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Contextualizing Democratization
and the Practice of Social Research

(Demokratijos kontekstualizacija ir socialinio tyrimo praktika)

Santrauka. *Straipsnyje nagrinėjama demokratinės žinojimo visuomenės koncepcija, kuri remiasi metodologinėmis fenomenologinės sociologijos pirmtako Alfredo Schützo prielaidomis, kad kiekvienas mūsų esti 1) kasdienybės pasaulio praeivis, 2) ekspertas ir 3) gerai informuotas pilietis.*

Socialinio veiksmo metodologijos požiūriu, dialogas yra hermeneutinio interpretacinio supratimo raiška, apibrėžiama pagal dalies-visumos santykį. Hermeneutinis principas rodo, kad socialiniai mokslai remiasi ikiinterpretuotu, ikireflektyviu, ikiteoriniu gyvenamojo pasaulio pagrindu. Kitaip tariant, savaime suprantamos prasmės atsargos, susidedančios iš kasdienio socialinio ir kultūros patyrimo, ir yra toji sąlyga, kuri leidžia kalbėti apie teorinį žinojimą apie patyrimą. Dėl šios priežasties socialinis mokslinis žinojimas yra reflektyvus. Jis priklauso nuo ikisupratimo ar interpretacijos – nuo savo paties egzistavimo sąlygų supratimo.

Svarbus politinio autonomiškumo principas – dialogas – esti nuoroda ne į kažką, bet su kažkuo. Tai rodo domėjimąsi kitu. Metodologinėje dialogo koncepcijoje, kuri remiasi bendruomenės supratimu, socialinis patyrimas nagrinėjamas kaip santykis tarp individualios savimonės, kito ir pasaulio. Dialogiškas interpretacijos pobūdis nėra tik nuorodą į kitą. Tai – žiūrėjimas su kitu. Tai – vieta, kur interpretacinis supratimas susiejamas su bendruomenės „metodologija". Paskiro žmogaus žinojimas yra kolektyvinio teisėtumo, bet ne privataus tyrimo rezultatas. Šį žinojimą įgyjame šeimose, mokyklose, bendruomenėse; skaitydami knygas, laikraščius, žiūrėdami televiziją ir naršydami internete.

Siekdami išsaugoti ir stiprinti gerai informuoto pilietiškumo sąlygas, turime kurti tarpinius – viešojo švietimo, žurnalistinio etoso, sutartinės demokratijos – institutus, kurių paskirtis yra bendrasis pilietinis gėris, kuriamas bendromis pastangomis. Šiuo požiūriu politinė žurnalistika ir komunikacija yra pirminės sąlygos, leidžiančios išsaugoti ir tęsti politinės (t.y. demokratinės) visuomenės principus.

Reikia skirti, viena vertus, politinę komunikaciją ir, kita vertus, socialinę bei individualiąją veiklą. Pastaroji susijusi su interesais. Kad ji taptų politine ir demokratine, jai stinga autonomijos. Politinė komunikacija – veikla, kuri vadovaujasi autonomiška viešąja diskusija, - atsako už padarytus sprendimus. Šiuo požiūriu privatūs interesai, kurių motyvacija yra iracionali, slepia arba naikina racionalią ir laisvą viešąją diskusiją. O tokia diskusija neturi būti supaprastinta. Be to, ji neturi vengti prieštaravimų. Tai, ko reikia vengti, yra paviršutiniškas požiūris, dažnai pateikiamas kaip „objektyvus". Paprastai manoma: jeigu pateikiami du priešingi požiūriai, tai „problema" jau yra suformuluota. Tačiau rimtas dialogas reikalauja kruopščiai išnagrinėti dalyką dar prieš pateikiant vadinamuosius „skirtingus požiūrius". Paprastas požiūrių pateikimas negali būti esminė žinojimo sąlyga.

