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Openness, humility and trust, conditions to achieving community democracy.

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Track 3: Community Psychology in Context-

Community, Social Movements and (un) democratic traditions.

México undergoes an enormous natural and social devastation. The situation has become almost unbearable in the last 35 years. As a modest contribution to confront such devastation I propose three general community categories to analyze and organize the struggles towards the building of a new social tissue. The proposal comes from my 40 years community life and work in the middle of a poor, despised and native people. Together with my wife we have condensed that experience in our 2014 book “Community: Interaction, Conflict and Utopia”. To carry out social transformations we have noticed that community integration and democratic commitment require the implementation of three elements: the creation of a structural basis, rather territorial, and a social cohesion resulting from a strong subjective conscience of dignity, at the personal and collective levels. These are characteristics that are visible in the life of an experience if one is able to perceive openness in the interactions, humility in confronting conflicts and trust in journeying towards the utopian horizons of a dignified life. In the XIX Century slavery, racism, and colonizing processes increased in Africa, Asia and Latin America. In the XX Century the ambition and arrogance of the rich countries became patent through two World Wars and a Cold War. The last two decades have witnessed the development of human degradation and planetary devastation as new malignant fruits of nature´s abuse, human work´s devaluation, money´s idolatry, and overvaluation of knowledge by itself. The possibilities for a dignified life have now to be looked for at the levels, styles and quality of life that have survived in the life of solidarity, resilience and audacity of the poor, the despised and the native peoples of the world.

Openness, humility and trust, conditions to achieving community democracy.

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Introduction.

The great expectations created by the French Revolution at the end of the XVIII Century in the Western World, with the three magnificent words of Liberty, Equality and Fraternity that proclaimed a dignified life for all human beings were gradually evaporated in the subsequent centuries. The existence of privileges for a small number of determined sectors of humanity were confirmed and perpetuated by aristocracies of old and new sign, and by a bourgeoisie that concentrated the general wealth through work overexploitation, nature devastation, money accumulation and knowledge elite´s appropriation. The progressive industrialization and urbanization of Europe and North America in the XIX and XX centuries were the landmarks of the arrogant modernity of those peoples. In the XIX century slavery, racism and contempt for the non European peoples remained alive and the abusive colonizing processes increased in Africa, Asia and Latin America. In the XX century the enormous ambition and immense arrogance of Europe and the Anglosaxon world became patent through two World wars and a Cold war that was the outcome of political errors of the countries that prevailed after those wars and dominated the world scene. The last two decades of the XX Century and the three five year periods of this beginning of the XXI Century have been witnesses of the development of human degradation and planetary

devastation. Mexico undergoes an enormous natural and social devastation. The situation has become almost unbearable in the last thirty-five years.

In this presentation we will develop a proposal to analyse and organize the struggles towards the building of a new social tissue for a dignified life. It comes from our 40 years of community life and work in the middle and with a poor, despised and indigenous people. Together we have condensed that experience in our 2014 book titled “Community: Interaction, conflict and utopia” (Almeida y Sánchez, 2014). To carry out social transformations in this damaged world we have noticed that community integration and democratic commitment have now to be looked for at the levels, styles and quality of life that have survived in the life of solidarity, resilience and audacity of the indigenous populations.

The paper will include four sections:

1. A brief overview of the contents of the above mentioned book: a) A discussion of the origin and development of the concept of community in the social sciences literature; b) A description of the sociohistorical context in which we are immersed and which has conditioned and conditions the community life and work of any experiences of social transformation; c) A brief summary of our experience in the rural ant indigenous situations in which we have been involved and from which we have learned the need to be immersed in the thickness of life; the consideration of the fecundity of facing the vulnerabilities personal and collective of the participants in the struggle; and the utopian horizon of building horizontal relationships of reciprocal recognition in the everyday life of the region; d) A fairly extensive exposition of how those learned and experienced key elements of our life and work, interaction, conflict and utopia, can be traced by considering psychosocial and structural categories.

