A CYBERNETIC PERSPECTIVE ON GOVERNANCE. CONSEQUENCES ON THE EVALUATION OF TERRITORIAL ACTION

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Abstract: *The study is based on the determination of some relationships between the social fact and the governance institution, as a specific type of organization. The following definition is proposed for the social fact:* the social fact is a social action transformed at the individual level into individual information that has the role of stage function for the operating social system and is based on a social information transformed at the individual level into individual information that has the role of stage function for the emitting social system *(Pascaru, 1987). The organizations are defined as: human ensembles formalized and organized as hierarchies in view of assuring the cooperation and coordination of their members for the realization of some given goals. In the multitude of organizations that can be identified in the social field, the author has in view the territorial organizations (administrations especially). At this level (administration) some investigations on information and participation of the inhabitants of a commune (Horea, Alba County, Romania) were conducted. Some of the results of these investigations are also displayed. Then it is taken into consideration the social fact at the governance level and the consequences of the cybernetic perspective on the evaluation of territorial actions as a key moment in the act of governing itself.*

1. Theoretical Bases: Social Fact, Organization And Their Transformation

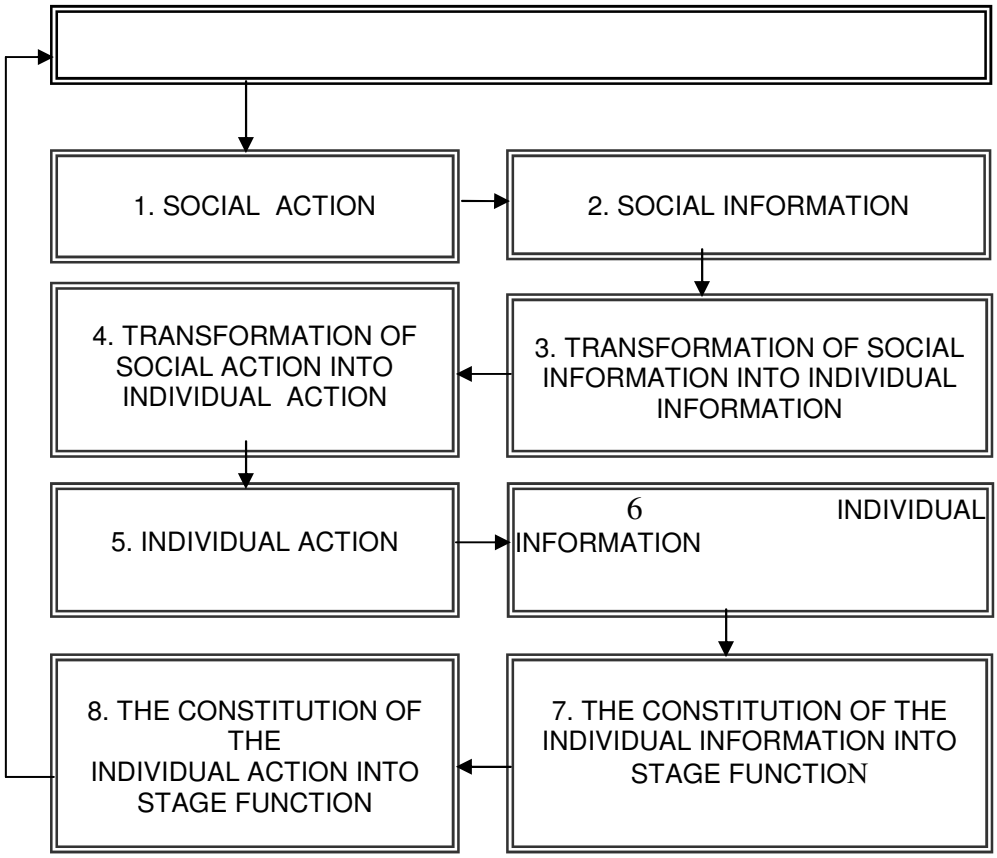
By analyzing some definitions proposed for the social fact as object of sociology (E. Durkheim (1974 [1895], R. Worms (1913), P. Andrei (1941), A. Mihu (1971), we deducted some aspects that, explicitly or implicitly, will be valorized in the definition proposed: □ the existence of a relative **coercion of the individual** by social system for its determination to some actions □ origination of the social fact in the **social institutions and environment** □ the capacity of the social **act to interest the society,** to pursue the realization of a social purpose; □ the concurrent interiority and exteriority in comparison to the individual conscience, and □ the existence of the social fact as interaction phenomenon. These elements could constitute a complex point of view that, utilized in the approach of the social reality, will bring us closer to a certain way of defining the social fact.

