, we attempted to answer the question which macro-identity was mainly adopted by the two upper categories of social participation (outstanding + good), since these people have a decisive part in the formation of local, national or European regional social circumstances.

Figure 14:
The averages of factor variables of national, ideological and occupational identity on the different levels of social participation (Renewing the Democracy through the Need for Community Ties/A közösségi kapcsolatok igénye a demokrácia megújításának esélye, 2009, N=1051)

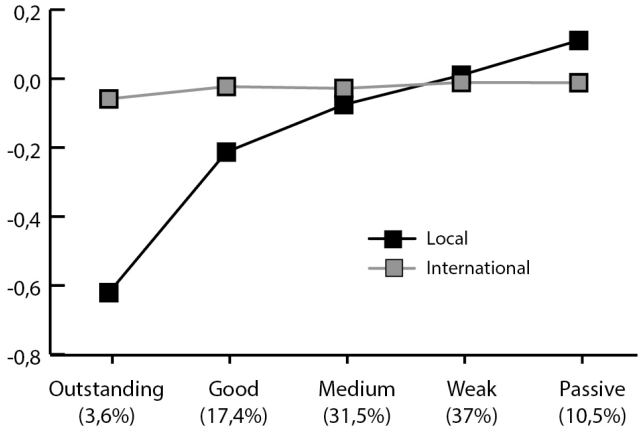


The small proportion of respondents on the outstanding level of participation (3, 6%) showed a strong preference for occupational and ideological (political-religious) identities, but the national identity was slightly stronger than the sample average in this group as well. The respondents on the second level of participation (17, 4%) predominantly opted for occupational identity.

The ideological and the national identities produced U-shaped graphs on the five levels of participation. This means that these two types had significant values of preference in the two extreme levels (outstanding and passive), whereas the values remained under the average in the other categories of participation.

Local identity had low values in the two upper levels of participation, but it was noticeably preferred by the respondents on the 'passive' level. The discrepancy in the preference for local identity in the socially most active, affluent and in the resourceless classes was striking. The low values of local identity on the upper level of social participation indicate that the citizens with the most intensive social participation 'devalue' local community relationships, they 'skip' the local level, and focus their attention on the interests of wider social groups. Additionally, their activity is motivated by their wish for prestige and status-attitude deriving from the occupational identity.

Figure 15:
The averages of the factor variables of local and international identities on the levels of social participation (Renewing the Democracy through the Need for Community Ties/A közösségi kapcsolatok igénye a demokrácia megújításának esélye, 2009, N=1051)



In sum, the attachment of the two upper categories of the participation scale, the fifth of the society which controls the community and public life, to the macro-community is predominantly determined by their occupational identities. Thus, it is probable that their actions in public life are motivated by occupational prestige and status representation. In the highest category, the ideological identity was significant as well, which points to the political ambition of this group. The self-identification of the top category with the home communities was ambivalent: although they felt devoted to their country, they did not show affection for their 'closer home', for their local communities. In contrast with the top category, the respondents on the lowest participation level had remarkably strong national and local identities simultaneously.

The preference for different identities in the participation groups reflects the discrepancies in their living conditions. This can be easily demonstrated by the example of the respondents on the passive level of participation, as their disadvantaged situation, their lack of social and geographical mobility tie them to their home, living place, country and nation, and the definite framework of their lives strengthens their local identity. The self-identification with the local community is supplemented with 'faith' in the passive category, or in other words with affiliation to transcendental and/or political-ideological groups.

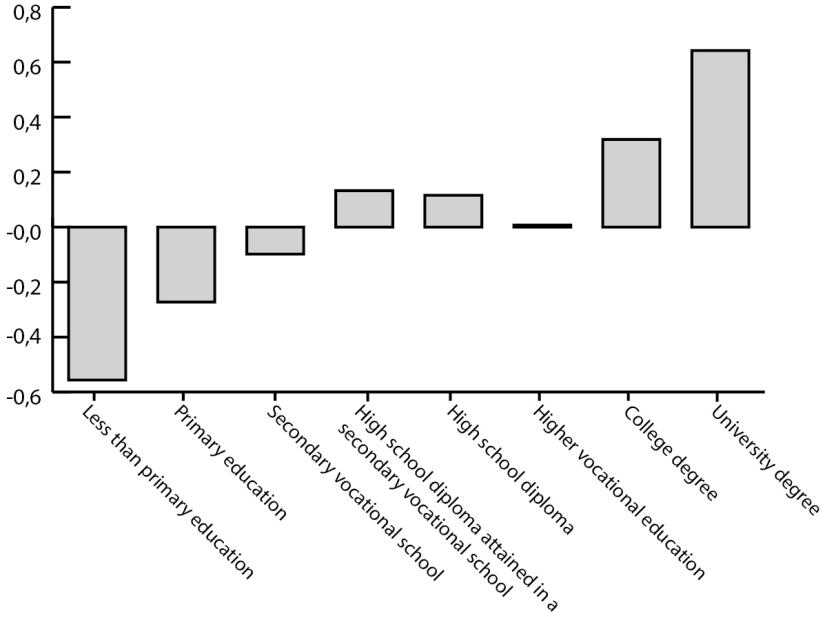
The connection of identity preference with the factor index of social participation verifies that predominantly the resourceful groups of the society possess the measures necessary to the development of need and inclination for social participation and to its practice. The renewal of democratic public life rests on the citizens who are socially advantaged, who were integrated into communities from their childhood, when they acquired positive attitude towards public life which

later increased their inclination for participation and their ambition to form the society. The more resourceless a social group is, the more exposed its members become to the political games and tactics of the affluent (Utasi 1997).

Due to their disadvantaged situation, the members of the lower social classes retreat from community life, and relinquish their possibility of social participation. There are always individual exceptions, lonely freedom fighters from different social backgrounds, but the real leaders of public life emerge from advantaged communities and social circumstance. According to our results, the influence of childhood community practice, at least secondary education and financial security are the favourable living conditions that ensure leading positions in social life.[28]

[28] The living conditional determinants of participation were analysed with linear regression. The 5-level index of civic participation was dichotomised; the respondents on the 1-3 levels were regarded as active, and the respondents on the 4-5 levels as passive in civic participation. According to the model, the primary determinant of participation was (1) childhood community practice, the second was the (2) educational attainment and the third most important the (3) income.

Figure 16:
The average of the factor index of the linear civic participation in relation to educational attainment (Renewing the Democracy through the Need for Community Ties/A közösségi kapcsolatok igénye a demokrácia megújításának esélye, 2009, N=1051)



IX. LOCAL COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL PUBLIC LIFE: SEVEN VILLAGES OF THREE COUNTRIES

Local Community Structures

The cooperation of neighbours in the village communities that were based on family economy was usual, but it has become less and less indispensable with the evolution of market economy and mass production. The socioeconomic changes resulted in the disintegration of interpersonal relationships; the previous scene of mutual help and long-term reciprocity, namely the local community lost its importance.[29] People in wide or even in the immediate neighbourhoods barely know each other, the number of strong ties decreases in the relationship networks and consequently the interpersonal trust diminishes as well (Wellman and Wortley, 1990, Utasi 2001).

[29] The cities of post-industrial societies, and the Western 'welfare' and Eastern 'Socialist' economies emerging from modernisation created the illusion that all services would be affordable and purchasable in the system of institutionalised organic solidarity, full employment and regular income, and this would release the individual from the compulsion and duty of everyday solidarity and reciprocity. But the removal of interpersonal ties resulted in the loss of supporting relationships, thus the individualisation led to atomization.

The decline of strong, primary relationships impedes the collaboration of the individual and the community.[30]

It was presumed though, that the neighbourhood relationships still have a significant role in the majority of small villages, therefore, people tend to trust each other more than the residents of larger towns and cities. The economic cooperation, however, is limited nowadays to the family and relatives.[31] In the last decades, the inequalities increased by the economic competition have aggravated the shrink age of solidarity network and trust even in the villages (Utasi 2008).

Although the cooperation of neighbours has become loose due to the structural changes of economy after the political transition, the local communities have maintained their functionality. According to our research definition, the village community comprises the identity of the residents, their mutual solidarity, the common values shaped by similar living conditions and the preservation of customs and traditions (Weber 1987, Tönnies 1983, Hankiss 2004, Utasi 2009). It was presumed that most of the listed parameters still exist in the neighbourhood communities of small villages.[32]

The relationships are evidently weaker than decades ago; still the villagers have more opportunities to build strong

[30] The competition of modernisation and the voracious lifestyle of consumer society do not leave time the people to build strong relationships and get to know each other closely. The time shortage does not favour the development of trust, so mistrust poisons the most direct circles of the individual; prejudice intensifies, partnerships, families, closer and wider communities fell apart.

[31] Manifestations of everyday solidarity and mutual help is limited to the family and relatives, because only these ties ensure long-term reciprocity over generations consequently to the loss of mutual trust in interpersonal relationships.

[32] It has to be emphasised that these relationship networks are typical only for small villages. In the large villages where the small communities and relationships disintegrated more rapidly due to the effects of modernisation, urbanisation and the lack of civil organisations.

personal ties based on tradition and trust than the residents of settlement with large population do. Consequently, villagers might have a better chance of getting involved in the local public life so as to influence the decision-making process of the local authorities. The immediate nature of relationships in the village neighbourhoods might revive the inclination for civic participation and for democratic improvement.

According to our hypothesis, village communities are constituted by various relationship circles. These are partly traditional circles formed by similar origin, goals and values, and partly formalized civil communities created in reaction to the civilization process. Our research is focused on these small groups with different functions which are encompassed by the local communities.

Two categories of small communities were differentiated. Our attempt was to determine the conditions of entering informal and/or formal small communities and their prevalence in the villages (Weber 1987).

Furthermore, we examined how the small groups with different motivations coalesce into the local community of the village, and how they influence local public life. In the era of globalisation and internationally centralised economic-political power, local communities are of primary importance, since they can become the counterpoints to the centres by articulating local interests, sustaining local value preferences, traditions and local public life as well.

Local public life is, in our understanding, the attention and activities of the population of a settlement that are aimed at common resolution of actual social, local or political problems of the living place. Dominant fields and elements of local public life or local democracy are, for example, the common work for the improvement of local circumstances, opinion exchange, and political activity. Local community and public relationships do not necessarily lead to civic participation and

activity, since these require consciousness and the ability to understand information. However, the majority of the resourceless population lack both. In the examination of the relationship network of democracy and democratic public life, our starting point was Dahl's theory who emphasized that citizens should effectively participate in collective decisions, receive adequate information, improve their knowledge and know the agenda of social issues. As we have indicated in the preface, Barber's view of the preconditions of democracy, namely civic participation, civil dialogue, civil actions and active citizens who have community ties, correspond to our research concepts (Dahl 1989, Barber 2004, Utasi 2009).

The results of a nationally representative survey, as it has been discussed earlier, revealed the living conditional determinants of civic participation and the need for it: education, financial security and socialization through childhood communities.

Accordingly, public life was expected to be intensive in the villages where the majority of the population live in advantaged social circumstances and have an average or high level of education. Indigence and the lack of education limit the needs to the acquisition of primary goods, and this impedes the flow and the comprehension of social-political information and the pursuit of interests. In addition to the adequate living conditions, emotional attachment to the village is an important factor, since people who intend to live their lives within the same community presumably want more influence on the public life.

The geographical situation and regional economic position in the country, employability and labour market affect the public and community life of the villages as well. Our sample consisted of villages that are in the vicinity of cities, with a population previously engaged in collective farming and not exceeding 2500 people. Out of the seven villages that were

studied in the survey, three were located in Hungary, and four were in two other countries, but these villages had Hungarian majority population as well. In Hungary we examined Ruzsa, near Szeged, Petőfiszállás, near Kiskunfélegyháza and Ramocsaháza, a village from the most disadvantaged region and county (Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg) of the country. The villages outside of Hungary were Hajdújárás in Vojvodina, near to Szeged and Subotica (Serbia), Bácsgyulafalva (Serbia), a remote and closed village, Agyagfalva and Bögöz in Transylvania near Odorheiu Secuiesc (Romania).

The geographical location of the villages and the fact that they belonged to three different countries enabled us to compare the public and community lives of Hungarian population within and outside of the borders, to examine the same aspects in advanced and less advanced regions and to reveal the economic strategies of different communities.[33]

Economic Strategies in the Villages

The majority population of the seven villages in the sample used to make their living from collective farming before the political transition. Even today, the families of every second respondent (58%) did supplementary farming, and many of them sold their products on the market. Agricultural activity was characteristic for three fourths of the families in the villages far from the Hungarian border. In Hajdújárás, near Szeged and Subotica, the proportion of farmers was relatively

[33] We balanced the sample with the population (N=845). The houses were selected with random sampling with the help of topographical maps received from the local authorities. In the households with more than one people we interviewed those whose birthday was the closest to the time of the survey.

low, but the number of those who sold their products on the market was the highest here and in Bácsgyulafalva (Vojvodina).

The proportion of farmers was the lowest in Ruzsa (near Szeged) which is probably the consequence of the proximity of the urban labour market, the impacts of urbanization and the low quality of the soil. However, the residents who were actually engaged in agriculture tended to sell their products which again points to the possibilities offered by the city.

The villagers in the sample were strongly attached to their living places: three fourths of the respondents had not even considered living elsewhere. Only a few percentages planned to move away, or reported the wish for leaving the village.

Although the examination of the income sources and the economic activities showed a high proportion of inactive residents (retired + unemployed = 57%), it did not mean that only the 'formally' employable people worked, as farming and in some villages tourism were of great importance. In other words, the villagers tried to exploit multiple sources of income, and the 'real unemployed' were only the people incapacitated by age or illness.

The average age of the village populations (aged 50-55 years) and the high proportion of the younger generations suggests either strong attachment and favourable circumstances, or the opposite, factors that impede change and mobility. The number of young residents was the highest in Ramocsaháza and Bögöz. Ramocsaháza, in the Nyírség region, had a peculiar social composition. There was a high proportion of young, Roma residents who barely find employment in the economically disadvantaged region, not even with commuting; therefore they are compelled to get along with the scarce possibilities locally. Employment and unemployment rates also indicated the lack of possibilities: the former was the lowest

and the latter the highest in Ramocsaháza among the studied Hungarian villages. Moreover, Bögöz and Ramocsaháza had polarized social structures, as the age distribution was the most imbalanced in these two villages: despite having the highest proportion of young respondents in the sample, the number of the retired elder was also remarkably high. The reason for this phenomenon is probably the strong preservation of the traditional forms of extended family.

Our data revealed that the villagers of the sample sustained and continuously reinforced their relationships. Besides the people in their households, the respondents communicated regularly with six relatives on average. It has to be added that approximately half of the relatives with whom the respondents interacted weekly lived in their villages, but modern-day technology enables people to overcome distance, thus the participants kept in contact with the reported number of relatives personally, and/or through telephone and e-mail. The information exchange between the respondents and their relatives about their lives, neighbourhoods, etc. is continuous, and they can help each other in case of need (Molnár 2003).

Despite the strong attachment to the villages, people who are not restricted in their mobility leave their living places permanently or temporarily impelled by socio-economic and financial difficulties, or by the effects of civilization process and consumerism. The proportion of the respondents' relatives who were living abroad in the time of the survey informed us about the extent of migration.

The four villages outside of Hungary had the highest number of migrants currently living abroad. In Bácsgyulafalva, four fifths of the respondents had relatives (at least one) abroad, in Bögöz and Hajdújárás the proportion was two thirds, and in Agyagfalva more than half of the participants reported the same. Presumably, the living conditions in these ethnic

villages led to an economic strategy which involved migration as the final solution for a great part of the population.

In the case of the three villages in Hungary, it became obvious that the proportion of migrants depended on the economic and regional situation of the village and on the quality of the living that the region can offer. In Ruzsa, for example, which is a village near to a city with considerably good employment oppotunities, only a quarter of the participants had relatives abroad, while the proportion was one third in the economically most disadvantaged village, in Ramocsaháza. The majority of the migrants had left the village (and the country) motivated by economic factors in hope for a better living temporarily or permanently.

Obviously, the more livelihood opportunities the village provides, the stronger the pull factors are. But the isolated geographical situation, in and outside of Hungary, aggravates the economic difficulties, compels people to abandon their communities and seek employment abroad. The village community strives to keep the relationship with the migrants. The cohesion and persistent power of the village communities are reflected by the frequency of interaction: one tenth of respondents who have relatives abroad communicate daily and one fourth at least weekly with the migrants. The in-depth interviews revealed that the majority of the migrants return home for village days, fairs, other events or celebrations in the village. The most preferred destination of the migration, both for study and work reasons, was Hungary. The possible explanations for the high percentages of immigration from the Hungarian majority villages outside of the border to Hungary are the strong linguistic and cultural ties, as well as the lack of knowledge of other languages. The second most likely target is Germany, with even more potentials.