2. The main corpus of the paper is conformed by the 27 premises that refer to the intercrossing of the psychosocial categories: intersubjectivity, unconscious and identity; and the structural ones: time/space, power, material conditions. Nine intercrossings are related to interaction, nine to conflict and nine to utopia.

3. Out of the way we have thought and experienced those premises. We have come to conclude that the path to community democracy is made of counter attitudes confronting the dogmatic, arrogant and self-defeating ones of the global and neoliberal world: Openness in the interaction, humility in dealing with the conflicting vulnerabilities and trust in journeying towards a utopian dignified life. Those attitudes, to develop, need structural - psychosocial signs as landmarks of the consolidation of a community experience of social transformation: a) The materialization of a structural basis, rather territorial, where the experience is located or relocated and identified. b) The enduring social cohesion of the people committed to the endeavor, however small the group can be. c) The strong subjective conscience of personal and collective dignity of the members of such group. These are the signs of a consolidated experience where community democracy is evolving by the countercurrent effort to survive and thrive in the middle of a hellish world.

4. A final epilogue. The paper intends to discuss our local, regional, Mexican community experience as our contribution to the debate about the diversity in global enactments of community psychology.

I. The contents of the book. “Community: interaction, conflict and utopia”.

The book is the outcome of a long conjugal debate on the relevance or not of keeping the discussions about community; on the relevance or not of keeping the discussions about society. These two concepts refer to realities immersed in the present civilizational breakdown, in the modernity/coloniality crisis, that have made patent and acute to extremes the destruction that the speculative financial capital, the transnational corporations and the organized crime are doing to human life and to its possibilities of reproduction. These three monsters have also generated religious and political fundamentalist responses that alienate minds and detonate new forms of violence. They have conformed a climate of impotence, a

reality of powerlessness that frequently produces cynicism or indifference. Several recent events make visible, to our point of view, the beginning of the modernity/coloniality breakdown, the civilizational collapse: The forced vanishing of 43 students in Ayotzinapa, Guerrero, Mexico by a confabulation of the organized crime and the State; and the criminal assaults to defenseless people in France and Belgium.

We tried to analyze the remaking of sociocommunitarian links that are being created in different lattitudes as reactions to the civilization changes. There are fundamentalist communitarisms and emancipatory processes; depression and resilience; resistance and creativity facing barbarian identities, predator individualisms and subjectifying individualisms. We tried to listen to different sociology and social psychology theoreticians. We studied the trajectory of the concept of communityfrom an evolutionist and lineal point of view, going from the traditional to the modern, from the affective, compulsory, imposed, instinctive, natural, to the concept of society as the rational, contractual, free association of citizens. Such vision ignores that modernity was achieved thanks to the spoliation and stigma of coloniality and of the idea of a progress that now goes to pieces. We noticed that there is a community psychology that strives for the peoples´ adaptation of imposed normatives and also a community psychology that looks for people´s liberation. We finally presented three theoretical approaches that can be useful in understanding community and society: the theory of Alain Touraine that looks through subjectivation to the understanding of the societal production of the non-society. The theory of Boaventura de Sousa Santos that inspired by a Marxist tradition adopts a position that emphasizes the ecology of knowledges as a step towards new civilizatory horizons; he questions the liberal and the Marxist ways of thinking as branches of the epistemology of modernity. The third theory is the one fro m Raquel Gutiérrez Aguilar that reorganizes the classes antagonisms, understanding the actual social dynamics as a war between the network of transnational corporations against emergent weaved communitarian schemes. We leave open the way to construct a new concept of community more congenial with our extremely difficult times.

The experience of San Miguel Tzinacapan, our experience, already described and analyzed in our 2005 book, “The paths of incertitude” (Sánchez y Almeida, 2005) was brought again to our reflection. We decided to rethink it again as the intercommunitarian process of intercultural relations in which we have been involved and which has afforded to us life experiences and illuminations to go through this obscure night of history. We summarize the whole enterprise as a solidarian pilgrimage of countercurrent tendency consisting of entering into the thickness of life, recognizing vulnerabilities and struggling to build horizontal relationships of reciprocal recognition among human beings. The pilgrimage started at the rural indigenous region of Sierra Norte de Puebla and has been continued in an academic setting, intending always to connect the two scenarios.