Griežtai kalbant, politika turi vieną pagrindinį uždavinį – atvirą sritį, kur kiekvienas bendruomenės narys dalyvauja spręsdamas viešuosius klausimus. Tokia laikysena rodo, kad visi bendruomenės nariai yra vienodai įsipareigoję dalyvauti viešuose politiniuose svarstymuose. Tai – pastangos rūpintis politikos etosu, t.y. politiniu būdu, kuris išsaugo ir stiprina viešosios srities galimybę. Kaip tik todėl politinė-žurnalistinė komunikacija, kaip demokratijos etoso dalis, turi suprasti perskyrą tarp viešosios ir privačiosios sričių ir domėtis, ar politinio pobūdžio teiginiai yra susiję su viešaisiais rūpesčiais. Demokratinės politinės žurnalistikos paskirtis – informuoti bendruomenę apie maskuojančią politinio teatro veiklą, jo nemokšiškumą ir sprendimų stygių. Tokia sritis nėra natūrali arba socialinė. Tai – autonomiška politinė sritis.

Introduction

Political communication is strictly distinguished from social and individual activities that are interest-laden and thus lack the autonomy to be political. The latter belongs solely to political societies that are democratic. Indeed, there must be a strict restriction of the use of political" to a public domain in which every member of society participates in public debates and decisions. This participation is the continuous origination and maintenance of the political domain as a guarantee of human autonomy and equality.

This equality suggests that the publicly appointed officials are bound by the democratic ethos to maintain such a public domain and thus are called on to communicate the public issues; any communication that is designed for effect, for rhetorical obfuscation, is interest-laden and hence designed to advance the motives of an individual or a group and not the concerns of the public. In various ways, such a communication, and those who in their expertise help in its design, adds to the legitimation crisis that leads finally to public cynicism.

Political journalism, as part and parcel of the originating and maintaining of the political society, is designed to serve the public by providing information that is of public concern. This is not to say that gossip columns of social interest are to be excluded from mass media. Rather, the primary task is information – despite the tendency of the public officials and their experts to obfuscate and mislead. One could in fact argue that political journalism and communication is, by now, the primary instrument of continuing the origination and maintenance of political (i.e., democratic) society (Mickunas, Pilotta 1999).

Democratic Principles

In the Western tradition, there are posited two fundamental conceptions of the basis for democracy. The first is the classical Greek conception of human equality, based on a shared human nature, and the second rests on the conceptions stemming from various modern views. The latter are subsumed under the title of political enlightenment. Although this title hides a diverse set of conceptions, there are some basic principles that are shared by them all. First, there is a rejection of human nature; second, there is a postulation of human subject who is fundamentally free both with respect to the natural environment and all social and ethical norms.

Because the United States is founded on modern conceptions, this essay focuses mainly on modern understandings of freedom, autonomy, and equality of the citizens of a democratic political community and its ethos. The ethos implies a primacy of *communication* over power and domination. In turn, the primacy of communication interconnects the various segments of the public, such as government, the citizens, the mass media, and social research.

The principles of democracy, in which free people are the final arbitrator, the free press keeps the public informed, rest on the difference between relationships that comprise a political community and other types of human relationships. The answer demands a careful scrutiny of the founding of a political community, which that it is the only one entitled to be called democratic. Only democracies deserve to be called political.

Most types of human relationships rest on numerous common interests. Such interests may become part of a democratic society. Yet there is a difference between such interests and the founding of a democratic community. The founding and the existence of such a community are tied together inextricably. Although there are purposes that may comprise our common aims, the democratic community is its own purpose with an assumed duty by each citizen to maintain it. The reason for human relationships in a

democratic community is this very relationship that is identical to its own purpose.

Autonomy must be strictly distinguished from freedom of choice. The choice is seen as a power capable of selecting among options. Yet in the final analysis, the choice is determined by an underlying motive. In this sense, its base is irrational. The freedom of autonomy is analogous to logic wherein the structures are not results of forces, but of rational and free postulations; equality of all persons stems from autonomy. If the rules, logics, rational discourses are not derivable from natural states of affairs, there is no criterion by which one cold render a decision concerning the superiority or inferiority of one postulate over another. In this sense, they are equal. Autonomous freedom as rational in the above sense results in the equality of persons who are in a position to posit the rules by which they would govern their lives and deal with the environment.