The significant discrepancy in the proportions of people migrating from the Hungarian villages and the Hungarian

ethnic villages suggest that the four villages in Serbia and Romania are in a more disadvantaged economic situation than the other three settlements of the sample. The employment opportunities abroad detract the mobile workforce even from the cohesive village community. It is a well-known sociological fact, however, that predominantly the active, qualified and young people endeavour the work abroad, thus migration deprive the local communities of some of their most resourceful and valuable members.

According to our previous results, financial security is the precondition of the individuals' intensive attention to common issues and of the active participation in the community life which could later evolve into civic practice. However, deprivation confines individual activity to the acquisition of primary goods, and impedes the development of higher needs, such as the need for public participation (Maslow 1954, Allardt 1993, Utasi 1984).

The income scale was determined by the hierarchic index of assets of the families.[34] The average amount of the assets per family was the highest in Agyagfalva where the distribution of the index was relatively low, in other words, the financial inequalities were less significant here than in the other villages of the sample. Agyagfalva has a long and effective tradition of family farming involving several generations, and this practice guarantees the decent wealth of the residents. The second village on the income scale is Petőfiszállás, but the distribution is higher which indicates more significant economic inequalities. According to the income scale, the most disadvantaged village in the sample was Ramocsaháza, moreover, the index distribution

[34] The list assets included: Cable TV, colour TV, landline, mobile phone, dishwasher, automatic washing machine, home cinema system or DVD player, PC, laptop, Internet connection, digital camera, car, art object, vacation property, own house/flat, another house/flat, land/agricultural property.

here was the highest in the whole sample, ergo deprivation is combined with huge inequality.

If our hypothesis is correct, and the low level of education and the financial difficulties prevent the improvement of public participation, then Ramocsaháza has the civically most disinterested population. As far as educational attainment of the residents is concerned, Ramocsaháza has the lowest proportion of graduates (4, 4%, the sample average = 9, 6%). In other words, Ramocsaháza was the most afflicted by the two impeding factors of public life in the sample.

Village Community and Trust

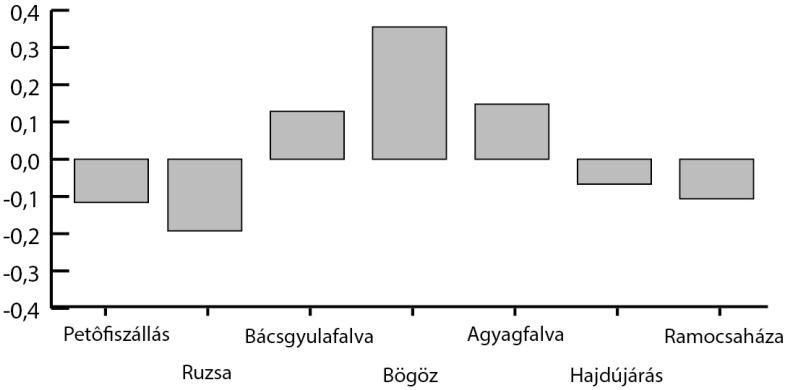
Previous examinations have proved that the interpersonal trust is diminishing in the modern consumer societies as a consequence of urbanization, industrial development and individualization; workplaces are in a constant state of flux, and the living places are repeatedly changed, people always have to adapt to new co-workers and neighbours which hinders the emergence of trust in relationships. In contrast with the dynamic population of cities who have less primary and more secondary relationships, the village communities are able to reinforce their connections with face-to-face interactions daily, and this favours the development of close and reliable ties (Fukuyama 2000, Utasi 2005).

The averages of the composite trust index that was aggregated from the four trust-related variables showed insignificant discrepancies in the sample of the village communities.[35] The averages of the trust index were the highest

[35] Indicators of trust: a) there are only a few people one can trust entirely (very true = 4, not at all true = 0). b) it usually is not necessary to doubt

in Bögöz and Agyagfalva, possibly because the tradition of cooperation between families, neighbours and communities has been strongly preserved in the interdependent Transylvanian villages; and in the isolated Bácsgyulafalva (Vojvodina) where the members of the community protect their ethnicity in this way. The outstanding averages of these three villages reflect the traditional value preferences and the stronger cohesion of the village communities as well.

Figure 21:
The averages of the trust index in the villages of the sample (Z-scores)



In contrast with the three previous examples, the averages of trust index were low in the Hungarian villages. The reasons for the results are presumably the values of civilization and market economy that play a greater role in people's lives here due to the proximity of cities. In addition, many inhabitants regard the settlement as accommodation, but not as a living place, as they find employment in the cities and do not

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other's benevolence. c) if I am not careful enough, people will take advantage of my benevolence. d) The best is if everyone relies exclusively on her/himself and not on others.

feel attached to their neighbours. The village community disintegrates more easily and its members do not trust each other. The residents of Ramocsaháza also reported low degrees of trust, but the explanation in this case is not the atomizing effect of advantaged economic situation, but the deprivation and economic inequality within the community. The residents' strong desire for leaving and their lack of identity also confirm this theory.

In sum, not only the prosperity and advanced level of urbanization reduce interpersonal trust in the modern-day consumer society, but deprivation and social inequalities as well.[36] Financial difficulties, if combined with extreme social discrepancies precipitate the loss of trust and local disintegration to a similar extent as the effects of urbanisation and consumerism do in the more advantaged settlements and regions. Advertisements and commercials induce people to long for unachievable goals, but most of the consumer goods are unaffordable in the resourceless regions, consequently the people search for a scapegoat and start to distrust the more successful members of the community first (Beck 1999, Lorenz 2002).

The trust scale revealed, nevertheless, that the degree of trust was comparable in all villages of the sample (11, 5-12, 8), but the distribution of the trust index was everywhere significant as well (2, 1-2, 9). In other words, the discrepancy in trust is more significant between the social classes of the villages than it is between the different villages. Market

[36] The rapid disintegration of traditional communities and individualization are the interests of resourceful individuals and social classes. Traditional trust-based communities are evidently afflicted by the inequalities resulting from the achievement-oriented economic competition. However, it is not only the relatively wealthy rural society that suffers from the social disparities of consumer society and the loss of trust. Consumer habits and impacts of modernisation invade even the most underdeveloped small villages through the means of modern technology, and encumber economic difficulties with distrust and intensifying social imbalance.

economy and civilization affects all villages to some extent and erodes interpersonal relationships and their trust content. As aggrandizement and acquisition of consumer goods vary individually, the loss of trust impairs every social class in the villages differently. The average of the trust index was the lowest among the respondents under the age of 35 with at least high school diploma, since they are the most resourceful members of the village communities. Because of their social advantages, they do not have to rely on others, thus community ties are mainly burden for them which intensifies their distrust.

Solidarity in the Village Community

In the definition of local community, solidarity of the members was identified as a crucial parameter. According to the data of our survey, only a negligible percentage of the respondents (3, 5%) did not benefit from the mutual support-network in the wider community (outside of the family) of the sample villages. The overwhelming majority helped someone with work, money or emotional support and/or received help with the listed options.[37] With the exception of a small number of people, the respondents were integrated into the solidarity network of the villages which reasserted our definition: village is a community where solidarity as the indicator of cohesion works functionally. However, several differences, or variants of solidarity were discovered in the villages of the sample. Solidarity functions in small circles for which village community is a framework (Fararo and Doreian 1998, Utasi 2002).

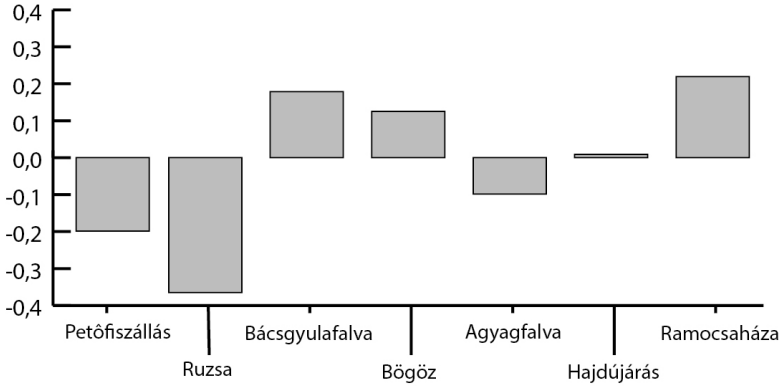
[37] (1) helped with the housework or shopping, or received help (2) lent or loaned money (3) consoled someone or gave emotional support, or was given such kind of support. We used 4-level scales (0-4), and the values of the integrated solidarity index ranged from 0 to 24.

It was also noticeable that the composite value of the given help was higher than that of the received support. The reason for the discrepancy is possibly a certain kind of cognitive bias that overestimates the offered help, and devalues the received one. The solidarity transfer was significantly intensive in Bácsgyulafalva, Bögöz and Ramocsaháza in regard to work and material support (money) as well. These villages lie either far away from the Hungarian border in Transylvania and Vojvodina, or in the disadvantaged region of Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg County. The high degree of solidarity realised with material contribution is the consequence of the recognition of interdependence and social compulsion in these three villages.

The values of emotional support were less unsteady in the sample. It was striking though, that the residents of the most urbanised Ruzsa and Petőfiszállás were the less likely to receive and/or offer this kind of solidarity. The relatively favourable living conditions, which are obtained with work usually in different settlements, alienate people from each other and gradually empty the relationships; therefore the chance and transfer of emotional support are reduced in these villages.

The standardised solidarity index synthesised from the three measured aspects of solidarity (work, money and emotional support) revealed that the degree of solidarity transfer realised outside of the family was below the average in Ruzsa, Petőfiszállás and Agyagfalva, above the average and the highest in Ramocsaháza, Bácsgyulafalva and in Bögöz, and the value corresponded to the average in Hajdújárás.

Figure 22:
The averages of composite solidarity index in the sample villages



The trend of the composite index of solidarity indicates that the simultaneous prevalence of strong interdependence and traditional values intensify mechanical solidarity, particularly the exchange of both work and material values. In contrast, prosperity and the relative wealth of residents, which makes consumer goods and services affordable, reduce solidarity. This alone would not disintegrate the community, as the community cohesion could function in other dimensions, even if the workforce and material goods are available through commercial transactions. The negative effects of the advancing civilization on the community are verified by the fact that both material and emotional manifestations of solidarity fade with the increase of personal affluence, as it is clearly illustrated by the examples of Ruzsa and Petőfiszállás. The proximity to the city precipitates individualization, loosens the reliable relationships between neighbours and reduces the probability of emotional support.

Evidently, the resourceful and employable young respondents were the most capable of material reciprocity within the solidarity network. The 26-35 age group showed

outstanding results, and there were no striking differences under the age of fifty, but over fifty the material potential and vitality decreases with age, and so does the quantity of goods and intangibles that would be exchangeable in the system of mechanical solidarity (Durkheim 1986, Utasi 2002).

In the sample villages, the young were engaged in mechanical solidarity to a varying extent.[38] It is usually an excuse, if the major part of the young generation commutes to work; in this case the expectations of the community are lowered. If the members of the young generations do not find employment, not even in the nearby settlements, and they are compelled to stay at home, they become the most active contributors to the mechanical solidarity network. The young inhabitants of Ruzsa, near Szeged, between the age of 18 and 25 were the less likely to participate in social transactions, either because they study, or because they commute to work, so their time expenditure on local community ties and work exchange is heavily limited. The youngest age group of Ramocsaháza, which was the most disadvantaged village of the sample in regard to employment and economic situation, showed the highest level of willingness to perform activities of mechanical solidarity. The residents of Ramocsaháza under the age of 25 were twice as likely to help with work and/or money as the respondents of Ruzsa of the same age. In this small village of the Nyírség, the proportion of the Roma ethnicity is relatively high, and the median age was quite low. Despite the high number of young active inhabitants, the chances of finding an employment are unfavourable in the region, thus the youngest intensively engage in the solidarity network in order to improve their personal circumstances.

[38] Following Durkheim's notions, we differentiated between the mechanical solidarity of the communities and the institutionally organised organic solidarity of the modern societies (Durkheim 1986, Utasi 2002).

Material Transactions and the Cohesion of the Village Community

By limiting the examination to the material transactions within the solidarity network, the villages could be classified into three categories in relation to the material help index (work + financial). Material transactions were the most frequent in Bácsgyulafalva, Bögöz and Ramocsaháza; moderately frequent in Agyagfalva and Hajdújárás; rare in Petőfiszállás, and barely occurred in Ruzsa.

We presumed that the high levels of income, the beneficial effect of the nearby city, such as higher chances of employment and better salaries, reduce the necessity for the material help of neighbours, but the population of the disadvantaged villages have to cooperate so as to create better living conditions.

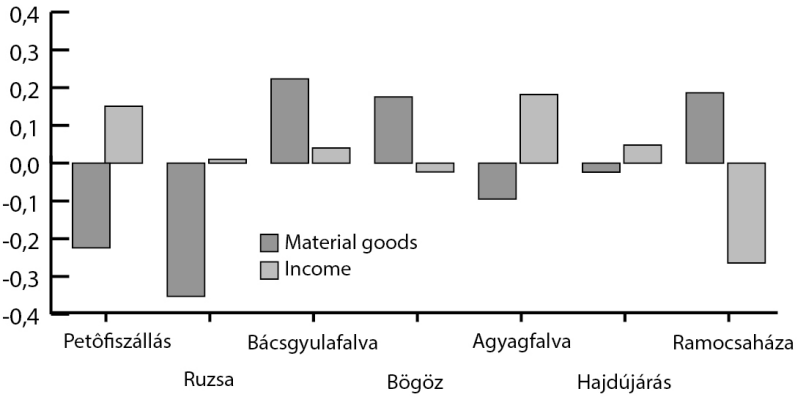
However, the relationship between the income scale and the material transactions did not confirm our hypothesis completely. In the villages with economic situation above the average, more precisely in Petőfiszállás, Ruzsa, Agyagfalva and Hajdújárás, the degree of material solidarity was indeed below the average. In these four villages, the relative wealth of the community reduces the frequency of material transactions outside the family, as the residents do not need to rely on others. The reasons for the lower degree of mechanical solidarity were presumably the proximity of cities, wider labour market and intensive farming based on family cooperation.

The data of the respondents from Ramocsaháza corresponded to our hypothesis, since the disadvantaged financial situation and the low chances of employment were

offset by the intensive practice of solidarity, by traditional material help. Members of the village community alleviate the economic deprivation with local cooperation, social transactions and long-term reciprocity.

The data of Bácsgyulafalva contradicted to our presumption, as the intensive practice of mechanical solidarity co-occurred with advantaged economic conditions. The ethnically isolated situation of the village and the recognition of interdependence presumably enhance the cooperation between households and sparks transactions in the solidarity network. In this village, mutual support is not the result of economic compulsion, but cultural tradition of community life and self-defence deriving from the minority group status.

Figure 23:
The averages of the indexes of income and material solidarity (work + financial) in the different sample villages (Z-scores)



The data indicated that material solidarity is motivated by varying factors in different villages. It was either the economic interdependence of the residents, or the collective traditional value system, or the isolated ethnic-cultural

existence that intensified solidarity. The discrepancy in the motivations of solidarity is clearly illustrated by the two Transylvanian villages, Agyagfalva and Bögöz, since they are only a few kilometres far away from each other, yet the former had considerably low, while the latter considerably high averages in material solidarity practised outside of the family circle. In Agyagfalva, a great number of the inhabitants were engaged in rural tourism as a profitable form of family business, thus the help of others and the long-term reciprocity within the community were not vital to them. The village community is conventionally exclusive and secluded; people normally refuse the idea of asking favours and incurring 'debts', so they try to find solutions with the help of the immediate family. Similarly to Agyagfalva, Bögöz is a Hungarian ethnic village, but it has a strong middle class, and the traditional family collaboration is less significant, thus the inhabitants have to rely on the support of the community, of their neighbours in order to preserve their well-being.

In other words, the research revealed varying degrees and motivations of solidarity in the different villages. In some places, economic pressure is strong, while in others, closed family circles are able to replace solidarity with the purchase of services as a result of their wealth. Lastly, we found villages where the younger generation is absent from the community in daytime due to their commuting lifestyle, which escalates individualization and consequently people opt for the institutionalised organic solidarity instead of traditional forms of cooperation.