When trying a redefinition of the social fact, we started from the consideration that the definition proposed should respond to the following requirements: □ to reflect what is definitive for the society as an ensemble, i.e. the specific of the social in comparison to the natural and the individual; □ to reflect a systemic reality because the society could be considered such a reality; □ to reflect also the informational dimension of social reality, as long as this is one of its fundamental dimensions; □ to reflect the specific elements of adjustment and re-adjustment based on feed-back, because the social system owns such elements; □ to reflect a reality of cybernetic type (unit of systemic, informational and reverse

connexion) because the society could be considered such a reality and, □ the exigencies mentioned above be satisfied, as much as possible, in an explicit formulation. Taking into account these determinations, we proposed the following definition mode: *the social fact is a social action transformed at the individual level into individual information that has the role of function of step for the operating social system and is based on a social information transformed at the individual level into individual information that has the role of stage function for the emitting social system* (Pascaru, 1987). The notion "stage function" was taken over from Morton A. Kaplan who, after W. Ross Ashby (1949), specified: "the entries that produce a change in the organization and the characteristic behavior of the system are called stage function" (M. A. Kaplan, 1972, p. 331). Figure 1 displays a graphic representation of this definition.

Social facts could be classified from the perspective of social action origin with which their structure and dynamics starts. This origin could be the status of social system as a whole, in the decision of an organization or in the decision of a community. We will say then that we deal with social facts when the social action originates in the social system as a whole. We consider that there is social fact when social action is the action of an organization. We refer to the organizational fact when the social action originates in the life of a community. A law opens the way for the constitution of a social fact, putting it into effect presupposes a series of *organizational facts* and the particularization of the application norms as well as the observing of norms at the community level could be analyzed as *community facts*.

Figure 1. The structure a social fact



The problems of organizations` transformation could also be approached from the perspective of the social fact and its types. C. Lafaye, when analyzing a series of approaches of transformation of organizations deducts the following: □ ***The change through crisis and adaptation****:* the organization is not a system formed of routine procedures only, as we usually imagine, but also short periods of crisis that, by the adjustments allowed, supply the long phases of stability; □ *Change through collective learning:* any changing action is conditioned by the discovery and appropriation of some new collective capacities, new modalities of rationing, new modalities of living together. So, the change means learning. It means especially the learning of another way of cooperation that is to say to invent and fix new models of „play". The engagement in a collective process, in which the individuals and groups become actors of change, takes the place of the imposition from above or outside of a model; □ *The change as a form of development:* the development and the changes determined by organizations could result only from certain local initiatives based on progressive learning of other production and administration practices. This conception over change attributes a key role to cultural phenomena; they are the ones that will determine the learning processes. The understanding of change as development appears in many ways as a variant of change as effect of learning; □ *Change through modernization:* a diversity of actions whose compatibility is not necessarily taken for granted are taken into consideration: investments in sophisticated technical material, redefinition of the relations with clients or users, work reorganization, appeal to "quality circles" and other managerial techniques imported from Japan, Communication campaigns with the purpose to modify the internal and external image of enterprise, etc. The relationships of the organizations to the social environment play an important role in the transformation. The Anglo-Saxon sociology of organizations, as C.