Each individual is an equal "law giver" to oneself and the environment. If there are common rules, they will not be discovered but posited and decided on in a public (i.e. political) debate. Third, the modern concept of environment as material, coupled with the view that the human is capable of remaking the environment in accordance with his or her designs, leads to an increasing technologization of the social life and to an all pervasive technocratization of politics, to political technocracy and bureaucracy.

It is essential for the understanding of the principles of democratic political society and political activities that there can be no other sources of rules apart from those originating with the public covenant. One misunderstanding must be avoided: the autonomy of each individual, as the unconditional source of law, does not imply unrestricted activities. It states that the freely posited rules are not causes that dominate human life but are rationally analyzable systems that can be modified and even rejected. Autonomous freedom means a life under freely posited, debated, and rationally achieved rules (Habermas 1970).

Such an achievement is a matter of mutual public debate and consensus. Indeed, this is the basic sense of the political: a public domain where all members of a community participate in the establishment and maintenance both of this domain and the rules. This is another way of saying that the political is identical with a continuous activity of maintaining, of originating the public domain as its own purpose. This is another way of saying that the political is identical with a continuous activity of maintaining, of originating the public domain as its own purpose. This domain is *the most basic political institution* on which all other political institutions-including the establishment of specific constitutions- rest. Without this institution, without each member of society being able to enter the public domain as an autonomous source of rules, the basic meaning of the political disappears.

One of the more important assertions is the universality of law. The universality is a guarantee of rationality or the absence of contradictions in a given law. This is, every proposed and approved law must be accepted by all, including the one who proposed it. If one proposes a law against stealing, then he or she too must freely subject him or herself to the law. If a person decides to make an exception to him or herself, then he or she contradicts him or herself because in this case the law ceases to be universal.

Any public claim to the universality of a law must exclude such contractions. But in this sense, there is assumed freedom and equality of persons as the ground of law. The universality of posited laws implies a more basic principle: if one proclaims that he or she has the autonomy to be the source of laws, then he or she must universalize this claim to include all members of a political community – all are equal

sources of law. Without this procedure, one would face a reverse contradiction: No one is the source of laws, but I am the source of such laws.

Strictly speaking, politics has one major task: an open domain in which every member of the community participated in deciding public questions. Of course, such a position also implies that all community members are equally duty-bound to participate in all public affairs. The term *duty* should not be read morally. The concern is with an ethos, a way of being political and of constantly keeping the public arena open for public participation. It is known that the Athenians of ancient Greece regarded those who failed to participate it the public affairs not as "nonpolitical" but as "incapable of being." Therein lies *the goal of community social research*. As we conceive it, communication politics is the keeping of the public arena open for public participation and the right to know.

The net result of the distinction between the political and the social-private is the conception that human autonomy requires political community where the individual's freedom is guaranteed by a free establishment of laws and a free acceptance of such laws. Public and free establishment of laws is, simultaneously, an establishment of a political community as its own purpose (i.e., the presence of the freedom of each individual to participate in the establishment of laws and the maintenance of the right of any individual to be an autonomous source of laws).

This framework allows the discussion of all other purposes. One may establish other institutions, such as legislative, administrative, and judicial, yet they too have the task of guaranteeing that in the final analysis the autonomous being remains the final arbiter or all public rules. There is a hidden condition of this guarantee: In the public arena, all social and economic differences become disregarded and everyone enters the public domain as an equal.