The opinion of the respondents on the cohesion of their village communities was not consistent with the data of solidarity. Because of the discrepancies in individual and class conditions, people perceive community cohesion differently. Although material and emotional support were not characteristic for their living place, the residents of Ruzsa and

Petőfiszállás reported the strongest community cohesion and collective identity. As it has been mentioned, both villages showed low degree of solidarity and high proportions of commuters. In Bácsgyulafalva, Bögöz and Ramocsaháza community cohesion was devalued by the respondents, despite the fact that the everyday cooperation and solidarity transactions were the most regular in these three villages. Presumably, if solidarity is designed to offset drawbacks and supplement properties, and it is a compulsion, rather than a choice, the collaboration generates numerous conflicts. In addition, predominantly people of similar social situation support each other mutually, and this breaks the unity of the village community and weakens collective identity. It is a well-known fact that everyday solidarity functions with long-term reciprocity which requires strong trust. But trust emerges in homogeneous groups the most easily; this is why social homogeneity facilitates the practice of solidarity. As a consequence, many inhabitants are excluded from the solidarity practice in the villages where socioeconomic inequality is severe; either because they are not able to contribute to the trust network with their resources, or because they are resourceful enough to succeed without the help of others. The respondents who were unsatisfied with the cohesion of the villages are possibly the 'omitted', those members of the community who are less successful socially, therefore they find the degree and the frequency of community cooperation inadequate.

In the two most urbanised villages, in the proximity of cities (Ruzsa and Petőfiszállás), local cooperation mostly signifies common decoration and improvement of the settlement, like flower planting, and not the solidarity between individuals or households. The interdependence is less significant, since the residents do not need others' help; consequently they do not get to know each other, but avoid

conflicts. Thus, residents of these villages perceive a positive image of the community cohesion.

Small Communities in the Village

As it has been emphasized previously, the village community comprises numerous groups, small communities. In our research on the function of these small local groups, two types were distinguished: firstly the informal or personal circles formed individually; and secondly the organised civil groups, established formally, with a leader and regulations. The informal groups most possibly exist inside the traditional communities as well, while the formalized civil groups occur only in the more modernised villages (Weber 1987).

Informal Communities

Meeting Places

The villagers meet the members of their groups intentionally or accidentally, more or less regularly, on different 'forums'. Occasionally, greater groups of the village community find amusement in the same place (cafes, pubs, balls), enjoy artworks, sports, spiritualty (cinema, theatre, sport event, church) or shopping and fashion (market).[39] These events are opportunities to exchange information about the community issues. Obviously, people who attend these places with

[39] Occasionally goes to cafes (46%), pubs (24%), restaurants (38%), balls (37%), sport match (30%), movie (12%), theatre (32%), church (785), market (80%), shopping plaza (78%).

different goals do not constitute a community, since most of the criteria of the community definition are not fulfilled, but the simultaneous presence of many enables the villagers to build new relationships and sustain the old ones, to enhance trust and make enquiries.[40]

Visiting these meeting places requires vitality, mobility and money, thus the financial situation and the age can both increase or decrease the frequency of amusement. In our questionnaire, we listed ten types of meeting places, and then we created a scale of the amusement habits in the villages (0, 10). The average of the scale was considerably high in the sample: 5, 4 out of ten. In the villages that were situated in the proximity of a city, the inhabitants adopted the urban amusement patterns, so they were the most likely to attend the listed places (residents of Hajdújárás and Ruzsa). However, the proportion dropped with population density, the residents of Ramocsaháza and Agyagfalva were the least active in going out.

Informal Circles of Entertainment

A considerably high proportion of the respondents meet their private circles regularly and do common activities with their friends for amusement (playing cards, visiting wine cellars or a friend's house): almost three fourths more times annually, and one third weekly or fortnightly. Private circles do not presuppose intimacy: solidarity and trust are not necessarily preconditions, as the motivation is sometimes purely instrumental, namely the enjoyment of leisure activities. Nevertheless, the habit of attending these informal meetings indicates clearly that the participants do not live an isolated

[40] Pubs and sport events are traditional masculine meeting places, information exchange over a cup of coffee, a jar of beer, or during a match is typical for men, whereas they usually don not attend the programmes organised in the local community centres.

lifestyle, but they are integrated into the structure of the village community which comprises relationship circles of different aims or values. The time spent together, the common play and amusement allow the participants to discuss local 'gossip', but it also facilitates the information flow about local problems, or public issues (Simmel 1973).[41]

The data revealed significant discrepancies in the proportion of respondents who attend private gatherings or any other events of amusement. Half of the inhabitants of the relatively deprived Ramocsaháza did not participate in informal meetings at all, presumably because the socioeconomic disadvantages restrict their possibilities. The proportion was low in Petőfiszállás as well; here the commuting lifestyle exhausts many villagers. In contrast with the two previous villages, the inhabitants of Bácsgyulafalva and Hajdújárás, in Serbia, frequently took the opportunity of common leisure activities, and in our understanding, this is an attempt to continuously reinforce the sense of ethnic cohesion in these two isolated villages.

The time and money expenditure on amusement vary with age as well. The young studying or working commuters have in theory less time for leisure, but the respondents in their twenties were the most likely to go out, two thirds of them reported more occasions monthly.

The difference in the amusement habits of the villages was significant in relation to age as well. The residents of Petőfiszállás had the most divergent practice: only one tenth of the elderly participates in certain forms of amusement once or twice monthly.

[41] According to Simmel, the essence of informal groups is sociability, and association itself. Instrumental motivation is never expressed explicitly, informal groups mean pleasant diversion for socially homogeneous individuals, but the time spent together is never impractical, it serves for building relationships and collecting information.

Almost one fifth of the sample stayed away from the listed forms of entertainment, they exclude the stress-relieving, enjoyable meetings, such as friendly discussions, visiting a friend's house or a wine cellar, tippling, playing cards and common meals from their lifestyles, despite the fact that these activities promote information flow and social integration, and foster the sense of community in the village.

Friendship Circles and Personal Groups in the Village

Friendly discussions, tippling and games do not require close relationship and intimacy between the participants, thus frank or confidential conversations occur in these meeting casually. In contrast, trust, homogenous social status and prestige, similar socioeconomic situation and solidarity are essential in friendship circles (Simmel 1973, Welmann 1992, Utasi 2011). The common activities mentioned above are opportunities for socializing, but lack some of the indispensable parameters of the community, whereas friendship circles fulfil all criteria. The friendship circles might overlap the informal groups of amusement, but the two are not always identical. The friendship circles of the respondents are closer, more intimate, socially more homogeneous, equality and mutual support is expected among the members who do not necessarily live in the same village. Public transport, personal vehicles and commuting lifestyle enable people to build strong ties outside of the village. However, the data indicated that the respondents predominantly kept in regular contact with fellow villagers or with migrants from their home settlement.

Two thirds of the respondents had friendship circles with whom they met regularly to discuss important events or celebrate special occasions.[42] The proportions of the participants

[42] According to the data of the nationally representative survey of 2009, 25% of the respondents did not have any friends.

who had friends were higher in the Hungarian ethnic villages outside of Hungary (75-85%) than in the sample villages in Hungary (52-62%). The comparison of these results with the data of the nationally representative survey of 2009 reveals that the average of the respondents with friendship circles in the Hungarian sample (77, 5%) equals the average of our sample villages outside of Hungary. In other words, the friendship proportions of the Hungarian villages are exceeded both by the Hungarian national average and by the Hungarian ethnic villages (Utasi 2011).

The discrepancy in the results confirms that the traditional social bonds have disintegrated more rapidly and atomization is aggravated in the communities of Hungarian villages. The reason for this phenomenon is presumably the lack of trust that impedes the evolution of informal relationships into friendships. In contrast to the Hungarian villages, the Hungarian ethnic blocks still preserve their traditional value system and culture as a result of a protective social reflex, and close friendship circles emerge naturally. Social changes have eroded the interpersonal relationships in Hungarian villages more efficiently than in the interdependent, traditionally cohesive and persistent ethnic communities. In Hungary, traditional ties have dissolved more dynamically in every settlement type because of the relatively advantaged economy. The urban environment is nevertheless more favourable for friendship circles than villages where new forms of personal and civil communities have failed to develop due to the disadvantaged living conditions.

Consequently, the friendship practice of the young respondents who live in villages in the proximity of a city is highly deficient. In these villages, the proportion of those who do not have any friendship circles is high, even in the socially active 18-25 age group. For example, in Ruzsa and Petőfiszállás, two thirds/one fourth of the young inhabitants and half/two thirds of the elder did not belong to friendship circles. Many of

the young residents of these villages spend their weekdays in the city, at work or in school. Contradictorily, the contentment with community cooperation and cohesion was the most general in Ruzsa and Petőfiszállás. Presumably, the commuting lifestyle results in a particular and ambivalent form of attachment, since the commuters cannot identify themselves with their work community. As a consequence, they revalue their village community, but they are still unable to integrate into the local groups or organise friendship circles due to their daily routine. Despite the lack of friends, the majority of them had never considered leaving the village permanently, but it is also true that many of them would not have the necessary financial background either.

Two thirds of the sample visit informal meeting places and public places of entertainment. In the four sample villages outside of Hungary, the respondents were more likely to spend time with their informal groups than the residents of the Hungarian villages. The respondents from the most disadvantaged regions met their friendship circles the least regularly. In total, one third of the sample did not attend informal events of friendship circles, and this usually implies isolation from the village community.

Organisations, Associations and Clubs

The intensity and quality of formalized social life of villages heavily depend on ambitions, philanthropy and patriotism of local intellectuals, school or library staff and the mayor. The village community life is usually organised by high-prestige local leaders. If the prominent personalities of the village consider the improvement of the community life as their calling and undertake the management of local civic groups, the inhabitants can benefit from various possibilities of civic participation. But if the village lacks the generous organiser, intellectuals or school, the local community life is dreary. According to our data, social aspirations of the members of the local authority influence the villages' community life as well. Mayors who appreciate local cohesion encourage civil communities and assist them to fund their activities. In our questionnaire, we listed sixteen forms of civil circles, associations and organisations in order to determine the proportion of the village inhabitants who participated in organised formal communities.[43]

Religious communities attracted an outstanding number of villagers. In fact, this category does not denote civil communities, rather the individual weekly or monthly visits to traditional religious events and liturgical ceremonies. However, the respondents' subjective choices revealed that religious

[43] Local government (5, 4%), town watch (3, 1%), farmers' association (2, 8%), agricultural cooperation (3, 2%), firefighter (3, 6%), housewives' club (3, 2%), sports club (4, 2%), cultural association (6, 6%), ethnic organisation (2, 6%), tradition preservation (6, 9%), pensioners' club (7, 2%), religious organisation (45, 4%), youth organisation (1, 2%), hunting (2, 5%), local (5, 3%), other local patriotic (2, 5%).

communities had higher proportion (45%) than any other options (Putnam 1995, 2000, Csizmadia 2002).

In the two Transylvanian villages, Bögöz and Agyagfalva, almost four fifths of the population belonged to the Reformed Church, and only one fourth/one fifth of the inhabitants were Catholic. Ramocsaháza had approximately as many Catholics as Calvinists. The majority of the other villages' population were registered as Catholics. In every village, the proportion of those who did not belong to any religion was remarkably low (1, 3%), and the proportion of those who refused to report their religion was even more insignificant. If we generalized from the number of people who are converted to some kind of religion, we would conclude that secularization did not prevail in Hungarian villages. The answers reflected slight variation in the denominations, since only some inhabitants of Bögöz reported a third denomination (Baptist 3, 2%) besides the two dominant religions.

Religion in modern villages preserves traditions and provides an institutionalised framework of spiritual life, but it has also become a significant sphere of social life, as it unites the greatest part of the community.[44] The villagers, apart from one fifth of them, still attend church more or less regularly. However, only one third of the sample went frequently (at least once or twice monthly), and the proportion of those who attended church weekly corresponded to the national results (16%) (Tomka 2006).

The low degree of self-identification with the religious community was reflected in the proportion of the respondents who believed that they 'followed the teachings of the religion', as it was only one fourth of the sample average. This proportion dropped to the half of the sample average in Ruzsa

[44] According to Tomka (2006), faith joins people and creates communities. Many philosophers and researchers argue that the real importance of religion is not the faith, but its uniting, socializing and cohesive effects.

(14, 3%) possibly due to the secularizing effects of the nearby city. The overwhelming majority of the village inhabitants, similarly to the urban population, were 'religious in their own ways' (65%).

The traditional religious affiliation was the most strongly preserved in the Hungarian ethnic villages far from the border (Bögöz, Agyagfalva, and Bácsgyulafalva); but the proportion of those who followed the church teachings was just slightly higher than the sample average. In other words, religion in these villages is the reinforcement of cultural and communal cohesion, an institutionalised community.

The other forms of organised communities targeted different classes, and consequently almost one third of the sample (32, 7%) belonged to organisations or associations besides the religious affiliation. It has to be added though, that the communities separately attracted only small proportions of the respondents. By adding the proportion of the religiously affiliated respondents to the previous one third, the results revealed that more than half of the villagers (59%) were members of at least one formal community.

If the religious affiliation is included, the data indicate that the residents of the isolated Hungarian ethnic villages far from the Hungarian border (62-70% of Agyagfalva, Bögöz and Bácsgyulafalva) were the most likely to join any of the listed formal communities. The respondents of Ramocsaháza, which is situated in the disadvantaged region of Eastern Hungary, were the least likely, but even here every second villager had formal community ties.

If the religious membership is excluded, and only other civil communities are considered, the most modernised Ruzsa and Petőfiszállás show the highest proportions. These two villages are in the proximity of cities which improves the civil attitude of the residents, additionally, the local leaders ensure

various opportunities for community participation with their intensive organisational work.

Bácsgyulafalva had a similarly high proportion. In contrast to the previous two villages, the inhabitants of Bácsgyulafalva were not influenced by the urban values; it is the preservation of ethnic and cultural traditions that improves the social life, and it is also a reaction to the auto-segregation of the considerable Serb community who moved to the village after the Yugoslav Wars. This means that the organised cooperation of the community is predominantly intensified by the ethnic isolation in Bácsgyulafalva.

Ritual Events of the Village Community

The local leaders of the villages deliberately strengthen the community cohesion with events where every villagers and migrants are invited and awaited. These are mostly ritual events organised by the local government, school, and/or community centre annually. If the organisers have patriotic feelings, the event mobilizes great masses and every age group, and usually becomes successful and memorable.

The most general forms of ritual events in the sample villages are the village days that are usually frequented by migrants, descendants of earlier inhabitants and the residents of neighbouring villages as well. The parish feasts organised on the name day of the patron saint of the local church had similar function earlier. The village days were introduced in the anti-religious Communist era with the intention to replace parish feasts, but fortunately both are organised nowadays, and this increases the number of ritual cohesive events in the village communities (Boissevain 1992, Rappaport 1999).

There are annual events in the village that are associated with certain lifecycles or age groups. The organisation of school events, for example, concerns predominantly the parents, but

grandparents, other relatives, friends and neighbours also attend the programme. In order to examine the participation in ritual events, we asked the respondents whether anyone from their families had visited any of the ten listed events of the village community.[45] In the most families at least one family member had attended the village day (69, 7%) and the parish feast (55, 4%), then Christmas celebration (42, 3%) nursery school/primary school events (40, 6%) and weddings (36%) were the most popular, but members of every fifth family had visited the other events as well. The numbers of the young and the middle-aged attenders were similar on the village events and celebrations, and the proportion was just slightly lower in the eldest age group.

The highest proportion of respondents who went to village events was found in Hajdújárás (Vojvodina) and distribution was the lowest here as well, and this means that this sample segment had the slightest inequalities in attendance of the inhabitants. In this relatively wealthy ethnic village, the events that entertain all inhabitants are of primary importance, and the efficiency of the organisers is remarkable as well. The respondents of Ramocsaháza (Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg County) were the least likely to participate, as there are less opportunities to strengthen the community cohesion through ritual events in this village.

On average, the families of the respondents (at least one member) visited more than three organised events out of the ten listed options in the year preceding the survey. These occasions invigorate the collective identity, the sense of belongingness in the villages, and indeed, the majority of the respondents had been engaged. It was only one family out of ten where nobody had attended the village events. In sum, the local leaders recognize the

[45] The percentages of family participation: parish feast (54%), carnival ball (19%), May Day (19%), Christmas (42, 3%), New Year's Eve party (12, 4%), events organised for the elderly (21, 5%), village day (69, 7%), wedding (36%), nursery school/primary school event (40, 6%), any other event in the village (21%).

importance of these events, so the villages succeed to organise events that preserve or even improve community cohesion.