Lafaye remarks, tends to question the relations between organizations and their environment. Some research show that in the conditions of a fertile ambiance, the organizations tend to develop a structure of mechanical type, characterized by an elaborated organization chart, a pronounced centralization of decision power and articulation on hierarchic line of internal communication. In return, in the conditions of a moving ambiance, a model of organic organization model in which the hierarchic structure is weak, the roles are not clearly defined, the decision power is divided and communication multi-directional is imposed upon. From the perspective of the structure and social fact dynamics we can notice the increase of moment 3 as an indicator of transformation (the transformation of social information into individual information, through the increasing of the role of debates between organizations` subjects) and the diminution of the costs necessary to sustain moment 6 (informing on the behavior of organizations` subjects). But the main objective of the present study is the proposition of some methodologies of informing and participation of the organizations` subjects to the structure and dynamics of facts that organizations propose to administrate.

2. Research at the territorial governance institution level

The researches on a certain species of social fact, the administrative social fact and on territorial administration were carried out in Horea commune, Alba County, Romania (Pascaru, 2003).

During our investigations carried out in Horea we followed each stage in the structure and dynamics of the social fact, thus:

1) Social Action. The society and the individual meet each other through the mediation of social action but always on a certain reliability stage. As regards the trust of the individual in the social system, we believe it could be revealed also through the analysis of the changes promoted at a certain moment, in our case after 1989. For the question "How do you appreciate the changes appeared after 1989?"

2) Social information. We were interested firstly if the peoples know the decisional level to which the local taxes were established.

3) Transformation of the social information into individual information. Our hypothesis was that all that is social information (information on taxes or contributions` imposers, information on the sums to be collected and the information of this sums) would influence the contributor decisions. The process of social information transformation into individual information, process that will serve the decision and to the transformation of the social action into individual action (finalized with the payment or non- payment of taxes and contributions) depends a lot on the appreciations of the solicitations.

4) Transformation of the social action into individual action. Anyway, what determines these answers determines also the discussions around the subject. The hypothesis is that the frequency or the intensity of discussions increases along with "the pressure" exerted on the persons that bring into the discussion a subject such as taxes and contributions.

5) Individual action. The individual decision taken in the process of social action transformation into individual action is put it into practice already or it will be materialized during the fiscal year.

6) Individual information. Individual decision put into practice or in progress will be acknowledged in way or another by the organizations interested, i.e. City Hall. In this case, the individual information is not individual` s information but the local authorities` information on individual behavior in respect of his tasks as subject of the organization. In this sense, the extent to which the decision taken by the inhabitants was brought to the knowledge of the city hall or church, firstly from contributor` s initiative interested us most.

7) The constitution of the individual information according to the stage. In the questioning specific to this stage we began with the hypothesis of the important role of the Local Council, including in the activities connected to taxes. That is why it was important for us to know to what extent the activity of these representative organisms is known by the contributors.

8) The constitution of the individual action according to the stage. The regeneration of the social action in the present case would presuppose the increase or decrease of taxes and contributions, and this will lead to resumption of the social fact cycle. In this case we also expect a new intervention of the two organizations – city hall and local council.

We have two fundamental results about all this data: 1) It looks like they faster the voluntary debts even though the sums are larger; 2) *The payment or non-payment depend on the relations of communication between territorial organizations and their subjects, in the sense that one pays faster there, where there is more communication.*

The second result is the one that interests us in particular. It may be detailed as follows:

□ of those who said that they did not know how much they paid, most declared that they didn't pay anything.

□ the ones that knew the exact destination of the money for the City Hall, mostly paid their taxes;

□ the evaluation towards "too big" debts caused the inhibition the tax participation;

□ the frequency of discussions stimulated participation, except the family talks regarding taxes; it is possible that these discussions were oriented in a direction favorable to the immediate interest of the family, the accent falling on a series of expenses more urgent than the taxes;

□ none of the questioned ones who said was advised to pay the taxes as soon as possible was on the group of those that said that they paid nothing;

□ the communication with the City Hall, after taking the decision on the promptitude and the level of participation, may also be stimulated for participation: most of the ones that did not communicated their decision on the payment of taxes, paid at least one part;

□ being aware of the activity of the Local Council seems to be associated with intensive participation: most of the ones that said they were informed, had paid everything;

□ out of those that said that they were searched for matters concerning taxes, just one taxpayer had not paid anything.