From that analysis, careful attention to our intuitions, and deep consideration of our cultural realities we developed analytical axes that can be useful to understand social and communitarian processes: The structural axes are: Time/space, power relationships and material conditions of existence. The psychosocial ones: Intersubjectivity, the unconscious and identity. We acknowledge that the intercrossings of these axes have allowed us to construct a three by three frame of social understanding as an unfinished task but according to us one useful analytical step.

The conducting thread of our book is the communitarian pilgrimage to a meaningful humanity, a pilgrimage to life fecundity, going countercurrent to promises of individual success.

II. The 27 premises for understanding and being involved in community as interaction, conflict and utopia.

In the book we have made an effort to understand how the social links are being restructured and what kind of community and society are emerging and how they can be conceptualized. The experience of San Miguel Tzinacapan, one

among many others, butone in which we have been actors of that process, bring several paths of analysis that can be useful. From this experience we propose the concepts of Interaction, Conflict and Utopia as the characteristics to elucidate the new and old community links dynamics and their micro-macro societal relation. Otherwise, from the San Miguel Tzinacapan experience springs out a tonality or atmosphere with which we have tried to confront the contemporary world breakdown: Get into the thickness of life as a specific form to develop interaction; recognize vulnerabilities as the strategy to identify and confront conflicts; strive to build horizontal relationships of reciprocal recognition as utopian perspective. How are evolving the practices of convivial intimity and also those of external relations? How it takes place the daily territorial existence and also the symbolic daily experience?

For the structural axes we adopt the Castells (2001a: 53) proposal of situating the community links in our world, articulating the global interaction in which the time/space dimensions are overturned as a product of the globalizations and the multidimensional politics that are modifying power relations. Besides, we assume the marxist perspective of class in relation to the restructuring of the material conditions of life.

For the psychosocial axes we look at the understanding brought about by the intersubjectivity realities; at the deep consideration of human reality looked at from the unconscious; and at the diversity recognition-differentiation that have conformed new social identities and also new reification processes.

From a methodological approach we have emphasized in our book the psychosocial axes inserting each one of them into the structural axes. In the intercrossing of these two dimensions we offer categories of reconfiguration, potentiation, property restructuration; mental health and unconscious, social unconscious, division of work; identification, social character and social class. We offer three tables to visualize the way these elements are structured for each of the three main concepts of interaction, conflict an utopia.

A. The nine premises of interaction.

Table 1. Interaction: 9 structural-psychosocialintercrossings.

Structural Axes / Psychosocial Axes	Time/space dimensions	Power relations	Material relations.
Interaction.			
Intersubjectivity.	a. Space/time changes and their influences on intersubjectivity	b. Strengthening or weakening of intersubjectivity	c. Material relations, polarization of property and intersubjectivity
Unconscious	d. Unconscious and mental health or deterioration	e. Enlightning or repressions of the social unconscious	f. Unconscious and inequality legitimation
Recognition/Differentiation forms.	g. Identifications and identities reconfigurations	h. Subversion or adaptation of social character	i. Identity processes of inclusion/exclusion

Source: Almeida y Sánchez, 2014, p.132

<u>Interaction.</u>

How to enter into the thickness of life?

a. Creating a flexible dynamic intersubjectivity in a community experience between the ones of internal and external origins and considering spacial and temporal variations.

b. In both, internal and external participants, the conscience of their own dignity conditions the potentiality of the intersubjectivity.
c. The material conditions of both social actors are key to the construction of a dignified intersubjectivity.

d. Both agents need to be aware of the daily life obscure aspects that hurt the personal and collective mental health.
e. Confronting repressed desires, interests and realities that prevent the conscience of hidden away potentialities.
f. Confronting the unconscious legitimations of inequalities in the material conditions of existence.

g. Facilitating for both agents a positive identity dynamics, personal and collective, strong and flexible.
h. Facilitating personal and collective resistancies and defiencies that are needed for qualifiad identity processes.
i. Facilitating the effort to break away classist identities, personal and collective.