The Synthesised Index of Community Life

To calculate the proportion of the respondents with informal and/or formal relationships in the sample villages, we considered all the circles and meeting places where community ties develop and strengthen. All the connections to small communities and their sources were synthesised into a scale. This scale was designed to symbolize the degree of attachment to small communities. The negative values of the scale showed the proportion of the village population who lived an isolated life and who prospectively would not develop the need for social and public participation (Castel 1993, Ferge 2000).

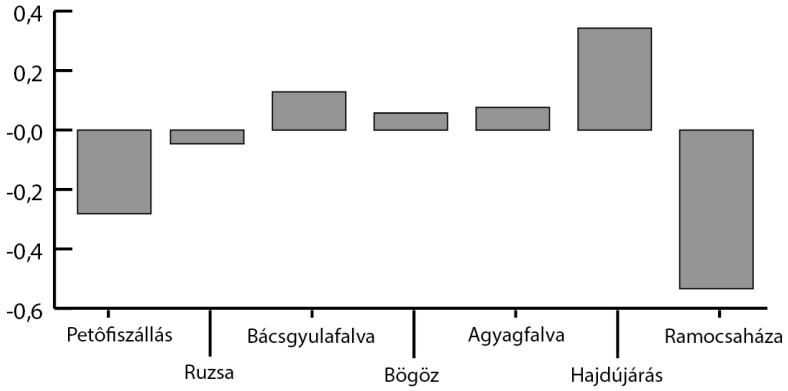
We presumed that the collection of information concerning civic attention and public engagement would enable us to prove our initial hypothesis, namely that the intensive community life, irrespective of its genesis and original purpose (informal, traditional or formalized civil community initiations), leads to the individual need for social and public participation which enhances the inhabitants' actual engagement in the democratic public life of the villages.

The information contents of all variables signifying the attachment to small communities were merged to a composite community index (informal communities + formalized communities + village rituals + private gatherings + going out).[46]

[46] The components of COMPCOM index: INFORMCOM (informal communities), FORMCOM (formalized communities), VILLRIT (ritual events that mobilize the whole population of the village), INDIVAM (individual occasions of going out, or amusement)

Ramocsaháza had the lowest value of the composite community index, whereas the inhabitants of Hajdújárás were the most strongly attached to the community. As it has been discussed earlier, both the individual living conditions and the regional economic situation were the most disadvantaged in Ramocsaháza, and this obviously disintegrates the inhabitants' community ties.

Figure 24:
The averages of synthesised community index in the sample villages (Z-scores)



The averages of the community index were definitely lower in the Hungarian villages than in the Hungarian ethnic villages in Romania or Serbia. In other words, the synthesis of everyday community relationships revealed more intensive community life in the Hungarian villages outside of Hungary. The difference confirms that the Hungarian ethnic minority in Transylvania and Vojvodina tries to preserve its cultural unity with more frequent community engagement.

The composite community index was lower than the average in all of the three Hungarian villages. In these villages, the disintegration of traditional ties is more escalated than in the villages outside of Hungary, but the civil development is

delayed and contradictory, the modernisation of these villages is asymmetric, thus new forms of civic cooperation fail to emerge. This anomalous situation undermines local community life. The lack of community cooperation is the most acute in Ramocsaháza where the number of personal communities was strikingly low, and the organisation of community meetings was hindered by the economic situation of the region.

The composite community index correlated with the income scale (corr. 360**) and the educational attainment scale (corr. 244**) positively, but moderately. This indicates that community life is less intensive in the village where the population had lower educational attainment and was in less advantaged financial situation than the average. The connection between the composite community index and the age was even stronger (corr. -414**), and its negative sign refers to the active community participation of the younger generations, in other words, the younger inhabitants were more intensively involved in community life than the elder despite the fact that many of them commute to work or school, or despite their socioeconomic disadvantages.

Public Engagement and Civic Attention

In our research, we intended to find the answer for the question whether (and how) the intensity of community relations influences local political and civic attention, public engagement and local democratic participation. It was presumed that the intensive community life and dense relationship networks increase the inhabitants' civic and political activity and the democratic involvement in the

village.[47] Social life was expected to be more vivid in the village communities than in the urban setting because of the frequency of direct interactions and the enhanced human interconnection. Additionally, trust and solidarity might be more general outside the family than in the cities where the number of secondary relationships increases to the detriment of primary relationships and atomization is aggravated.

However, the socioeconomic drawbacks of the villages, namely lower level of modernisation, lower educational attainment and deprivation, might confute the theory of public participation, as these conditions limit the social needs of the majority to the minimum, and this evidently inhibits the emergence of political and civic attention and activity.

In our view, ambitious leadership and effective local authorities might offset the negative effects of the villages' disadvantages. High-prestige local leaders and intellectuals presumably play a significant role in the improvement of community life, as their organisational work and initiatives intensify civic activity, social engagement and consequently democratic self-government.

Political Attention

One third of the sample (31%) reported that they were 'not at all interested' and/or 'not interested' in local public life and local politics. A slightly higher proportion was 'interested' and/or 'very interested' (38%). As a consequence, the scale of political and public attention was tripartite. The same scale of

[47] The density of the relationship network depends on the number of ties that connect the individual to other members of the community (Angelusz and Tardos 1998).

the national sample had a very similar structure with three approximately equal segments.

The respondents from Agyagfalva and Hajdújárás were the most attentive to local politics and public life, but the distribution was strikingly high in both villages, and this indicates a high degree of polarization within the community. However, it could be concluded that the civic and political attention in the Hungarian villages outside of Hungary is generally higher than it is in the village communities of Hungary.

The inhabitants of Hajdújárás were the most interested in national politics, but the distribution was significant again which reassured the inner polarization. The Vojvodinan village community, or at least a great part of the population paid close attention both to local and national politics. It has to be added though, that the high results might have been influenced by the preparations for the general elections that coincided with our survey. It is nevertheless remarkable that the results of the villages in and outside of Hungary were less divergent in the case of the national politics than they were in the case of the local public issues.

Public Dialogue and Activity

The degree of information exchange through face-to-face conversations about everyday local problems and issues (with the neighbours, in the shop, or on any other public place, by visiting the local authorities) was similar in every sample village. The inhabitants of the isolated Bácsgyulafalva (Vojvodina) were the most likely, and the respondents from Ruzsa were the least likely to discuss the ordinary difficulties.

The conversations about local politics and local public life were less regular everywhere. Although Ramocsaháza showed the highest results in in this case, the distribution, as the indicator of social disparities, was again significant. The discussions about local politics and public life were the least frequent, or engaged the smallest number of inhabitants in Ruzsa.

The proportions of respondents who were willing to participate in public manifestations, namely signing a petition, joining a permitted protest or an unannounced demonstration, in order to improve local circumstances were similar in all villages. It was only Ramocsaháza where a significantly lower number of people would undertake such actions. On average, the inhabitants of the disadvantaged villages were the least active, whereas the respondents from the most modernized village, from Ruzsa were the most willing to engage in public manifestations. The most mobilizing spheres of local political life are the local elections. Four fifths of the respondents had voted, but barely one fifth had attended the nomination meeting before the elections. The reason for the low attendance is partly the fact that the inhabitants of the village know the nominees personally and they can ask their questions on other occasions, and partly the low level of the need for formalized public participation. The data of the different villages diverged in this case as well. Our research did not intend to examine in details why the villagers opted against public participation, but the in-depth interviews confirmed that local politics engage only a small segment of the village population. Direct participation in local public life and civic activity would be indeed very important, since only this can protect the local community from the arbitrary and antidemocratic decisions of the local government. István Bibó, the prominent jurist and political theorist emphasized: no representative democracy could replace the universal democracy of the community or the

principal requirement of modern politics that every adult person is entitled, authorized and obliged to have and express his/her opinion on the most important issues of community life. If the appropriate forum for the dialogue was not provided, an elitist oligarchy would take over the national politics, and the masses would be considered as a politically insensible, disturbing element (Bibó 1990).

The most essential questions of local politics are the elections of the representatives, the mayor and the members of the National Assembly. On its actual level, the need for public participation in the villages is insufficient; the majority lacks the education that would ensure the self-confident expression of opinion and the practice of self-government. We accept Bibó's notion, namely that public participation is not only the right of individuals, but it would be an obligation. However, information is an indispensable precondition of public participation. As it has been demonstrated, the major part of the inhabitants had extensive community networks in the villages, so our research interest was to determine the proportion of the respondents who are able to acquire and process public information, and by this, become competent to decide on the most important issues of local and national politics.

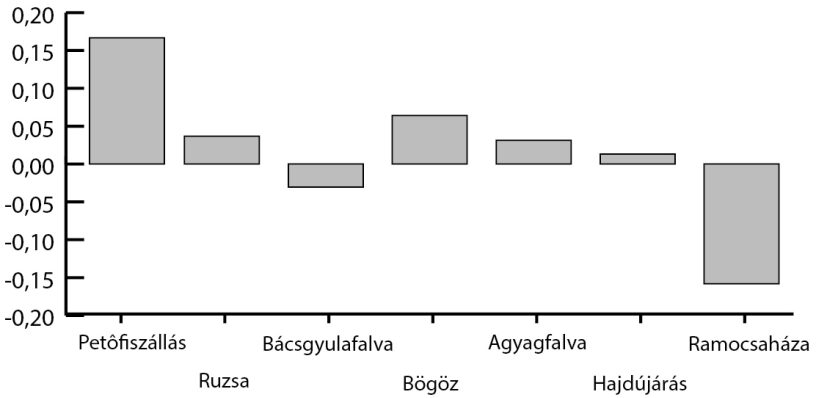
Synthesised Index of Public Life

In order to illustrate the differences between the sample villages, we synthesised the variables deriving from the questions about public participation into a linear index of public and political attention and activity. The components of the index were: (1) participation in the last nomination meeting, (2) the level of interest in local and/or national politics and social life, (3) the frequency of discussions about

local public and political issues, and (4) the proportions of respondents willing to sign a petition, or join a permitted or unannounced demonstration.

The linear scale of public life (0-33) which comprised all the different variables of civic practice and public activity indicated that the inhabitants of Petőfiszállás were the most attentive and active, and the respondents from Ramocsaháza were least interested in public and political issues.

Figure 25:
The averages of the synthesised index of public life in the sample villages (Z-scores)



The composite index of public life unites the variables, arranges a hierarchy and demonstrates the discrepancy between the averages of the villages, but it does not illustrate the differences that derive from social inequalities. In other words, the average of the linear index obscures the disparity in the civic practice of different social classes, and does not provide information about the uneven level of public participation of separate social groups. This is a crucial point of the examination, since the value distributions of the indexes indicated varying levels of inequalities in different villages, so

the intensity of involvement and the areas of participation might differ by each social group. In addition, the high averages might be the results of the dominance of a closed, highly active group of inhabitants in public life, whereas the majority are unable to utter their opinions.

The complexity of the question induced us to create an index for public life that was apt for the demonstration of the characteristics of the different social groups' public participation in the villages. All the variables of public life were included and three groups were distinguished with cluster analysis:[48]

Formalized public life (1. cluster) (27, 7%) (= individually engaged in politics)
Informal public life (2. cluster) (31%) (= engaged in politics with a group)
Isolated from public life (3. cluster) (41, 3%) (= not engaged in politics)

According to the cluster index of public life, almost half of the population in Ruzsa and Agyagfalva were isolated from public life (48, 5%-45, 8%). In Agyagfalva, the major part of the inhabitants was involved in family farming which lifestyle has a strict schedule not leaving time for public participation. In Ruzsa, many young people commute, and their daily absence prevent them from obtaining the latest information and engaging in public discourse. The proportion of inhabitants who stayed away from public life was slightly higher than the sample average in Ramocsaháza (44%). Here the residents' socioeconomic situation was more disadvantaged and their educational level was lower than in other the villages, and this clearly deprived a great part of the population of the interest in public issues.

[48] The included variables were (1) interest in local and national politics, (2) conversation about public life with fellow villagers, (3) willingness to participate in protests, petition signing, and (4) opinion exchange on the actual problems of the village.

The analysis of the effects of different living conditional factors on public participation revealed that the members of the first group (formalized public participation, individually engaged in politics) were predominantly the youngest male respondents with relative financial security and at least a high school diploma. These villagers usually seclude themselves from the rest of the community, do not participate in discussions about political issues, but they would be willing to take individual and 'official' actions (petition signing, protests). This group comprises the autonomous residents with the most advantaged living conditions whose public and political commitment reflects their individual values and interests, whereas they refuse to associate with the rest of the village community, and to share or discuss their opinions with the people in their environment. The members of this group cannot become the intellectual citizens who stimulate local democratic participation (Bibó 1990).

The respondents in the second cluster had a similar level of interest in public and political life as the members of the first group. In opposition to the individually engaged respondents, the people in the second cluster communicate their views, discuss and form their opinion through conversations with the fellow villagers, but they would barely or not participate in organised public manifestations (petition, protests). Respondents in this group were in more favourable financial situation than the sample average, and they were chiefly middle-aged or older men with esteemed professions, and with vocational qualification or university degree. These respondents are the most successful in influencing the local public life; they are the fuglemen of local politics.

The third cluster consists of the respondents isolated from public life who were financially more disadvantaged than the sample average, mainly women from the youngest or the eldest age group with primary or lower educational level. In

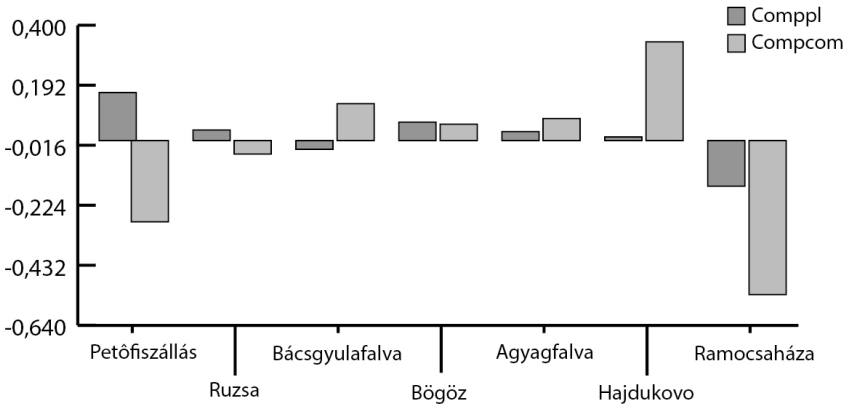
other words, the last group comprises the most deprived inhabitants of the villages who encounter livelihood issues on a daily basis, for them even the acquisition of basic necessities is difficult, therefore their need for public participation could not develop. Moreover, the examination of the cluster members in relation to educational attainment revealed not only the strikingly high proportion of villagers with primary or lower educational in the isolated group, but also the even distribution of graduates in the three clusters. This means that almost one third of the graduates were isolated from public life, one third of them 'skipped' the local level and engaged individually in formalized public life, and only one third of them joined their compatriots and participated in local democracy.

Social Participation – The Interaction between Communities and Public Life

In order to answer our research question, namely whether the level of human interconnection influenced the level of public engagement (and if yes, how decisively), we examined the relationship between the linear scale of community life and the linear scale of public life. The correlation between the standardized index of community life and the standardized index of public life (both in Z-scores) verified our hypothesis, as it was positive and considerably strong (corr. 302**). The connection between the two linear indexes confirmed the interaction of the values of public participation with the average level of human interconnection in the villages. According to the correlation, public life is more intensive in the villages where the inhabitants have stronger community

relations. We presumed that the index of community life would parallel the index of public life in every case, namely the public life would be intensive in all villages with strong community ties and vice versa.

Figure 26:
The synthesised indexes of community life and public life in the sample villages (Z-scores)



However, the trends of the two indexes were indeed opposite in Petőfiszállás, Ruzsa and Bácsgyulafalva. The composite index of public life had values above the average in Ruzsa and Petőfiszállás, and it was especially high in the latter, but the values of the index of community life were below the average in both cases. These villages did not correspond to the research hypothesis, as the need for public participation was high despite the lack of community ties. The data and the circumstances suggest that the divergence of the two indexes results from the ambivalent value preferences and living conditions caused by the contradictory social and regional situation of these villages and their transitional standing between the rural and urban development. In other words, the reasons for the anomaly are the villages' proximity to a city

and the high proportion of commuting inhabitants. Despite the local difficulties in the village, the favourable opportunities offered by the nearby city lead to a contradiction of the weak attachment to the village community and the intensive civic practice. Although the educational attainment of the inhabitants is above the average, and this increases their need for public and political participation, they cannot or do not want to expend time on public discourse that would promote local public life. The respondents from these villages barely belonged to small communities in their home settlements, were not involved in the local solidarity network of the households; they tended to formulate their opinions on politics and public life individually, as outsiders, yet they reported a quite positive impression of the community cohesion in their villages.

