

# Communicative construction of social reality philosophy essay

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Nowadays social system is under institutional transformation due to the development of modern technologies, i. e. due to process of mediatization. All aspects of modern reality (religion, politics, everydayness etc.), in comparison with earlier ritually ordered times, are functioning in communicative way (specifically, in " media logic"). According to that, communicative practices must be understood as new institutions (frames, constraints etc.) by which social structure is figuring. The main issue of that process is non-reflection of the actual institutions. As a result, such disconnection between new reality and consciousness exerts latent influence on human behavior. Under our approach, we suppose that communicative practices could reduce the social ones - it's showed in decline of social capital, conventional participation, self-identity process and so on.

**Key words: communication, mediatization, constraints, social reality, consciousness, social capital.**

Methodology. The research is based on different theories of humanitarian science, specifically on sociological phenomenology, symbolic interactionism, social constructivism, neofunctionalism and theory of structuration. There are some authors who are especially influential for us - they are A. Giddens, J. Alexander, E. Goffman, E. Durkheim and A. Shutz. According to these approaches we attempt the model of social reality on base of what we describe the communicative construction. Social reality. The real is just the object of our consciousness. It's important to understand that ' social reality' and ' consciousness' are the absolute categories of human world cognition. As E. Husserl wrote, " reality isn't in itself something absolute... rather, in the absolute sense, it's nothing at all; it has no ' absolute essence' whatever; it

has the essentiality of something which, of necessity, is only intentional, only an object of consciousness, something presented in the manner of peculiar to consciousness"[1]. According to phenomenological sociology, social reality looks like space-time structure of intersubjectivity. This characteristic implies the consciousness of environment by the all interacting people. But the possibility of such quality exists only due to order that form social structure. Order in society can be maintained because " people relate to each other from the most part, not in the spontaneity of direct face-to-face contact, but in the predictable and controlled manner"[2]. In our opinion, order is the exact feature of social sphere. Moreover, absolutely everything, that could be recognized or realized, is a part of such order, i. e. as A. Giddens told " it was a mistake to understand social constraint as similar to physical constraint, and it was a mistake to regard constraint at all as a criterion of ' social' or the ' institutional'... society becomes a kind of inhibiting environment in which actors move, and which makes its presence felt through the pressurising effects which condition their conduct"[3]. That's why we could say, that social reality is a complex of constraints through which we can realize that, otherwise as R. Descartes claimed - " no finite creature, as he knows himself to be, could possibly have given rise to such an idea, the idea of an infinite being"[4]. Everything exists only as a result of constraints - like our consciousness, which could appear only in human body with the help of social environment (upbringing, experience etc). " Consciousness is a biological phenomenon caused by brain processes"[5]- how J. Searle wrote earlier. Moreover, nature is one of the most important constraints, but it exists for us only when it's active, when it restricts us (for

example, Volcano Eyjafjoll in Island). From the other side - culture, which includes in itself different forms of technical, social and other types of constraints. When we create something like a house, we use restricted amount of materials, which are layed in exact order, as a result, it could exist - so it's a constraint, because " first we shape our buildings and afterwards our buildings shape us"[6]. But social constraints play more significant role in the research, i. e. institutions, rules and other social frames which are included in this concept. Although, institutions are more appropriate symbols of social constraints according to modern discourse in social sciences, e. g. D. North explained institutions as social constraints created by human. Mostly they conclude the order of social reality. Very important to understand the real determination of human activity, which is formed by this order - " while a dishonest judge must pretend to be an honest judge, even an honest judge must play a role of " honest judge"... even honest judge must dress and behave properly when ' onstage', by wearing black, not pink robes and by sitting behind the bench rather than cross-legged on the floor at the feet of the jury"[7]. Our routine actions are framed by walls, streets, trees, limited alternatives of choice, but interactions are more restricted. In other words, social action is an ordered activity, but interaction is more ordered due to its socially communicative quality - i. e. " role-playing" is actually socially ordered action targeted on an audience. According to E. Goffman's concept of " social dramaturgy", our typical interaction (real drama) is like stage acting (social drama) - where we " use our body, emotions for demonstrating"[8]. On the assumption of space-time structure of social reality, we could say that everyone is restricted by time and

space[9]. Such constraint submits the significance of the both characteristics. Particularly saying, everydayness is a routine part of social reality, which isn't valued by ordinary people as opposed to exceptional part – i. e. social events. Social event is something unusual, or it seems to be unusual. D. Davidson explained social events through four characteristics, he claimed that social event is a social activity happened in determined space and period of time, which is possessed of unroutine character[10]. Consequently, we already can see two dimensions of our "social reality" model: The content of social reality

## **Ritual**

**(order)**

## **Drama**

**(communication)**

## **Social event**

Ritual actPerformance

## **Everydayness (routine)**

Real actionSocial communicationThe understanding of social events is able, best of all, in the example of primitive societies. E. Durkheim[11]described the functioning of such communities quite clear. The structure of their life was simple; there were two periods – everydayness or profane period and ritual time or sacred world. Everything that was happened in rituals was sacred, but only because it was unusual and restricted in time. The content of any ritual is ordered activity which is proceeded in determined space-time point, that's why we could understand "sacred through interdictions"[12].