B. The nine premises of conflict.

Table 2. Conflict: 9 structural-psychosocialintercrossings.

Structural Axes / Psychosocial Axes	Time/space dimensions	Power relations	Material relations.
Conflict			
Intersubjectivity.	a. Conformism or resistance confronting the new planetary conflictivity	b. Inertia or resilience confronting conflict	c. Spolation or reappropriation in conflictive processes
Unconscious	d. Negativity or confrontation of conflict in mental health	e. Servitude or autonomy	f. Autonomous solidarity or coloniality-alienation
Recognition/Differentiation forms.	g. Identifications reconfiguration or violent identity rejections	h. Social character, submission or resistance and organization	i. Struggle and recognition or depredation and contempt

Source: Almeida y Sánchez, 2014, p.172

<u>Conflict.</u>

How to propitiate the identification and recognition of vulnerabilities, one´s and of somebody else´s?

a. Breaking away the entrenchments in times and spaces that hinder the common creation of a different style of life.
b. Recognizing and confronting assymetries of power that cripple reinforcing the jointly vision and action processes.
c. Ribeling against any personal and collective despoilment suffered and produced by predators past and present.

d. Searching for our hidden sources of ambiguity and cruelty in our daily dealings.
e. Unmaking yearnings for personal and collective power.
f. Deconstructing colonial and racist traits that have been introjected along our trajectories.

g. Recognizing the identity hatreds in which we move and which we have incorporated.
h. Recognizing the scars and injuries that have been provoked by an injust self-denigration.
i. Struggling against the social absurd, the reification, alienation, spoliation and scorn abysses in which we have been submerged by the capitalist hydra.

C. The nine premises of utopia.

Table 3. Utopia: 9 structural-psychosocialintercrossings.

Structural Axes / Psychosocial Axes	Time/space dimensions	Power relations	Material relations.
Utopia.			
Intersubjectivity.	a. Shared conviviality vs individualist skepticism	b. Neocommunity vs Social fascism	c. Social and affective inclusion without inequality vs neoliberal mediations of exclusion
Unconscious	d. Growth and interdependence syndrome vs deterioration and passive spectator syndrome	e. Archaic traits of cruelty vs luminous archetypes of goodness and androginy	f. Openness to historic options without privileges vs denial of contradictions and evil
Recognition/Differentiation forms.	g. Horizontal recognition of diversities vs substitutive reifying universalism	h. Lived typical human experiences vs reifying indifference	i. Dignity and solidarity in communal spaces vs accumulation logics by spoliation

Source: Almeida y Sánchez, 2014, p.213

Utopia.

How to take the road towards horizontal relations of reciprocal recognition?

a. Taking into consideration the collective memory and social imaginaries of future from both agents in the building of social tissue.
b. Approaching with flexibility the conditions to avoid social fascism and create neocommunity: Minority groups, commitment degrees, multilocalizations.
c. Being alert to the imprevisible of depredation logistics, and without looking away from the suffering, the injustice and the miserable life of the excluded.

d. Collaborating to close the Jungian abyss of consciousness-unconsciousness, making aware of the mental deterioration that implies living life as a spectator.
e. Being alert to the depredator collective unconscious and without downsizing the guard confronting the perpretators of violence.
f. Being militants in the fight against evil, being conscious that hope is the resistance in front of the cruelty of the world.

g. Building a dynamic intersubjective ourselves (nosotros), rendering each human being towards oneself and recognizing that we all are political beings.
h. Learning the stamina of language of the sentiments, the lived experiences (vivencias); and the weakness of indifference; in building social character.
i. Living in a constant pilgrimage at countercurrent in a reciprocal accompaniment. This is the art of constructing what the capital destroys.

III. The path to community democracy.

Mexico goes through an historical period characterized by violence, devastation and discrimination of the majority of its population. It is a nightmarish, awful, terrible, sociohistorical context. It is a situation in which the corruption of those who capitalized the power generates an ambiance of revulsion. It is a social ecology in which the impunity of those who control the economy creates an atmosphere of shame. It is a social space in which the “lawful state” means a constant threat to the life of its dwellers, a society of fear. In these conditions the social tissue has been destroyed and it is urgent to think and act to stop such catastrophy.