The trends of the indexes of community life and public life were opposite in Bácsgyulafalva as well, but in the other way: the index of community life was above and the index of community life below the average. The intensive cultural and community life and the strong community cohesion in this case derived from the isolated geographical location and the inner ethnic division because of the resettlement of Serbs in the village.

In the other villages of the sample, the indexes of the community life and the public life were parallel. The values of both indexes were far below the sample average in Ramocsaháza. The deficient community life and the lack of public participation were the consequences of the disadvantaged regional economy, and the deprived living conditions. The inhabitants of Ramocsaháza had considerably low educational attainment: the proportion of residents with at least high school diploma was the half and the proportion of the graduates was third of the sample average. The everyday difficulties impede community life and inhibit the improvement of political attention and the need for public

participation. Self-identification with the community was insufficient; the attachment of the inhabitants to the village was weak: one fifth of the respondents from Ramocsaháza planned to move away in the future.

Social Participation, Community Cohesion and Isolation in the Villages

The pursuit of local interests will be the most successful and the operation of the local democracy will be the most efficient in the villages where community network is dense, and a high proportion of the population pays attention to social issues and develops the need for community participation. Strong attachment to the home village and self-identification with its community are indispensable preconditions as well. The synthesis of the dimensions of community relationships and civic attention and public participation signified in our research the level of social participation. In case of the villages, social participation also reveals the degree of local community cohesion.[49]

The index of social participation was calculated from all variables of community life and public participation, and 5 categories were created with cluster analysis. The social participation index enabled us to classify the respondents into a hierarchy from 'outstandingly active' to 'isolated' levels.[50]

[49] The variables of solidarity, protesting, conversation about local issues, exchange of political opinions, civic attention, attachment to formalized civil organisations, attendance to village events, informal community ties and attendance to the nomination meeting were all included.

[50] The hierarchy of the categories was set up according to the level of community attachment and public participation.

Three categories of the 5-level scale of the community cohesion (social participation) collected the socially integrated, active population of the villages with slightly varying levels of participation.[51] These three groups encompassed two thirds of the sample (64, 7%).

The isolated group comprised one third of the respondents, but this sample segment was not united. The fifth category on the negative end of the clustered index (one fifth of the respondents, 20, 4%) was not integrated in the village community, was not interested in social issues and did not participate in public life either. Besides the bidimensionally isolated group, a partially isolated group was identified as well: it consisted of the respondents who were not attached to the community and stayed away from community life, who showed a high level of social and political attention and individual public participation (15%). As it has been mentioned, the isolated and the partially isolated groups made up one third of the sample (35, 4%).

The proportions of the two isolated groups were above the average in Ruzsa and Petőfiszállás (44%-48%), and it was the lowest in the ethnic village in the proximity of two cities, in Hajdújárás (29%). Petőfiszállás and Ruzsa are the two villages mostly affected by modern urban civilization, and consequently the individualization is accelerated, traditional ties disappear rapidly, and this why the community integration and cohesion are difficultly re-created and sustained. The inhabitants who commute to work in the city have much higher level of need for social and public participation than those who stay in the village. In sum, the impacts of modern consumer society have eroded the local community cohesion more rapidly in the Hungarian villages in the proximity of a city than in the Hungarian ethnic villages outside of Hungary.

[51] The included active groups: 1. Group = community and social initiators (17, 8%), 2. group = active (26, 9%), 3. group = moderately active (20, 0%).

In the ethnic Hungarian villages, primarily in Hajdújárás and Bácsgyulafalva, the minority status, the ethnic cultural tradition and the self-seclusion have contributed to the more effective preservation of the community's unity and the cohesion, hence the lower proportion of isolated inhabitants. The process of isolation is determined by local, regional and individual conditions. In relation to educational attainment, the low-qualified respondents constituted the greatest part of the isolated group, but higher level of education does not necessarily mean more active participation, as the graduates were more likely to abstain from local community life than the respondents with high school diploma.

In the case of the graduates, two distinctively separate group were discovered: the active graduates are energetic, brisk organisers and leaders of the community, and the isolated graduates do not socialize with the low-qualified villagers, do not communicate their opinions, but individually they are indeed interested in local and national social life and politics. In other words, a great part of the isolated group is composed of the intellectuals, predominantly graduates, who do not wish to participate in the village's community life despite their increased interest in social and political issues. As it has been discussed earlier, the lack of education and financial security mostly impede the social integration, thereby reducing the chance of the development of the need for public participation. However, it has now become obvious that one part of the graduates refuses to engage in the improvement of local public life with active social participation. This phenomenon is evidently self-seclusion, not exclusion (Castel 1993).

The proportion of isolated men (43%) was significantly higher than that of the isolated women (31%). Data suggest that the attachment of women to the community and their social vitality are stronger. This might be the consequence of the work conditions of the male inhabitants, namely that they

do exhausting physical work, or commute, so they have less time and energy for community relations and social integration. In relation to age, it was the young (26-35) age group that had the fewer socially isolated members (27%). The respondents in this age segment have already completed their studies which enables them to lead a socially active life, while the majority of the younger inhabitants still commute to school, and as it typical for their age group, they are usually less interested in local issues and socialize exclusively with their counterparts. From the mid-twenties, people normally live in stable relationships and found a family, and their new situation increases their need for information and directs their attention towards local institutions, local issues and public life. Below and above this age group, slightly higher proportions of respondents are socially isolated (30-33%); over sixty this percentage reaches the half of the age group and it only grows with age. In other words, more than half of the eldest is not integrated into the community.

The comparison of the Hungarian villages in and outside of Hungary confirmed that the village communities were more cohesive in the second case. The two isolated groups (isolated + partially isolated) encompassed a considerably lower proportion of the respondents in the ethnic villages (one third, 30%) than in the sample villages in Hungary (42%). It was also revealed that the Hungarian villages had twice as many 'partially isolated' inhabitants (the respondents who were individually interested in local public life, but did not participate in social life) as the Hungarian ethnic villages. Because of the minority status, the compulsion to preserve cultural unity and community cohesion has become very significant persistent powers which decelerate atomization and isolation.

However, it is a promising conclusion of the research that the socially interested and integrated population constituted the

majority in both village types. Hopefully, the small village communities will encourage more and more inhabitants to participate in local public life. It was nevertheless striking that local leaders and intellectuals took a greater part in the improvement of the community's life in the Hungarian ethnic villages, and this increased activity might be the example and catalyst for a more comprehensive democratic participation. In contrast, half of the graduates in Hungarian villages do not want or cannot contribute to the local public life, and opt for self-seclusion.

X. THE INTERACTION BETWEEN TRUST AND COMMUNITY – SAMPLES OF 28 EUROPEAN COUNTRIES

Sociologists have been trying to identify the causes of the perceptible lack of trust in modern societies for decades. It was assumed that the gradual loss of trust between individuals and social groups is a consequence of the realignment of relationships and communities generated by the socioeconomic changes. Family farming was replaced by large-scale production during the industrial capitalist development, the traditional small communities crumbled, urbanisation accelerated, economic competition and rivalry between individuals and/or social groups aggravated, and the restructured economic system modified the human value preferences as well (Fukuyama 2000, Putnam 1995, Elster 1989, Kuczi-Lengyel 1996, Luhman 1979, Sztompka 1996).

In traditional societies, family farming and coexistence in closed and small communities fostered the development of strong and primary relationships, but in modern societies the secondary ties constitute the majority of the individuals' relationship network. Although the number of relationships that connect the individual to others and to communities has not decreased, the proportion of loose and trust-lacking relations grew to the detriment of the reliable connections. Globalisation has augmented the number of secondary relationships as well, since the spread of the Internet lead to virtual acquaintances

which are mainly weak ties rarely transformed into strong bonds (Granovetter 1973, Wellman 2001).

Furthermore, profit-oriented and rationalized economy combined with excessive bureaucracy of the consumer society induce flux of functions, staff cutbacks and fluctuation of workforce which afflict the trust content of human relationships as well. Administration becomes more and more depersonalized, as institutions enable online access and expand virtual databases. Nowadays, the society lives in the bureaucratic care and control of different public institutions whose efficiency shapes the civic trust towards the authority, or whose inefficiency arouses distrust, discontent and the sense of helplessness in the citizens.

The trends of gradually reducing social trust, increasing number of secondary relationships and scepticism about the administration were accompanied by radical changes in the life of communities. In contrast to traditional societies where relationships were based on frequent face-to-face interactions, so the trust content could be easily assessed, in the weak ties of modern societies trust is deposited, as there is no time or occasion to learn by experience.

Community relations are reconsidered and revalued in modern-day society. According to our hypothesis, people with wide and versatile relationship networks tend to trust others and the authority, whereas reclusive people limit their reliance to the closed family or immediate community, and exclude others. The lack of trust does not only erode personal relations, but it also hinders economic cooperation which normally operates with long-term reciprocity. Trust is, therefore, the indispensable catalyst of interpersonal relationships, as well as of cultural or economic alliances of communities, nations or societies (Polányi 1976.)

The present chapter discusses the correlation of community and trust in European societies. It was designed to

find answers for the questions whether community relations enhance trust and if yes, how significantly, and the reverse: whether trust intensifies community life. Prior to the comparison of certain European countries, the social and demographic conditions, that are supposed to influence individual and community life and the degree of trust, are determined. Additionally, the chapter describes the discrepancies in the degree of trust and intensity of community relations of social, demographic or economic groups with diverse living conditions, and examines whether these discrepancies affect the social life and contentment in different countries, or it is the reverse, and the conditions offered by certain countries increase or destroy its citizens' trust and relationships. The research was based on the European Social Survey's database of 2008 (N=58454, 28 countries).

Methodology and Measures

Individual and institutional were regarded as two separate dimensions of trust. Three 10-level scales were synthesised to calculate individual trust in others, in 'strangers' (INDIVIDTRST).[52] The institutional trust (INSTITRST) was measured by seven questions that concerned the trust in the authority and public institutions: in the parliament, in the existing system, in the police, in politicians, in parties, in the EU parliament, and in the UN. The measure of general trust was created by the synthesis of the two trust dimensions (GENTRUST).

[52] (1) Most people are trustworthy. (2) Most people are hindrance. (3) Most people are helpful. The cumulative values of the three scales represented the individual trust (INDIVIDTRST).

The composite indexes were used to measure community relations and social activity (GENSOCIET). One of these arranged informal community relationships according to the frequency of meetings (SCLEMEET). The second signified the social activity (SOCACTIVITY) in political parties, associations, organisations, and contact with political or state leaders, petition signing, participation in protests and boycott on products or charity in the year preceding the survey.[53]

The two scales of trust and the two indexes of community and social life were synthesised into a factor index (PARTICIPATION) the averages of which symbolise the degree of social participation characteristic for the respondents, for the included countries.

The Correlation between Trust and Community Relations

According to our research thesis, trust correlates with community relations; these two factors mainly intensify each other's positive or negative effects. Community emerges from strong trustworthy relationships easily, and vice versa, community creates opportunities for the members to get to know each other, and this strengthens their mutual trust. However, the degree of trust depends on the character of the community. The basic criteria of the community: common

[53] (1) Did you participate in political party or political action in the last year? (2) Were you involved in any organisations or associations in the last year? (3) Did you have any contact with a political or state leader? (4) Did you sign any petitions? (5) Did you participate in any permitted protests? (6) Did you join any boycotts on products? (7) Were you involved in charity?

values, interests, aim or common origin, tradition, collective identity and solidarity. These parameters increase the members' mutual trust within the community. It has been proved previously that trust is the strongest in the smallest circle of community relations, in the family (Weber 1987, Tönnies 1983, Utasi 2009).

Reclusive families and other communities are frequently mistrustful, especially in the two extreme cases, if they are resourceless and cannot divide their possessions to help others outside of their circles, or the reverse, if they are privileged and preserve their status with exclusion.

In contrast, the more open-minded and sociable people are, the more trust they have in others outside of their closed circles. Informal or formal ties and social activity that transgress boundaries of immediate community intensify trust in 'others'. Our research hypothesis was that general trust arises from versatile community relations.

Effects of Different Living Conditions on Trust and Community Ties

As a consequence of the disparities in demographic and economic conditions and average level of education in different societies, we prognosticated discrepancies in the degree of trust and in social and community participation.

We also expected that the trends of general trust and community and social indexes would vary significantly at the international level according to the amount of material sources and intangibles of different groups. General trust, community involvement and social activity are usually characteristic for

countries where respondents are relatively resourceful, materially and culturally affluent.

High educational attainment, and its benefits, cultural capital and higher income increase trust and social capital as well, and predominantly well-educated and successful people can afford to maintain wide relationship networks and to trust confidently. Consequently, high degrees of trust and community engagement are anticipated in the countries where the proportions of well-qualified inhabitants are higher; and in countries where the average level of educational attainment is lower, the trend is prospectively reversed.

The size of the settlement and the number of its inhabitants, as well as the density of community networks influence the degree of trust. In countries where a great part of the population live in small settlements (villages, suburbs), relationships tend to be intensive and strong. Human interactions are in this case direct and more transparent, and this favours the development of community life and trust. The most distrustful and deficiently interconnected samples derived usually from the countries comprising high proportions of city population, since the ratio of the strong primary relationships to the weak secondary ones is highly imbalanced in the cities.

In sum, it is presumable that those countries will present high degrees of general trust, stable community relations and active social participation whose society is decently affluent, where high proportions of the population are evenly resourceful and the subjective contentment with income is general as a result of relative social equality. Societies with higher average level of educational attainment will be more trustful and their social relations will be more intensive. Rural population with dense, but clear-cut relationship networks will be more trusting than the atomized population of the giant cities.

Trustful and Distrustful Countries

One of the variables of the index of general trust measured the individual trust, in other words the readiness of respondents to trust 'strangers', people who were not included in their closed cultural communities. Turkey, Bulgaria, Romania and Greece were proved to be the most distrustful countries. These nations differ from the other European countries of the sample both in their religions and cultural value systems. In these societies, community life is still closed and traditional; the majority of the population live in small settlements where trust is limited to the family and relatives. In addition, these three countries are less resourceful than the others in the sample, and this also hinders the emergence of trust.

The most open-minded and trusting nations were the Scandinavian countries, especially Denmark, Norway, Finland and Sweden, and the similarly affluent Switzerland and Netherlands had just slightly lower results. In comparison with other European countries, these nations are characterised by prosperity, social equality and even distribution of goods which are combined with Protestant moral and values, thus contentment is more general and the average level of educational attainment is higher. The number of large cities is quite low in these welfare states; the majority of the population live in traditional or modern suburban areas or villages. The beneficial social conditions make the society resourceful and strengthen both the confidence and the trust of individuals.

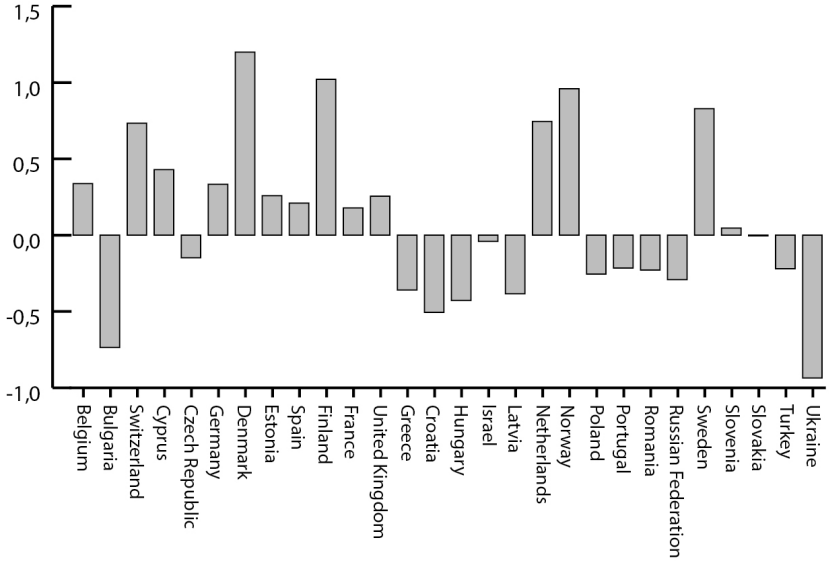
The trend of institutional trust was very similar to that of individual trust. The citizens of Bulgaria and Greece, who had low degrees of individual trust as well, were the most distrustful of institutions, and Hungary, Croatia, Latvia and Ukraine were the next in this case. The results of Turkey deviated from the trend, as the population tended to trust the institutions despite the individual distrust. The possible reason

for the anomaly is the cultural difference, or the traditional values, especially the respect for authority which stabilizes institutional trust.