In a political community, a person acts from respect for the law. The composition of such a respect means; first, that a person respects freedom and is not subject to causes and impulses; second, respect for law draws its nourishment from requirement to maintain the autonomy of everyone and thus to maintain the public arena. In this arena, laws are not given as if they were natural necessities, but depend on public participation in their continuous preservation. Third, their continuity means that freedom is not merely one of the social factors, but a condition that is equally established and maintained actively. Fourth, the maintenance of political freedom and the public sphere, requires legitimate force capable of preserving the public arena against private interests and individuals who reject the freely obtained laws. Such persons have rejected their own autonomy and become subject to impulses and causes, to irrational forces. This should not be taken as if it were a moral question; rather, it reveals the ground of what is a political community and the necessity of its preservation if the human is to remain autonomous.

Rather, political community has its own ethos with respect to rights and duties in the public domain. The ethos requires a free, rational public debate and agreement on laws, issuing from mutually autonomous persons and their understanding of the necessity of maintaining the rights of all. This ethos allows for tolerance and the view that laws are not eternal. On public agreement, they can be altered or rejected. Because the posited laws are practical, they must meet the previously mentioned conditions of pubic approval and universality.

Political Communication

In principle, the institution of representative government is not democratic unless certain conditions are met. First, any person appointed by the public is bound legally to ac-

complish what the public requests. All other activities claiming to be for the sake of the public are illegal. This stems from the conception that the sole source of legality is the public and the decisions to which it binds its own members and the public officials. The public official is not to "lead" but to serve. Second, election is a dialogical process.

Persons running for public office offer their proposals on public questions; such proposals become a covenant in case the official becomes appointed. That is, because the public agreed with the proposals and thus appointed a candidate to a public office, the public official is duty-bound by that very covenant to carry out the proposals. Any failure to do so is equivalent to the breaking of a binding and communicated agreement. Such officials must be dismissed from the office immediately, and perhaps should be prosecuted for criminal activities. Third, a candidate for office should not only offer his or her proposals, but due to public discussions, should modify his or her proposals based on public input.

Ideological dogmas comprise one person's proposals, and should reflect possible modifications once they are exposed to public discussion. In a political society, the duty of the candidate is not to expound on "future hope" and 'grand visions," or even "my dream of better life," but in the first instance to communicate his or her public concerns and the concerns of his or her constituency and to offer either practical or legal solutions to such concerns. This means that political communication, if it follows the structure of autonomous public and its free domain, is responsible for the statements made. Yet in this sense, private interests, motivated by causes and irrational drives, hide, if not abolish rational, logical and free discussion of public issues.

Such a discussion need not be simplistic or without controversies. Yet one principle is im-

portant: political communication consists of a triadic structure. There is the subject matter of concern that is addressed by a speaker and the public or an opponent of the speaker. What is to be avoided is the surface view, often paraded as "objective": it is assumed that if two opposing opinions are presented, then the public has an understanding of an "issue." Yet a serious dialogue requires a thorough exposition of the subject matter of the arguments prior to its obfuscation by the so-called "different viewpoints."

A simple exposition of viewpoints does not constitute information; the subject mater of the viewpoints is fundamental. In turn, the public participation in the public arena requires that it too should be cognizant of the subject matter of discussion and not be a simple sum of yet "other views" to be taken into account. Full rationality requires no less. It would be nonsensical to debate public policy on nuclear energy without first explaining what such energy is, what it does, what are its effects, and how it functions. It would be argued persuasively that the duty of the public, and above all a candidate for office who claims to possess an ability to serve the public, not only is to be well-versed in the subject matters that are of concern to the public, but also to be able to present the subject matter to the public.

Journalism

Mass media, as transmitters of such knowledge, are among the most fundamental public "institutions" of democracy. Indeed, one could plausibly contend that they are coextensive with the continuous origination and maintenance of the autonomous source of all laws and legitimation. The uniformed citizen is hardly in position to grasp public issues and to form a rational judgment. Moreover, the very information is a condition for public dialogue, debate, and adjudication. Democracy, as an incessant self-

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maintenance, includes in its core the necessity for open information, present and available to everyone, not simply for the sake of extraneous purposes, but for its own sake as part of the ethos of democratic activity.

To speak in terms of the democratic principles explicated so far, mass media and journalism are political communication to the extent that they are geared toward information and thus the public. In this sense, there is no such thing as apolitical reporting. This is to say, in political society journalism is principally political communication – prior to questions of ideology or other agenda.