The purpose of our conference, sustained by a life and practice of more than 40 years intending to built at a small scale and countercurrent a community experience, is the proposal of not ceasing in the exertion of creating a social tissue of a life conducing to the human needs satisfaction, no only of the basic ones, when we think about the existence. We try to tend to the enjoying and facing of the life adversities but in commun. Our experience has been narrated in the book “The paths of uncertainty” (Sánchez y Almeida, 2005) and in the one we are commenting in this presentation (Almeida y Sánchez, 2014).

Interaction refers to a community life which is a practice of liberty. We have learned that this approach needs people decided to enter into the thickness of life of the groups with which one lives and works, and not as a freelance social actor but as the member of a team. The task is to create community conscience, of forging an intersubjectivity able to understand and share texts and contexts, of establishing a structural basis where one could question the belief and practices in which domination is supported. The matter is to learn to read and write collectively, to strengthen critical and lucid thinking, to destroy the phantom of the predators. This structural basis is the task of creating community, team groups. Of not being alone never again. To have company is as important to learn to live as to write it is to learn to think.

Conflict refers to a community life which is a practice of equality. Any community experience implies a polyvalent social space infested with assymetries

of culture, age, class, ethnia, gender and economy. The social actors should be attentive to face and confront social differences, looking to create social cohesion and to avoid confinments and fundamentalisms. The recognitions of one´s vulnerabilities, those of our team and those of the population in which one has been involved is the condition to learn from the conflicts, to accept the right of any human being of being human. The practice of narrating the own experiences lead to acquire a solid thought, full of affectivity, of social support, to deal with oppressions from an ambiance emotionally rich in the joyous struggle. To have company, make groupings and support one another, reinforces the intentionality of creating community conscience.

Utopia is the most critical and neglected aspect of community psychology. It is the one that fosters it as a practice of fraternity. When one strives to be conscious of our own dignity and the one of the others, one can not tolerate, from apathy and conformism, the abomination of corruption, the shame of impunity and the ostentation of injustice. Critical community psychology requires the constant effort to democratize the democracy, the promotion of the utopia of horizontal relations of reciprocal recognition. Reading and writing, narrating texts and contexts of daily life is the source of a strong and flexible thinking to combat privileges. To have company is the way to have a life and a dignity project supported by an autonomous solidarity.

Summarizing, this is a proposal of community psychology as politization supported by the building of a social intersubjectivity made of openness and freedom; of reinforcing a social cohesion consolidated by humility attitudes and the search for equality; of struggling for a dignified life for everybody, with trust in a fraternity/sorority.

IV. Final reflection.

This 6th Conference of International Community Psycholoy compels us, without complacency, to rethink and reconsider our trajectories. In our case it is the one of

a group of friends that started to live together and to look for a new style of life among ourselves and with the people of a Nahuat region in the mountainous North of Puebla, 40 years ago. We have tried to build a “nosotros” (ourselves) as self dispossession, as assumption and as commitment. We have been and are in a conviviality of long years among us and among the indigenous and urban groups with which we have shared living situations and possibilities. The intention of self-despossesion (despojo) has consisted in putting to a critical perspective our vision of the world and of the events, to create mental and vital openness in our everyday life towards everything that is alive. It is not and has not been easy to stand like that, being attentive to everything that life has been requiring of us and trying to live together (convivir), share and care.

The intention to assume the conjectural (lo cotidiano) and the historical has consisted on being present, be a presence to look for the way to liberate, educate and transform us together. As can be understood, this intention of assuming has been frequently contaminated by urgencies of acting, fighting, intervening, going out of the anonymous standing, and of appropriating us the fecund actions achieved. The intention to commit ourselves has been manifested by our decision and effort to enter into the thickness of life with all of our vulnerabilities and with the utopia of reciprocally recognizing us as singular subjects in the community of a common world.

We share the destabilizing process to which we have been convoqued by this 6th ICCP 2016. We like to share also in the tonifying experiences that this gathering opens to the fecundity of the vulnerable.

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