The degree of institutional trust was the highest in those countries that were the first in the hierarchy of individual trust, namely the Scandinavian countries, Switzerland and the Netherlands. The high degree of trust in institutions is the result of the relative social equality and general contentment of the population. The enhanced trust in the authority and its institutions suggest that democracy function more effectively here than in other European countries. As a result, the majority of the population is satisfied with their living conditions, and this increases and generalizes confidence and certitude.

The synthesised trend of individual and institutional trust revealed that the composite value of trust was the lowest in Ukraine, Bulgaria, Croatia, Hungary, Latvia and Greece. All of these are resourceless countries that had experienced a lot of conflicts.

Figure 27:
The synthesised index of individual and institutional trust (GENTRUST) in the sample countries (Z-scores) (European Social Survey, ESS4e03, 2008 N=58454)



Trends of Community and Social Activity in European Countries

One of the indexes of social and community relations measured the organised community activity characteristic in different counties of the sample. Based on earlier examinations, we presumed that the hierarchy of the countries would be determined by their prosperity and the average level of educational attainment. One third of the population of the European countries in the sample were involved in organisations or associations, but we found significant discrepancies between the countries due to the different living conditions.

The degree of civic participation and social activity was above the average level in the efficient Scandinavian democracies and in those welfare states that preserve strong democratic traditions, namely Sweden, Denmark, Finland, France and Germany.

In contrast with the previous list, the population of Bulgaria, Turkey and Portugal was the least active in social participation, and the other disadvantaged Southern and former Eastern Bloc countries showed just slightly higher results. Civil traditions had been underdeveloped and further impeded by Communist governments, hence the deficient civic engagement in the Eastern European countries. Before the political transition, the civil communities and organisations were kept under the strict control of the state, and even two decades after the collapse of Socialism, the disadvantages still inhibit the function of organisations and associations. Moreover, low level or lack of contentment and education preclude the emergence of need for organised community ties. Under these deprived circumstances, the majority of people's energy is absorbed by the fulfilment of basic needs, so the degree of social engagement cannot increase.

The intensity of personal relationships was found to be strikingly low in Hungary and Romania, and the Greeks were similarly passive.[54] In the countries where the density of personal ties is insufficient, traditional values have disappeared and traditional communities have disintegrated due to the half-modernized state of development, while the informal ties provided by civil communities are still rare. Atomization is the strongest in the cities and towns of these countries; therefore the lack of friendship circles has become acute and easily detectable. However, it is also true that the relatively strong

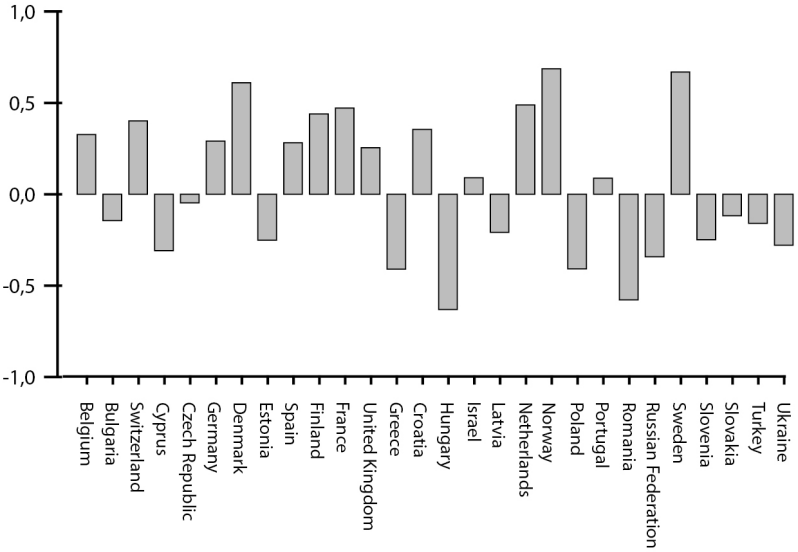
[54] Although Hungary was at the end of the international list, our research revealed that personal ties are nevertheless more intensive in Hungary than the organised ones (Hoskins 2009).

and social-like family bonds mean some kind of compensation in these societies.

Intensive personal ties accompanied the dense network of civic organisations (Norway, Sweden, the Netherlands and Denmark), and the brisk community life of preserved traditional relationships (Croatia, Portugal).

The two dimensions of relationship networks were synthesised into one scale that revealed that community and social ties were highly deficient in Hungary and Romania, and the results of other post-communist and Southern-European countries, except Portugal, were not much higher either. In contrast, both informal and formal social connections are accumulated in the Scandinavian countries, especially in Denmark, Norway and Sweden.

Figure 28:
The averages of the composite index of civil and personal relationships (GENSOCIET) in the sample countries (Z-scores) (European Social Survey, ESS4e03, 2008 N=58454)



Harmony and Disharmony of Trust and Community Relations

The comparison of the general trust index (individual trust index + institutional trust index, GENTRST) and the synthesised index of organised and personal community relations (GENSOCIET) verified that trust and community correlate positively by strengthening or weakening one another. There were only a few countries in the sample that presented a different trend.

Positive or Negative Values of the Two Indexes

The two indexes correlated positively and harmoniously in the countries that were in advantaged economic situation with insignificant social inequalities and a democratic distribution of wealth, namely in Denmark, Finland, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland and the Netherlands. The most harmonious correlation was found in Denmark where the interaction of the authority with the society and the prosperity guarantees the sustainment of the trust and cohesive communities.

The lack of trust and deficiency in community relations were striking in Hungary. The asymmetric modernisation process has disintegrated the traditional communities here, but they could not be replaced by weak ties that are concomitants of the urbanisation and migration processes, as the extremely high degree of distrust hinders the emergence of all kinds of relationships. Small communities have gradually lost trust due to the economic changes, whereas the political transition failed to meet the expectations, and this, combined with the disadvantaged living conditions resulted in general discontent of the population. Distrust in the institutions is similarly

universal. Furthermore, insufficient social connections co-occurred with distrust in Poland, Greece, Romania and Russia, in other words, in countries with economic difficulties. The self-seclusion from communities beyond the family circle is typical, but the distrust and atomization are not yet as aggravated as in Hungary.

Extreme distrust and loose community networks were found in Ukraine and Bulgaria. The traditional small communities still maintain the coherence of the society and contribute to the social integration of individuals, but the inhabitants are quite mistrustful of people from other cultures in these two countries.

Variants of Disharmony of the Two Indexes

a) Reclusive Communities and High Degree of Distrust
The trend of the trust and community indexes occurred in only those countries where the inner structure of the society had been roiled by international traumas. The two indexes were disharmonious in Croatia and Slovenia, as the armed conflicts of the last decades had aggravated the distrust towards strangers, but strengthened the traditional protective relationships and the reclusive nature of the communities. Similar results were caused by similar reasons in Israel where the continuous wars destroy the population's trust, but communities become cohesive and reclusive.

b) Weak Community Cohesion, Strong Trust
Disharmony of trust and community relations was found in Cyprus and Estonia as well. However, the trend is reversed in these two countries: trust is strong, whereas community relationships are loose. The controversy is again caused by

the dividing effects of wars on society and culture. Cyprus was torn into a Greek and a Turkish half by international politics, and both cultures maintained trust in their own institutions, but personal and civil communities were ruined by the cultural separation. In Estonia, the proportion of Russian inhabitants is high as a consequence of forceful population transfer realised in the Soviet era. Obviously, historical wounds and traumas have not been forgiven yet. Thus, separate cultures trust and seclude, but the development of civil communities is frustrated by the past.

c) Reclusive Communities and Weak Trust
In Portugal, community consciousness was fairly strong, but the degree of trust was low. Portuguese society has preserved its traditional nature, and the low average level of education and disadvantaged economy aggravate the distrust of outsiders.

In sum, the disharmony of trust and community is a consequence of wars, conflicts and divisions in the past whose repercussions still last today and preclude the coexistence of different cultures. This is the reason why the natural harmony of trust and community is upset in people's minds.

Social Participation in the Countries and Regions of Europe

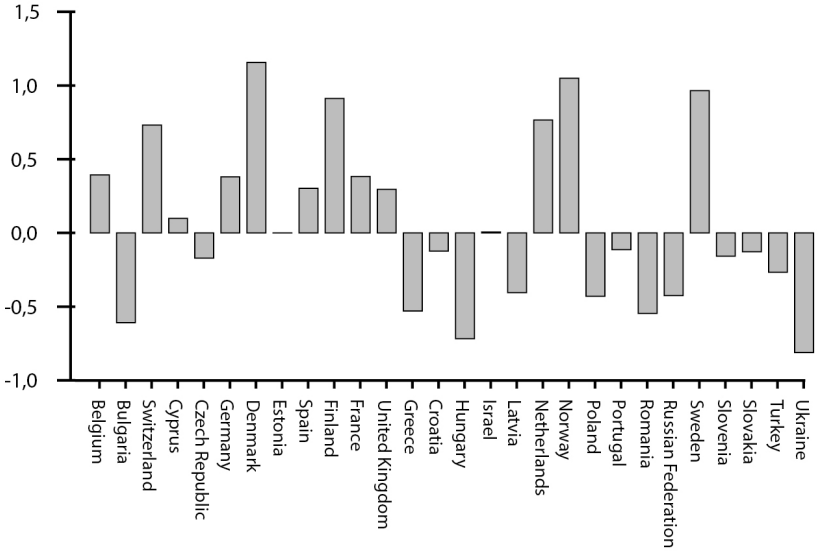
In the analysis of the international data, we accepted that community life rests on trust; consequently the discrepancies in the social participation of different countries can be illustrated with the correlation of trust and community relations (organised and personal). It was assumed that the societies with high degree of trust in outsiders, in the authorities and its

institutions, with dense relationship networks and intensive community life would have the highest levels of social participation. As a concomitant of active social engagement, public participation in democracy was expected to be intensive as well.

In order to determine the participation level of each country, we synthesised the indexes of different dimensions of trust and community relations (with principal component analysis). The separate levels of participation were differentiated by the division of the scale into five groups with cluster analysis. The averages of the participation index reaffirmed that high proportions of the population were engaged very intensively in social life in the countries of advantaged economies, but disadvantaged economy led to insufficient social participation. Based on the averages of the participation index characteristic for certain nations, the European countries of the sample were categorised into 5 hierarchic groups:

a) The averages were the highest in the Scandinavian countries where the population showed an *outstanding* level of social participation: Denmark, Norway, Finland, Sweden, and also Switzerland and the Netherlands.
b) The *good* category comprised the welfare states of Western Europe: Germany, Belgium, France and the United Kingdom.
c) *Medium or average* level of social participation was characteristic for Cyprus, Estonia, Spain and Israel.
d) The population of Latvia, Croatia, Poland, Portugal, the Czech Republic, Russia, Slovakia and Slovenia presented *weak* social participation.
e) The averages revealed *deficient* social participation in Bulgaria, Hungary, Greece, Turkey, Romania and Ukraine.

Figure 29:
The averages of the factor index of social participation in the countries of the sample (Z-scores) (European Social Survey, ESS4e03, 2008, N=58454)



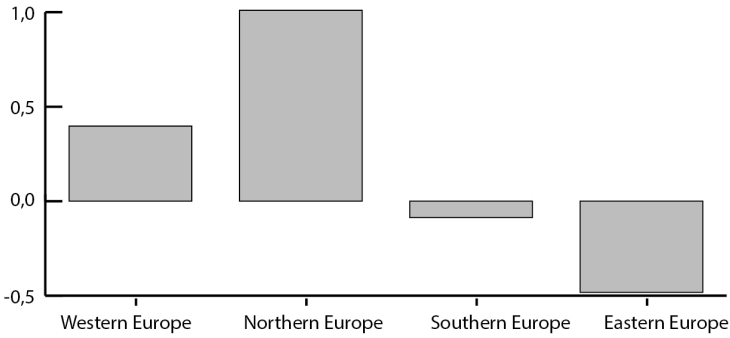
The hierarchy of the participation index clearly proved that the needful Southern and post-communist countries lag far behind the affluent and more egalitarian Western states in regard to the population's social and democratic participation. Scientists often argue that the inhabitants of deprived and former Eastern Bloc countries are still not accustomed to democracy yet. However, we have discussed earlier that trust and engagement in community and social life are significant in the resourceful countries where the majority live in considerably good conditions with high average levels of education. In other words, social participation results from the advantaged and resourceful living conditions in the Scandinavian countries, and not vice versa. The economy developed harmoniously and integrally in the countries that were saved from historic trauma and dictatorship in the recent

past, and the certitude stabilised the high degree of trust and the social engagement of the majority of the population, while the preservation of traditional and civic communities ensured the inclination for democratic participation.

The comparison of values of different European regions reveals how geopolitical and geo-economic conditions influence social participation. The chance of social participation was multiplied in the Northern countries. The inhabitants of the Scandinavian region were significantly active, even compared to the population of Western Europe. In contrast to the two previous groups, the post-communist countries of East-Central Europe showed a strikingly low level of participation.

We believe that the difference of the Northern and Western European countries proves that prosperity and high level of education characteristic for both regions are not sufficient to attain outstanding levels of social participation. To the encouragement of the majority in the democratic participation and in the formation of their own lives, a resolute social policy is indispensable which aims for social integration through organic solidarity and the fair distribution of resources.

Figure 29:
The averages of the factor index of social participation in the different European regions (Z-scores) (European Social Survey, ESS4e03, 2008, N=58454)



Appendices

The averages of individual and institutional trust, and also of formal and informal community life (Z-score)
(based on the file of ESS recorded in 2010, N=58454)

Country	Individual trust	Institutional trust	Participation in organised communities	Participation in personal communities
Belgium	0,31339926	0,28148487	0,277095279	0,253315001
Bulgaria	-0,463801525	-0,684754128	-0,363121309	0,093744006
Switzerland	0,611244835	0,635514151	0,364987979	0,282359462
Cyprus	-0,032409576	0,534963998	-0,169457356	-0,298327776
Czech Republic	0,097084059	-0,216869635	-0,068283493	0,019256401
Germany	0,326462406	0,268854538	0,530210091	0,02608263
Denmark	1,029056791	1,012568862	0,567897575	0,403406897
Estonia	0,368452213	0,15075469	-0,240360485	-0,119613884
Spain	0,152292118	0,175887587	-0,03968145	0,417642205
Finland	0,8067947	0,90420445	0,539494341	0,207979765
France	0,144613327	0,163362165	0,483529025	0,28680856
United Kingdom	0,429072032	0,124366208	0,287956041	0,154560172
Greece	-0,453258115	-0,235850477	-0,217720958	-0,326070116
Croatia	-0,210605617	-0,521568699	0,019866335	0,461470081
Hungary	-0,139646125	-0,465547268	-0,309338922	-0,545413075
Israel	0,283556023	-0,149780637	-0,215937059	0,291508145
Latvia	0,094535422	-0,504629699	-0,276903478	-0,126860107
Netherlands	0,623515797	0,643470462	0,350642182	0,405228317
Norway	0,898636595	0,775273894	0,65594361	0,436348043
Poland	-0,180293541	-0,240820882	-0,305218859	-0,280947251
Portugal	-0,206131202	-0,171426035	-0,388646706	0,403414253
Romania	-0,45930414	-0,071025715	-0,293090822	-0,572268727
Russian Federation	-0,117786498	-0,281472744	-0,312279645	-0,233600209
Sweden	0,827703258	0,651337149	0,709107319	0,379804088
Slovenia	0,050078692	0,037417226	-0,198272797	-0,138871274
Slovakia	-0,135532989	0,059814493	-0,162736814	-0,011795419
Turkey	-0,883123113	0,141046309	-0,364148884	-0,025430923
Ukraine	-0,245333728	-0,993461062	-0,28165533	-0,175205501

The averages of general trust and social activity in the sample countries (Z-scores)
(based on the file of ESS recorded in 2010, N=58454)

Country	General trust	Social activity
Belgium	0,337712968	0,326898955
Bulgaria	-0,73517696	-0,144239121
Switzerland	0,734213508	0,401662691
Cyprus	0,429842601	-0,309205569
Czech Republic	-0,148617239	-0,047468029
Germany	0,333623872	0,290232358
Denmark	1,199297322	0,610246922
Estonia	0,258370093	-0,251976465
Spain	0,210015145	0,281758149
Finland	1,021483981	0,438891395
France	0,178604384	0,471683135
United Kingdom	0,255632013	0,25453873
Greece	-0,359309286	-0,409741506
Croatia	-0,506137239	0,354851051
Hungary	-0,42748144	-0,631418339
Israel	-0,040330155	0,089869189
Latvia	-0,383994373	-0,208593086
Netherlands	0,744781281	0,488719653
Norway	0,959271665	0,686387111
Poland	-0,254495799	-0,408233805
Portugal	-0,214833717	0,088390787
Romania	-0,228460828	-0,578632817
Russian Federation	-0,291537105	-0,34237823
Sweden	0,828398187	0,66913805
Slovenia	0,046811551	-0,249210012
Slovakia	-0,004484819	-0,11828223
Turkey	-0,219839831	-0,159073722
Ukraine	-0,9357195	-0,279246794

The averages of the factor index of social participation in the sample countries (Z-scores)
(based on the file of ESS recorded in 2010, N=58454)

Country	Factor index of social participation (community relations + trust)
Belgium	0,394348388
Bulgaria	-0,608623237
Switzerland	0,73164145
Cyprus	0,099389781
Czech Republic	-0,170529196
Germany	0,380582426
Denmark	1,156062999
Estonia	-1,03903E-05
Spain	0,302103002
Finland	0,912453205
France	0,383024519
United Kingdom	0,296045785
Greece	-0,529316669
Coatia	-0,12372723
Hungary	-0,717591558
Israel	0,007084854
Latvia	-0,404696663
Netherlands	0,766046357
Norway	1,049352001
Poland	-0,429072214
Portugal	-0,113431953
Romania	-0,546182647
Russian Federation	-0,424274909
Sweden	0,964943564
Slovenia	-0,157290312
Slovakia	-0,127338535
Turkey	-0,266431694
Ukraine	-0,811096308

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XII. COMMUNITY, PUBLIC LIFE, SOCIAL PARTICIPATION SUMMARIZING THOUGHTS

The starting point for the experiment presented in this book was the conception that active community and social life increases the need for public life. Consequently, active social participation could renew the democratic functions of society. At the beginning of the research, it was assumed that under the present social circumstances of new capitalism, the reformation of democracy, its 're-democratisation' is necessary. We did not intend to examine the political or philosophical aspects of the function of society; we used a network-based approach during the experiment in order to determine the role of community relationships in the formation of society and in the renewal of democracy. We observed the proportion of those communities and people in the society who are able to formulate and pursue their interests, and we also considered the possibilities how this proportion could be increased.