The public must be informed and the ethos of journalism in democracy requires the reporting of all such entrances in order to activate the participation of the public in public issues. Crucial to the concept of coextension between democracy as its own purpose and journalistic mass media is the principle that whenever journalists appeal to a right of free access to, and a publication of information, they are in a process of origination and maintenance of the autonomous public domain Such a demand is not natural or social but political.

In democracy, political journalism is, above all, duty bound to inform the public about such obfuscating theatrics, and what ignorances, indecisions, equivocations, they are hiding. In turn, journalistic political communication, within the ethos of democracy, must articulate and expose what is or is not relevant for the public, what is private and particular, of no public concern, and what is essential in the proposals of current or prospective public figures. If such a public figure offers a technical solution to some public concern, the task of journalistic communication is not merely to repeat what such a figure stated, but to raise questions whether the statement is an accurate and adequate comprehension of a given subject mater relevant to public concerns.

How Can a Social Scientist Promote Democratization?

In the communication literatures, *dialogue* is typically concerned with the notion of speaking "with" rather than speaking "to" or "at". Presumable, speaking "with" signifies a concern for the other, whether that other be an audience, a research respondent, or a conversational partner. From the perspective of a social action methodology, dialogue is expressive of the hermeneutic principle of interpretive understanding configure in the part-whole relationship, and it additionally signifies a particular point of view on the social.

In light of the hermeneutic principle, social science necessarily speaks from the pre-interpreted, pre-reflective, pre-theoretical ground of the life world. In other words, the taken-for-granted fund of meaning that constitutes everyday social and cultural experience is the condition for the possibility of theoretical knowledge about the experience. Social scientific knowledge, then, is necessarily reflexive – it is dependent on a pre-understanding or interpretation as its condition of existence. This circumstance is not, however, the be-all and end-all of debates regarding the relationship between social science and the social world.

The "speaking from" only reflects the foundational experience that makes social science possible. It does not reflect the founding activity by which social science creates a different social world. Intervention and transformation are unavoidable components of research activities; thus it is critical that the interests of social scientists be aligned with those of the communities of the researched. In keeping with this critical mandate, social action research acknowledges the possibility that *accountable enactments of social scientific research can enable social action for positive change in and through the political domain.*

Explicit in the conception of dialogue formalized in a community-based methodology is the elaboration of social experience as a relationship between self, other, and world. The dialogical character of interpretation is not simply looking *at* an *other*, rather it is looking *with* an other at some *thing* which the other seeks to communicate. For the community-based researcher, speaking to the social world is dependent on the interobjectivity of the social relationship- self and other oriented toward a thing held in common. This is where the role of interpretive understanding comes into play in community-based methodology (Pilotta, Kreps 2001).

The notion of interpretive understanding further points to the inanity of a "presuppositionless" social science. Were it even possible to purge oneself of one's presuppositions, understanding could not be accomplished. It is only on the basis of one's own suppositions that the point of view of another person can be understood. In the research activity, the point of critical self-reflection is to determine which of one's presuppositions are appropriate and which are inappropriate given a particular situation. Understanding is understanding *something*.

In this case, interpretive understanding is the grasping of the way in which a community defines its own (situated) interest. In social action research, social issues become the common object of orientation for researcher and researched, and it is in terms of the community's definition of those issues that the interest structures of social science and social action can be aligned. But in order for this to happen, researchers must effectively gain community access.

The practice of social action research requires that we develop general influence in the community, and it demands that we create public trust and public accountability. In other words, in critical social action research, the role of the research-who-produces-research is replaced by research activities that define the *public* characteristics of the researchers. In this, the history of the research generates a motivational basis, a public history establishing a place for the researcher in the organization of the social setting. It is presupposed that it is not the reality of a viewpoint that provides a working necessity, not that of an inaccessible viewer. This premise operates to generalize the social code of authority beyond the private sphere of researcher-dominated contingencies.