3. The evaluation of territorial action and some consequences of the cybernetic perspective

In a speech delivered in September 2003, at REIT seminar in Besançon, trying a synthesis and to simplify a series of definitions given to the idea of action, I suggested the following definition: *Action represents the conduct of an actor who, by using specific means, aims to the alteration of a certain object.* The idea of object here has a broader meaning than that of thing, or material form. This will be shown in the following.

The suggested definition allows us to identify the main elements of the structure of the action: 1) the actor, that may be an individual, a group, an organization, a community, 2) the means, that may be human, material or financial, and 3) the object, that may be the nature, man or social structures.

We consider that any given action also has several dimensions. The following are mentioned: 1) the economic dimension of goods production or services, 2) the political dimension, of organising the macro or micro social structures 3) the cultural dimension, of

spreading and strenghtening the values, including through education 4) the social dimension (social welfare, social assistance and so on). The prevalence of one dimension or another would render a certain type of action: economic, politic, cultural or social.

Several logical classifications are possible for the idea of action. One typology that interests us in particular in this context starts from the criteria of the extension and complexity of the object of the action. Thus we distinguish: 1) an individual action that regards changes in an individual's behavior and mentality, 2) the group activity that regards in the structure, organization and / or conduct of a group 3) the comunitary action that aims at the production of alterations in the relationships, mentalities, and conducts of a specific community and 4) the territorial action which by its complexity is muti-comunitary (takes into consideration several comunities) or trans-comunitary (ignores the division of the population from a certain territory into several comunities). Specific to territorial action is also the fact that it implies in a defined manner, an explicit ecological dimension.

Establishing the typologies is a process that is necessary to be continued in the case of territorial action as well, specifying that the established types of action in previous operations are valid for territorial action too. At this particular moment we are interested in introducing two new criteria: 1) the foundation of the territorial action and 2) the state of the socio-political background.

In reference to the first criterium we distinguish between 1) objective based actions and 2) project based actions. The actions from the second type are of a special interest to us due to the exigency of the management of territorial actions through projects, exigency imposed by EU.

Introducing the second criterium, we will take into discussion: 1) actions in dictatorship conditions, 2) actions in representative democracy conditions and 3) actions in participatory democracy conditions.

As for the first type of action is concerned, the idea of dictatorship may appear inopportune on European stage, but it is our belief that it is not impossible to discover on the extended area of European democracies a series of territorial administrative actions that might be labeled as "local despotism". But this subject desearves and needs a special analysis.

The third type is of a particular interest to us due to the objective of stimulating participatory democracy.

At the territorial action evaluation level we will distinguish between 1) internal evaluation (by the actors themselves) and 2) the external evaluation (by special designated experts).

Be it the actors or the experts we have to take into account on one hand A. Evaluation on the development of action and B. The final evaluation.

In the framework of the evaluation of the territorial action, we believe that several aspects may be taken into consideration: 1) The legitimacy of the actors and of their decisions, 2) the partial effects of developing the teritorial action and, compulsory, 3) the participation of the citizens in the development of the territorial action.

Naturally, when we proceed to the final evaluation, we will take into consideration, first of all, the final effects of the territorial action and compare them with the expected effects. We cannot neglect the value of the public satisfaction.

We may now resume to the scheme of the social fact from a government perspective (Figure 2, in ANNEXE).

This scheme that is only apparently complicated, represents the levels and the moments at which an administrative fact, as a species of the social fact, is developed. The moments are marked M1, M2… M8.

The third moment (transformation of institutional action into individual information) represents the core of the administrative act in the conditions of a democratic society. The good functioning of this moment implies a new environment, defined as a *knowledge based society.*

The consequences of the cybernetic perspective on territorial action evaluation are on the whole, the following: □ an evaluation on multiple levels but centered on the core □ an internal evaluation centered on the stage function □ an evaluation during the development of action, centered on feedback (M8).

All of those are to be deepened in interdisciplinary and especially in external studies, based on comparative intercessions at a European level and not only.

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ANNEXE

Figure 2. *The structure of a social fact that implies governance institutions*