Parameters of the Community

The research was focused on relationships and community. *Identity*, *homogeneity* of the members and *mutual solidarity* were regarded as the essential elements of the definition of community. *Spirituality* is added to these three basic criteria in some exceptional moments of community experience that

become memorable and joyful through this subtle, but quite significant cohesive power.

Community does not exist without the components listed above. However, people's lives and their conditions change continuously, and so do their relationships, but the new connections are integrated into new structures. This process is more perceptible in modern industrial societies where interpersonal relations fluctuate constantly. Former communities disintegrate in accordance with the alteration of lifestyle or life cycles, but they are gradually replaced with new structures in the lives individuals and societies.

In the actual post-industrial societies, communities change and form more dynamically than they did in traditional societies. Because of the changeability of relations, the positive trust in others emerges more difficultly in individuals' lives. Without trust, the parameters of community develop more difficultly as well. Max Weber's theory is still valid today, as common interests, values, traditions and/or emotions are the cohesive power not only for communities, but for individual relationships as well. But it is also true that trust and certitude between members emerge the most easily, if their relationship is based on tradition and customs. These ties are the strongest even today, they accompany individuals from their birth to their death, and they are mostly family relationships.

Globalisation has expanded the networks of relationships, so they have become more versatile and more dynamic. More and more people have social links with communities in foreign countries and in different cultures. However, communities comprising members of different nationalities stay together rarely, because the distance and/or the cultural differences reduce the time and possibilities of finding and establishing common cultural aims, values and traditions. As a result, international communities seldom survive in the long term. International connections and

communities generated by the effects of globalisation cohere because of *common interests* which make them one-dimensional and ensure them a shorter lifetime than the communities reinforced by tradition, emotions and consistent cultural values have.

In consumer society and as a result of industrialisation, individuals can build new relations simultaneously in their actual living environment or at their workplace, and sustain their connections from their past. Technology and telecommunication, mainly the telephone, cars and the Internet, enable people to consolidate and reinforce their ties with nearby communities repeatedly with face-to-face interactions. On the other hand, one of the basic components of communities, namely the mechanical solidarity works more easily between those people who live close to each other.

The percentage of people engaged in political activity was extremely low in our sample: only the 1, 2% of the participants belonged to some kind of political community, party or association. Considering these results, the civic motivation provided by the political involvement was barely measurable with statistical means. The altruistic work of the members of everyday communities, the willingness to sacrifice and the efforts motivated by the feeling of competence were much more significant. According to our results, the development of civic attitude and practice had several prerequisites. The most important was the appropriate level of education which is indispensable for comprehension of information. A certain level of wealth and financial stability was also important, because these factors allow people to reproduce their living conditions; moreover, they provide convenient freedom which is necessary for the development of the social sense of responsibility and of the readiness to work for the community and for other people altruistically.

Sociability is usually acquired in childhood, partly in the family (during the process of family socialisation or through the example of familial community), and partly in the school and in course of formal (e. g. workshops or trainings) and informal (e. g. groups or gangs) activities outside the school. Considering the socialisation effects of the community models adopted during childhood, the family of orientation is of primary importance. The research showed that the respondents used to meet their relatives, friends or colleagues of their parents in their childhood (i. e. decades ago) more often than they meet their family members or present colleagues now. This means that the intensity of the families' social activity has decreased. It is also true that the family of orientation transmitted more active community participation patterns than the practice which the respondents developed in their own lives. Only the ties of friendship have become stronger that they were in the time of the participants' childhood.

According to the collected data, different age or lifecycles have a strong influence on the intensity of communal activities. Relationships with the neighbours, for example, are the strongest when a couple has small children or when they are over the age of sixty, while these connections are in their youth the weakest. It is also remarkable that young couples at the time of founding their own families reduce their community participation. At this time, even the closest family connections loosen, the social activities, like going out, usually become less frequent. Later, when the children grow up, couples in their forties or fifties gradually open up to their relatives and other communities. This means that the types of communities, that individuals prefer, is determined by the tasks of lifecycles and by living conditions, and community practice changes according to age. Doubtlessly, the relationships to the family of orientation (especially the connection with the

upbringing parents) endure these periodic changes the most effectively and family seems to be the strongest community in a person's life.

Solidarity in Small Communities

We found that the relationship between upbringing parent(s) and the child/children is the strongest and they are the basis of the firmest community of solidarity. In spite of the high rates of divorce and single-parent families, the communal and cohesive power and everyday solidarity of families remain invariably strong, the family as a community survives because of the strong solidarity between two and later on between three generations. Thus, the most significant form of community solidarity develops between family generations, whilst the other sources of mechanical solidarity can be the small communities surrounding them (friendships and organised communities).

The survey also affirmed that members of small communities highly rely on the help, support and solidarity expected from other members of their communities. The most of the respondents who belonged to communities felt that they would surely receive support in case of need. 80% of the respondents trusted in family relationships or friendships, and another 28% relied on their organised communities as well. According to the data, mutual solidarity of everyday life works not only in friendships, but in civil communities as well.

The consumer society had supposedly enticed a significant percentage of the respondents with the wide choice of goods, so many of them had become indebted, but we did not intend to measure the exact proportion. Impoverishment and increasing amount of debts were caused in resourceless

countries by the desire of people in low income groups for the goods that they normally could not afford. The majority of the society believed that they had equal right to those products that were financially suited the wealthier groups. In this specific situation, the role of affluent relatives and patrons with high social stratus has become more significant. Almost one third of the participants (29%) had an influential acquaintance (in economic sectors, in the media, in local governments or political parties), and the majority of this sample segment believed that their powerful relative(s) or friend(s) would help if they needed.

It was assumed that the connections between common members of the society and their influential relatives or friends constitute a special patron-client network under the current circumstances of economic crisis. Almost everybody who belongs to a community could land up in either of these changeable roles: a patron can become a client depending on the help of others overnight. This explains why the majority of participants trusted the support of their influential acquaintance or other community relationships. It has to be noted that the earlier meaning of the relationship (a powerful patron with a fully-dependent client) has changed; it is today rather a special kind of network in which everybody keeps a count of those affluent persons in their environment who can help them in case of need. Under more balanced economic circumstances, the support works reciprocally between people of similar social status and resources, but the asymmetric patron-client connection is exaggerated by the extreme discrepancies which are typical for indebted societies with high unemployment rates.

The participants of our survey sent greetings on special occasion to their distant acquaintances even if they did not keep in contact regularly, because they wanted to strengthen their ties symbolically, at least once or twice a year. The ritual

connections are integrated into a broad network in which people express their mutual sympathy, empathy or solidarity, and assure each other that they share joy or sorrow on special occasions. The birthday or name day greetings, graduations, funerals, promotions and honours create and demonstrate the symbolic networks of relations that mean extra certitude for the individuals in wider social network. The amplitude of ritual connections shows how securely and how deeply the individuals are woven in the texture of society. Our survey proved that the circle of ritual connections is significantly extensive, generally 22 per person, though wish and reality are often mixed in the reported number of greetings. The ritual connections have intensified lately because of the advantages of telecommunication. Thus, the amount of ritual connections of the youngest individuals in the sample was twice as high as the ritual connection of the eldest.

Community Identities

In addition to solidarity, another dominant criterion of community is identity. However, communal identity, just like community itself, has several levels, and we accepted the possibility that individuals might have double or plural identities in relation to different communities.

According to our data, the communities of primary relationships form various continuously expanding concentric circles. It has become obvious that the most essential primary community was the family for almost everyone in the sample. Four fifths of the participants regarded family as one of the most important communities.

The blank spots in the inner circle of the concentric circles of primary communities were the participants who did not

consider any community, not even the family important (12, 0%). For only one third of the sample (33, 2%) was the family as the only primary community satisfactory, friendship circles on their own meant contentment for only a few percentage (5, 8%) and civic organisations for only 7, 6% of the respondents. For the majority not only family identity, but friendships, membership in a club or organisation were also very important (41, 5%).

Macro-communal identity is the next level of communal identity. Macro-identity is attached to the wider community networks in the environment of the participants, to those communities in which the individual participates, but does not know all of the fellow members. Homogeneity also appeared among the members of the macro-community that was designated as identity-providing community by the participants. In case of macro-identity, we were also aware of the possibility of multiple identities, so we regarded the first and the second choices of the respondents as identity-providing communities.

The hierarchy of macro-identities selected by participants as primary or secondary was the following: most people identified themselves with their occupational community (36%), community of the birthplace (30%), national community (22, 4%) and the community of the living place (20, 6%). One tenths (9, 2%) had religious identities and only 2, 4% chose some kind of political community. Macro-identities of international level were rarely named: citizenship of the EU had 2, 5%, class identity 7, 3% and ethnicity only 3, 5%.

We aimed to specify the macro-identities that were preferred by communities with different living conditions. We found that social groups in the most favourable situation preferred to choose professional identity, ideological (religious or political) identity and national identity. The identities of the birth or living place community are less significant in the affluent groups. In opposition, the disadvantaged people found

the identity of the living place and national identity the most important. In the middle social strata occupational identity appeared as well.

For people of high social status who were also involved in public life the professional identity was the most important, in other words, the attitude of the leaders of public life was formed predominantly by the their professional ambitions and by ideological identity. Most of them also adopted national identity, but local communal identity was less characteristic for them. Consequently, the actions of the leaders in social life were motivated by the wish for further prestige and ideological identity, and not by the interests of local community.

The identity categories and solidarity networks reveal the differences in the relationship structures of individuals and communities. Our survey tried to measure the intensity and the significance of the relationship-building activities (e. g. the expansion of relationship networks through making new acquaintances, inviting guests or social representation) in the participants' lives. Intensive and frequent community practice was characteristic for one fourth of our sample, but half of the respondents did not participate frequently in community life. The sample segment of frequent community participation together with the rarely engaging respondents made up two thirds of the sample.

Illness and solitude are the most common hindrances of community practice. In opposition, youth, romantic relationships and high level of education ensure a wide and versatile relationship network. The research indicated that isolation from the community is more aggravated in the case of less severe illness that are not admitted or 'legitimised' by the immediate community than in the case of serious illness. It is also true than less serious illness frequently leads to self-imposed exclusion and consequently to loneliness.

Informal Groups of Friends

The main aim of our research was to determine the degree of social integration by social ties beyond the family. We were also interested in the proportion of the respondents who had the need for community life which is the foundation of social engagement and democratic participation. Previous analyses showed that the majority of the society is not attached to any civil communities but their families, so it was presumed that the individuals who have no families lived an isolated life.

Our examination of the ego-networks revealed that the major part of the society has a small community beyond the family: groups of friends whose role in the social integration is similar to the role of the family, as they ensure a comparably strong solidarity network, emotionally intensive relationships and community identity. In friendship circles, the problems of private life, as well as public questions are discussed. These private groups can direct the attention of its members to social issues, and they might become in this way a 'rehearsal' for public participation.

In connection with the groups of friends, we accepted the respondents' subjective classification. Our question was whether the respondents had a community of friends comprising at least three other people than relatives who they considered as friends and who they meet regularly for amusement, celebration, discussion of news and sharing their views. According to our research definition, people are members of a friendship group, if they have a socially homogeneous community that ensures solidarity and collective identity. The absolute majority of our sample (77, 5%) had at least one group of friends in their lives. Solidarity was also quite significant in the friendships, since the members trusted each other and believed that their friends would

support them if needed. According to the collected data, the reason for this strong trust was the homogeneity of the members' social status. Trust emerges more easily between people with similar social background and reciprocity functions more effectively even in the long term. As a result of the similarity, trust, mutual solidarity and a collective identity develops in these friendship groups.

The groups of friends comprise people from the immediate or former communities, actual or former collaborations, people with similar emotions, goals or values, or individuals whose secondary relationships gain in importance for some reason. Our research revealed that the respondents with more favourable living conditions (young people of higher social status) were more likely to have groups of friends, and their communities had various sources.

The majority of the informal groups in the society consist of members with similar life circumstances, identical values and empathy. In opposition to pre-industrial societies, most people have numerous life scenes in modern societies, thus they make friends from different sources in terms of time and space. Therefore, many people are members in more friendship groups simultaneously, sometimes in various settlements with different members. The exchange of information works uninterruptedly through the ego-networks in each group and between all groups.

However, the intensity of the contact with the different friendship groups varies with distance. The participants who had friends interacted with the geographically closest group at least once a week in person. Technology (telephone, the Internet) also facilitated the sustaining of relationships. It was revealed that those individuals had virtual friendships who were involved in real-life friendships circle as well, so the Internet meant a secondary source of community relationships for the majority of the sample.

The meeting places of the groups of friends, i.e. the scenes of social life usually differ. The more affluent groups, the young adults who did not own a flat or house and single people usually met in restaurants, pubs or cafés; others visited their friends, while individuals of the lower social strata met mainly in public spaces.

The number of friendship groups correlated with the individual property. One fifth of the sample did not belong to any informal community. Two thirds of this sample segment lived an isolated life, secluded in the family, they esteemed the time spent with their relatives highly and they had neither the need, nor the possibility to build other social relations. The participants of the sample segment without friends were mostly low-qualified and their financial situation was so unfortunate that they could not distribute their possessions further as the principle of reciprocal solidarity of friendship would require. They usually did not want to remain indebted to anyone, possibly this was the reason why they were not integrated in any friendship circles.

It was also verified by the research that friendship groups are the second most common form of community after family in modern societies. Friendship plays a very important role in individuals' lives; it secures social capital and enhances the life quality of those who have already favourable living conditions. It is also possible that the discussions or the information exchange in the friendly meetings direct the members' attention to the problems of wider society, especially to the local problems, and intensifies their willingness to act for the community. This increase in the need for public participation is more probable in the communities where the operation of the local government is transparent, where the individual lack of property does not hinder the development of social sense, the living conditions are well-organised and definite and the members of the local friendship groups are

well-informed. The high proportion of those participants who had groups of friends indicates that the need for wider community network is quite general, and this secures the chance of participation in wider public life.

Organised communities

In addition to groups of friends, the most important small communities for the respondents were institutionalised civil communities or associations. The solidarity of the members, their common identity and the homogeneity of social status were detectable in these small communities as well, but in opposition to groups of friends these organisations function with written rules and the members cooperate in order to achieve common goals, to pursue shared interests, or to preserve common values. The organised communities differ from the frequent mass movements, since the latters are devoid of the parameters of community that we have determined previously. Although mass movements cannot be regarded as communities, they reflect the need for social participation and collaboration, and they can be organised very quickly nowadays, especially via the Internet.