One must focus on the creation of public spaces where the explicitness of the research activity can become impressed on the researched. It must be kept in mind that research activity is thematically oriented on a problem of reference. Hence, in effect, the explicitness of the research activity diminishes the personal characteristic of the researcher. It is these personal, privately established life-histories that form the basis of the researcher's anonymous authority, namely, those things that cannot be "checked out" by the researched, either because the relevant information is unavailable or simply uninterpretable or meaningless to the research population. A different style of authority must be established for social action research to be operative, one that makes sense within the social context.

This style of anonymization is one that effaces locally irrelevant characteristics of the researcher and at the same time permits, even requires, the demonstration of the researcher's abilities. The research thus becomes a "public" or political person, with the relevant dimensions of "public" being established within the research setting. Nameless authorities, even and perhaps most especially the authority of "science," do not in a social research setting give motivation for the researched population to answer questions enabling it to be understood.

It is cliché to suggest that *entrée* is a continual process throughout the research that cons-

tantly requires that attention of the researcher. Yet, entrée is a continuous activity of building reputational linkages for the purposes of establishing social validity and enticing relevant persons to cooperate in the research process. It is a process of finding points of access through which to bring in bear the general power of social scientific research in a form that is generalizable both from the point of view of professional researchers and from that of the community of subjects who provide the setting for the research.

The social action researcher must build networks. Without the networking of the community of the researched, it will not be possible to establish the relevant parameters of the community or to conduct the research in a fashion that the community will perceive to be valuable. In some cases, merely finding the community poses a problem, especially when we keep in mind that this is not an exercise in demography or geography, but rather in identifying nodal points of *interests* and *concerns*. The parameters of the *community of concern* of course include community members, but they can also include social service agencies, police officers, public officials, and even local funding agencies.

"Truth" of the research is a function of the viewpoints of the community of concern; if one is not known and one' credentials not established to relevant persons, then the assumption is that one has not done anything worthwhile, and that is a good enough reason not to cooperate with the researcher. It is virtually impossible to obtain adequate information as well as to work with relevant individuals if one is perceived as a stranger who has nothing to offer. The more one's name is heard, the more involved one is viewed as being, and the more power is attributed to one in obtaining reliable information, which is precisely what one needs in order to get access to that information.

It is also imperative to establish contacts within the community in order that different community members will be able to check out one's credibility. One contact leads to the next, and crossing networks enables the comparison of perceptions about the researcher. These networks are also valuable for the purpose of the research being able to identify ways in which information is being screened for her or his benefit. It is also important to learn about any other research activity that may be going on or that has recently been conducted in the community. Past encounters with researchers may have adverse consequences that must be attended to. All of this involves a process of making the rounds sufficiently in order that one's name, in terms of level and degree of involvement, precedes one in the community.

Social reality is much too complex for research to set abstract ethical maxims for decisions in how to go about establishing trust. Trust is not a set of principles to which the research conforms or behavioral signposts for specific situations. Rather, trust is acquired through sharing various research practices and through formulating the research in such a way that the populace will be able to perceive in it the potential for increasing their own individual or community potential for action.

Trust is indispensable for getting beyond the momentary interpersonal rituals. Yet, for trust to be built and sustained, there are required auxiliary mechanisms of learning, symbolizing, controlling, and even institutionalizing distrust. Trust can be built and diffused if credible institutionalized supervisors are built into the research process (e.g., community leaders). On the other hand, where properly managed, trust can actually be increased where distrust has been institutionalized, particularly in minority communities. In such a situation, one needs to appear "different" by standards of some local code, thereby employing a history as a means to gaining a forum.

The reason for networking, trust building, and allowing oneself to be evaluated by community members, generally of staking out the research agenda within the community, as that many communities are social-science-wise. That social research and social researchers in truth are objects of distrust is a conviction in which many community members sincerely trust. At this stage in the history of social science, many communities view social science as either producing social disenfranchisements or as being simply irrelevant. Because of this broad tendency, one must be prepared at the very first encounter to answer thematic questions like "Who is doing the research?", "Who is this good for?", "Will it be of value to us?", and "When will we see results?" The researcher who has worked to develop a generalized influence in the community will be able to respond effectively to these concerns.

Social influence ultimately derives from successful research involvement in the community. "Success," however, is not an end product; it is more or less descriptive of the high points of any specific project and can be anything from creating a public uproar beneficial to the project, to identifying and meaningfully addressing community significances. In order to create conditions for maximizing the possibility of attaining such high points, products generated by the research must receive endorsement from relevant, recognizable community leaders, and media resources must be utilized to make the project and its objectives known. Publicity, in its most general sense, institutionalizes the public/political character of the research. We will focus briefly on utilization of media resources.

Media coverage can be employed to open up a project to the possibility of influencing agencies and, indirectly, for drawing other public institutions into the project at key points. In addition, the community will begin to "see" itself and develop ways of placing the face and the activity within the structure of overall community activity.

Media coverage is important for other reasons. First, the community at large will be able to monitor the project over time. Second, it will be viewed as pragmatically effective in a way that is open for all to see for themselves. Community participants, especially leaders, will be less likely to have to constantly justify the effectiveness of the project. Because it tends to "enshrine" what is significant, media coverage also helps to secure cooperation and interest from public institutions and their officials. Eagerness to avoid public embarrassment, or its possibility, is movie enough for many public institutions.

Community newsletters, newspapers, and public forums offer important channels for informing the community, expanding its contacts, and for providing a general thematic into which individuals can be attracted according to dimensions of their personal interests. In addition, events become pragmatic accomplishments symbolizing the project. Moreover, these events eventually become decontextualized points of reference whose meaning is not time-bound but instead an enduring "fact" or rationale for the project.

Project participation can be intensified by involving community organizations at levels that grant them access to institutional power, thereby solidifying the roles of the organizations within the community. Every fact of a project needs to take on the character of publicness. Such facts are not only formation but also function as reasons for the project. Whether in the form of significant information or of activities, every fact provides a justificatory structure for the project and a way of creating its history.

All of these elements create a generalized influence establishing a superstructure of public meaning and involvement within which the research activity can proceed. But at the research level proper, the generalized condition is that the research itself establish distinctive ex-

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pectations having a centered meaning-structure that has reference to specific themes, concerns, or purposes. At each point, the influence the researcher expects and assumes must be connected with something that can be specified in the social environment.

For influence to occur, the circumstances must be linked up with local imperatives. The activity must be able to be located within the social system. Clearly, social action research creates thematics, but these cannot provide *a priori* the full specification of the research process to the community, the media, or the scientific community. Rigid specification of the research process will limit the flexibility- and so its power- to pursue variation of the thematic in response to the contingencies of the environment.

Eventually, the selection and generalization process come full circle; the research activity is justified not by interpersonal arrangements about expectation, but on the basis of community thematics. These thematics in turn are related to the influence of the research activity on the thematics, which refer to the activities of the researcher in establishing thematic orientations. Thus, even research "authorities" are tied into and must appeal to generalized communication structures. (Luhmann 1982)

Epilogue

In general, the goal is to develop a set regulative principles for the production of a democratic knowledge society, whereby we recognize:

- the rational competence of individuals;
- that institutions are not an entirely different rational level from individuals;
- that scientific discourse and individual discourse need translation;
- the institutionalization of both discourse are fundamental to the practice of democratic institution.

We recall Alfred Schütz as he saw each of us as simultaneously (1) the man on the street, (2) the expert, (3) the well-informed citizen (Schütz 1964) Thus, each of us possesses knowledge that is a collective legacy not particularly the result of any inquiry of our own. We owe such knowledge to our family, school, community, newspaper, radio, television, books, Internet, as well as life conversations. But if we are going to maintain a well informed citizenry, we need the mediating institution of public education, honest journalism, and covenant democracy in a joint effort to find a common civic good.

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