Almost one third of the sample (28%) belonged to an organised civil community, mainly to associations of sports, religion, environment protection or charity. But even the sport associations that were the most popular in the sample could mobilise only 18% of the respondents. Mostly the graduates with higher social status were members of civil communities, as this kind of membership contributes to the further increase of their personal prestige very significantly.

The comparison of the activities in different settlement types revealed that organised community participation is the least significant in the large villages where traditional communities

have disappeared almost entirely, whilst the civic values are still quite underdeveloped and the modernisation is asymmetric. Furthermore, the proportion of commuting inhabitants hinders the foundation of local civil communities or associations. As far as the age groups are concerned, the eldest and the youngest are the least involved in civil organisations.

We also asked the respondents in our survey whether they would become members of organised communities, if they had more time or if an association whose aims corresponded to the interests of the respondents was founded close to their living place. One third of the sample would join some kind of civil groups under the appropriate circumstances. The expectations of the participants diverged. Most of them would collaborate with the others for entertainment, a further 39, 5% for environment or animal protection, and a relatively small proportion would be motivated by charity, by local or national interests, or by the wish for appreciation and recognition (34- 37, 7%).

The members of the organised communities lived an active social life; two third of them met their communities more than once monthly. Four fifths of the members also expected support, solidarity and help with everyday problems from the fellow members of the organised community.

Homogeneity of social status was observed in case of the organised communities as well: more than the half of the participants described their fellow members as having similar social backgrounds. A further 40% reported that their communities comprised people of mixed social standing. In other words, organised communities have almost as high level of status-homogeneity as friendship groups do. The youngest participants were rarely members of organised communities, but if they did join associations, they chose primarily groups where the members had similar social status to their own. The self-separation of social classes reflects aggravating social inequalities.

Virtual Communities

In our survey, we studied the differences between real and virtual communities, and it was obvious that virtual groups lack the parameters of solidarity and common identity. Yet, we could conclude that two thirds of the members of online communities belonged to an 'offline' community as well, most of them were earlier members of children's or other public organisations, and their absolute majority (93%) had friendship groups as well at the time of the research.

More than four fifths of the members of virtual communities were in their forties or younger. The geographical distribution of the members was not significant; the settlement size did not influence the proportion of the Internet users.

The collected data confirmed that the virtual communities frequently doubled the number of the members' social ties, since they simultaneously belonged to organised or personal communities as well. As the result of their online relationships, the respondents' real-life community connections have intensified. It was also concluded that people who have inclination for participation in public life online are usually engaged in real-life civic activity as well.

Community Life

We analysed the most general small communities beyond families, and our results indicated that the respondents were members of different communities, they had different chances of being involved and their participation was motivated by divergent expectation, desires and needs. We measured the community life of the respondents with a linear index that combined the indexes

of memberships in personal and formal communities, and the need for participation in these communities. Community life is a lifestyle with a particular community quality. The linear regression showed that community life is determined predominantly by the financial situation, the childhood community practice and the educational attainment of the father.

In relation to age groups, it was obvious that the youngest had the best chance of community life; the middle-aged had the worst, they were usually compelled to give up their social activity temporarily because of their small children. Community life was the most active in cities, especially in the capital and in the county towns, whilst large villages fell behind due to the social consequences of their anomalous state of development.

The linear index of community life was divided into five hierarchical categories (with cluster analysis) that revealed how differentiated the opportunities of individuals were to participate in community life. The proportion of the respondents who had *outstanding* community life was low in our sample (7, 1%), but together with the respondents who had *good* community life (12, 2%) they made up one fifth of the sample. The group of participants with *medium* community activity (22, 8%) - people with average degree of interconnection- meant another fifth of the sample. People in the two lowest categories with *weak* (30, 8%) and *isolated* (27, 1%) community life had a reduced number of social connections.

Attitude towards Public Life

Public life involves the actions and manifestations that are designed to achieve common goals of the community. We believe that community life correlates with public life interact: they mutually intensify or abate each other. As it was presumed

in the research hypothesis, activity in public life is a prerequisite of civic participation and of the renewal of democracy. The collected data revealed that public participation was more intensive in the social groups whose members had advantaged financial conditions and higher educational attainment (at least high school diploma).

We examined both the *attitude* towards *public life* and *civic practice*. We differentiated between two types of attitudes. The participants had *altruistic attitude*, if they reported that they would be willing to act in the interest of others, even if it did not correspond to their own interests. The second type was the *prestige-oriented* attitude: if the participants considered both their own and community interests, and felt that their participation was expected by their communities.

According to the collected data, prestige-oriented attitude is more prevalent in society than altruistic. The correlation of the synthetized index of the two attitude types was the most significant with community life, educational attainment and childhood community practice.

In relation to settlement size, the composite index of attitude towards public life had the highest values in the county towns; the lowest in the capital and in villages. However, the values grew with educational attainment everywhere. From the age groups, the youngest participants had the highest averages of the composite attitude index, but they had the strikingly high averages of prestige-oriented attitude, but extremely low averages of altruistic attitude.

Our main research objective was to study the relationship between community life and public participation. The relationship between public participation and attitude towards public life indicated that prestige-oriented attitude results more likely in public participation than altruistic attitude does. In other words, the sociable people with active public

participation and intensive community relationships tend to participate because of their prestige-oriented attitude that combines their own interests and the expectation of others, and not because of their altruistic attitude which would often require the disregard of their own interests.

Civic Practice

Civic practice was defined in our survey as the willingness of people to express their discontent over the abuse of authorities. In our survey, the readiness to sign a petition, to participate in permitted protests or to join unannounced demonstrations were the indicators of civic practice. The correlation of the participation in permitted protest with community life was the most significant. However, we also learned from the data that intensive community life was no prerequisite for participation in remonstrative manifestations. In other words, the correlation of the radical manifestations against political abuse with the community life was considerably insignificant; radical measures are characteristic for isolated and individual 'freedom fighters' and not for sociable people.

Civic participation and community life intensified each other in the case of the younger respondents, but not in the case of the elderly. It should be also noted that the averages of community life were normally higher than the averages civic participation in the sample, but civic participation was strikingly more significant than community life by the sympathisers of the most powerful opposition parties. Apparently, politically committed young supporters of political parties tend to replace community life with public participation.

Social Participation

We also intended to specify what proportions of the society does or does not participate in public issues, and what proportion is isolated and marginalized due to the lack of community relationships. The indexes of community life, attitude towards public life and civic practice were aggregated into the index of social participation. With cluster analysis we differentiated between five levels of social participation.

Only 3, 6% of the respondents belonged to the highest category, and 17, 4% to the second level. These two upper categories comprised the publicly and socially very active one fifth. The members of these two groups had extensive relationship networks with active community practice and high degree of need for social participation; moreover, their attitude towards public life, their public participation and their civic practice were significant as well. According to the statistics of linear regression, the chance of getting into the two upper groups depended on the respondents' childhood community practice and educational attainment. In other words, the most active participants of community and public life had already started to build community relations in their childhood. Later, in their adulthood, the high educational attainment enabled them to comprehend the necessary information about public issues and prompted an active social participation.

One third of the sample (31, 5%) belonged to the medium category. People in this group had an average level of social and public activity. Half of the sample was distributed between the two lowest levels of social participation index (37% on the weak level and 10, 5% on the passive level), thus every second respondent was left out of communities or refused to participate in public life.

The two upper levels of participation index (only one fifth of the sample) meant the small proportion of the population that was actively involved in social participation. Most of these participants had at least high school diploma. The percentage of men was higher in these groups than the percentage of women. Two thirds of these participants (64, 3%) belonged to the upper two quintiles if income categories. Our data suggested more people would join communities and participate in social and public life actively with the improvement of financial security and the increase of average educational level.

However, the results of our survey indicated clearly that the community and public life of the present society is controlled by the upper one fifth. The macro-identity of the upper one fifth included occupational, ideological (religious or political) and national identities. They identify themselves less frequently with the majority of the society, for example, their local identity was weak. This means that the most active one fifth of social participation is engaged in public life usually because of the wish for further prestige or because of an ideological or national identity. They rarely consider the interests of their direct environment and do not feel attached to their immediate communities.

In sum, the proportion of the socially and civically active citizens would increase, if the average level of education improved, the number of people with stable financial background grew and the local identity strengthened simultaneously. If these conditions are fulfilled, people can participate in community and public life more actively first at local and later at national level.

Community Life and Public Life of Villages – Seven Villages of Three Countries

Our research hypothesis presumed that public life is more intensive in local communities because of frequent face-to-face interactions. In contrast with our assumption, the survey proved that the socially-publicly most active upper fifth of the society- the most important actors of social life- did not adopt any local identities and compared to other groups their social ties to their immediate environment are weaker. In order to find the reason for this phenomenon and to answer other questions about the relationship between local communities and public life, we examined the population of seven Hungarian villages of three countries.

In the sample settlements, more than half of the respondents were engaged actively in agricultural production. In addition to agricultural work, most of the people commuted to work. A few decades ago when industry have developed extensively, many families have moved to the nearby cities or industrial centres. Nowadays, young people prefer commuting, since technology facilitates it. They do their 'primary' work in another settlement, but they build their homes and plan their future in the village. The number of families who flee the urban life grows as well. Some of these families were not able to cope with the high costs of urban life and try to recover financially in the countryside, but there are some families who chose rural life because of the proximity of nature and healthier living conditions.

Previously (especially in the youth of the now elderly generations) inhabitants of the Hungarian villages outside of Hungary were more often compelled to seek employment abroad than the inhabitants of the Hungarian villages. Fourth fifths of the respondents of Hungarian ethnic villages outside

of Hungary had relatives abroad, while only every third participants of the Hungarian villages had relatives in a foreign country. The more affluent a village was in Hungary and the more employment opportunities its inhabitants had because of the proximity of a city, the less people worked abroad. The inhabitants of villages leave their home only in case of financial problems, since the persistent power of the village is still very strong. Three fourths of the sample never considered leaving their home villages. Members of the younger generation plan their future locally, even if they are compelled to leave temporarily due to unemployment and economic circumstances, but they want to return.

The trust in others, in strangers is the strongest in the villages of Transylvania and Vojvodina. Traditional relations, ethnic interdependence and the need for cooperation are the reasons for this high degree of trust. In case of Hungary, the trust was the weakest in those villages where the proximity of a city intensified the effects of urbanisation. In addition to urbanisation, poverty and social inequality influenced the degree of trust negatively. Accordingly, trust is weak in affluent and urbanised villages in the proximity of cities, and in the villages where the living conditions are the most unequal.

One of the most criteria of community is solidarity. According to our result, only an insignificant part of the village sample was left out of the solidarity networks. Apart from some percentage, every participant had received help from others (in form of money, work or emotional support) in year preceding the survey. Ethnic identity seems to preserve traditional solidarity values the most effectively. Help with material goods (money, work or other products) was motivated in ethnic villages by tradition, while in the most disadvantaged regions by need, but it was still significant in both cases. Civilisation, wealth and urbanisation did not decrease the level of material help, but it diminished emotional support. In

contrast material help remained frequent in the ethnic Hungarian villages even if it was not economically indispensable anymore, because solidarity facilitates the preservation of cultural unity.

Surprisingly, the inhabitants of villages devalued the cohesion of their communities. The reason for the discontent was possibly the fact that the interest and obligation to help with material solidarity generated many conflicts among the inhabitants. The community, the willingness to help and the cohesion of the village was evaluated the most positively and generally appreciated in the villages where fewer residents participated in the solidarity network because of the great number of the commuters, where the cohesion is created by shared amusement and enjoyable free-time activities, and not in the villages where the interdependence of the inhabitants is strong so they are compelled to cooperate. As a result of the celebrations and 'ritual' interactions of free-time activities, the commuters esteemed the community of the village highly, especially compared to the impersonal relations of the cities.

More than two thirds of the villagers had groups of friends. There were huge discrepancies between the villages in Hungary and the Hungarian villages outside of Hungary. The latters had a higher proportion of people who had friends than Hungarian villages did. In the ethnic Hungarian villages, traditionally strong local connections evolve into friendships, while the percentage of people with friendship circles was higher in cities in Hungary. Most of the traditional relationships have already disappeared in the Hungarian villages, but new civil relationships have failed to emerge. As we have mentioned above, the inhabitants of Hungarian villages were less trustful e as well.

In sum, human interconnection was less satisfactory in Hungarian villages, and consequently the number of friendship groups was lower than in the Hungarian villages outside of

Hungary. Despite this fact, friendships seemed to be the second most important community ties (beyond family) even in Hungarian villages. The common amusement with friends was more frequent in the villages where the effects of urbanisation and civilisation were stronger because of the nearby city, namely in the Hungarian villages.

Two thirds of the villagers (69%) had friendship circles. A smaller percentage was involved in an organised community (59%), and without the religious communities, the proportion of organised community participation dropped to 33% (one third of the sample). In other words, our results showed that the proportion of members of organised communities was higher in the rural sample than in the nationally representative sample. In other words, the collected data confirmed our research hypothesis: the network of small communities was denser in villages than in the cities.

The proportion of isolated individuals was low in the rural sample; it was only every sixth person who was not engaged in informal or formal small communities. The majority was integrated in some kind of small community of the village, and this means a chance of the improvement of public participation and democratic activity. However, the proportion of participants who was not interested in civic and political participation was still high, 41%.

According to our results, villagers with more intensive community ties were more likely to get involved in local public and social life. The proportion of community relationships and the level of participation in public life mainly correlated in the villages: more intensive community relations meant more active participation in public and political life. We found only one exceptional village where the number of the commuters and the average level of education were higher; here the inhabitants were considerably interested in public and political

issues, but they did not participate in local communities, and their community ties were quite weak.

The integrity of villages and the proportion of the inhabitants who were capable of community and civic participation were revealed with the synthesis of the scales of community relations and civic attention. Two thirds of the sample was integrated somehow into the community of the village and participated in community and public life actively. The isolated one third was divided; some of them were isolated only from the community of the village, but they were interested in individually in public life and participated in organisations. They realised their public activity outside of the village. Unfortunately, these people cannot contribute to the democratisation of local communities.

We intended to answer the question whether the active community life in the villages and the dense network of relationships developed the need for the participation in local public and democratic life. The research confirmed that the majority of the villagers were interested in public life, but those who would participate in formalized public or political manifestations (petition, protest) constituted the minority. At least two thirds of the sample were interested in local public life. The discontent with formalized manifestation originated in party politics which rather disturbed the inhabitants of the village in its current forms, so it did not contribute to the development of the need for the improvement of local democracy. The local elections divided the population temporarily, but the village continued to function as an integrated unity after the end of the elections. In contrast, party politics generated conflicts continuously, the instructions of leaders of political parties disintegrated the local community, and these factors affected local public life negatively.

In other words, the renewal of local democracy would be possible, if the representatives of the political parties were

appointed and elected by the inhabitants of the village, the public and political demands were formulated locally, and the political parties consulted the community opinion in the local assembly. If macrosociety regards local democracy as a superfluous and disturbing factor, and ignores the local communities and emphasized the superiority of party politics, a small privileged power group takes over control, and there is no chance of the renewal of democracy.

International Trends of Community Life, Trust and Social Participation

The international differences of social participation were examined through the correlation of the indexes of community life and trust in the 2008 database of the European Social Survey. We intended to reveal the influence of macrosocial living conditions in certain countries on the degree of general trust, on the community and public relations and on social participation. We synthesised the scales of the institutional and individual trust, and the organised and informal community relationships, and we used this composite index to determine the degree of social participation in different countries. The European countries were classified into five hierarchical groups according to their national averages of the participation index, according to the average level of social participation:

Excellent: Denmark, Norway, Finland, Sweden, Switzerland, and Holland
Good: Germany, Belgium, France, United Kingdom
Medium or average: Cyprus, Estonia, Spain, Israel

Weak: Latvia, Croatia, Poland, Portugal, Czech Republic, Russia, Slovakia, Slovenia
Deficient: Bulgaria, Hungary, Greece, Turkey, Romania, Ukraine

It is obvious from the list that the general trust of the inhabitants, the community and social participation and democratic activity of southern or post-communist countries is insufficient compared to the prosperous Northern European countries where the distribution of wealth is more balanced. Trust and community and social participation are more intensive in those countries where the majority of the people live in relative affluence with higher average level of educational attainment. Accordingly, social participation is a result of resourceful living conditions provided by wealthy, educated, egalitarian and democratic society, and not vice versa. The economies of the countries which were not affected by international traumas and dictatorships developed harmoniously and integrally. Because of the favourable economic and social conditions, trust increased, moreover, traditional and civil communities were preserved which intensified the citizens' need for active democratic participation.