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The concept of ritual is understood by us in institutional way - ritual for us is "symbolic model of social order"[13], which constructs the ritual act. In other words, "rituals are 'texts' which can be 'read' for their symbolic significance"[14]. Quite important to understand the reason or the target of such constraints - it's pragmatic one. So, according to D. Kertzer, ritual act is any standardized human activity, symbolized in specific meanings, targeted to achieve determined human goals[15]. Each ritual act by means of its constraints/institutions create unique reality, where are used specific symbols. Moreover, new reality in "ritual practices generates belief and belonging in participants"[16]. Modern rituals in comparison with religious or magical forms are rationally targeted. The communicative part of "social event" level - are performances. Well, most scientists agree with the idea of theatre appearance in Ancient Greece, and so we are. It's appeared as a result of deep socio-cultural transformation of religious ritual - dithyramb, devoted to Dionysus. The reason of transformation was determined in 'Dionysian intoxication' that led to the "phenomenon of grotesque male figures who gyrate in non-symmetrical dance... one may think the padding applied to bellies and backsides to be "costume"—but to indicate whom or what? This motif gives ground to wild dancing and drinking and molesting satyrs"[17]. It's important to understand, that drama in Ancient Greece, in comparison with present days, was practically merged with ritual of worship, however, there already was a difference. The activity which constructed that event was directed not to god, but to people who rounded them[18]. As F. Nietzsche said - "the spectator without a play is contradictory idea"[19] and vice versa. American anthropologist, P. Bouissac described performance as

demonstrative traditionally patterned action[20]. Such position confirms the demonstrative content of any performance - as E. Goffman wrote, all that must be known is demonstrative[21]. Based on the targeting of this social event, we could say that performance is functioning by scheme of interaction (on the level of everydayness), i. e. in socially communicative way. According to that, it's quite simple to figure the structure of performative activity. It was well done in example of political performances, i. e. demonstrations, mostly: " all require stage or platform... All need audience... symbols and metaphors presumed to be well understood by those audiences"[22]. There are no new realities, i. e. there are used absolutely ordinary symbols or stereotypes, which must be understood by auditory. Also the performing can't be characterized as real belonging - performer understands that he is just acting. That's why we could say, that there is no " real" Self - performance based on " different kinds of play between ' me' and ' not me' that are involved"[23]. De facto any performer can exist in other ' self', in social one. It's important to add that they are socially depended (by audience) - it doesn't mean that are must be in entertainment form, but means that they are must be freely perceived: " performances are ephemeral... they create their effects and than are gone"[24]. Better way to understand performance as social event is to compare it with ritual act. We tried to construct our personal comparison:

**No**

**Characteristic**

**Ritual act**

**Performance**

1

**Type of activity**

OrderedCommunicatively ordered2

**Targeting**

PragmaticDemonstrative3

**Reality**

NewOrdinary/routine4

**Symbols**

DeterminedStereotypes5

**Self (by E. Goffman)**

RealSocial6

**" Micro"-base**

Action prototypeInteraction prototype7

**Frequency**

RecurrenceNonreproductivity8



## **Social environment (degree of engagement)**

Participants(belief)Audience(evaluation)Communicative construction. Well, E. Goffman wrote, that our behavior is a result of social order, but nowadays we should to say more, because " media constitute a form or process through which experience is interpreted and phenomena are presented... social order is communicated order"[25]. Most studies of the mediatization describe this concept as " process through which core elements of a cultural or social activity (e. g. politics, religion, language) assume media form[26]". This specific form was explained first time by D. Altheide, that he called " media logic". He said that, " when activities and events are organized, transformed, created and presented in order to comply with " broadcast" or " entertainment" requirements and guidelines, we have an instance of media logic"[27]. Media logic is just a form of communicative practice, but sure the widest. For example, U. Eco described a performance or a performative situation in terms of " the act of showing (ostention)... there objects/bodies, events and actions become signs of signs"[28].

communicationimmersionThere are two interdependent processes (impulses), which are occurred in frame of mediatization: the communication process and the immersion one - the directions of the influence are pictured here. Media, due to the communication process, inevitably divides reality in two spheres - performer and audience. Consequently such socially divided position creates the effect of immersion[29]- this make people think that they are participating in any event or situation, but in fact they are not. They just evaluate anything, but they are not involved. For example, when someone decided to perform any ritual act, like elections, and hasn't told

about the decision to the participants – then they become just no more than the audience (maybe even interactive audience, but still the object of communication). Any social event presented in media became some kind of pseudo-event which " is not spontaneous, but comes about because someone has planned, planted, or incited it. Typically, it is not a trainwreck or an earthquake, but an interview[30]. What could we say, for example, about political discussions – it's a serious ritualized activity, through which state decisions are made. But the reality is so, that " cabinet meetings have been changed profoundly by the media pressures that impinge on government: becoming much shorter and changing from being open deliberations about what policy should be adopted to being brief reviews of the media impact of policies already decided elsewhere"[31]. Generally, modern political protest isn't real, it's just demonstrative. The increase of political performances in case of political participation is confirmed by many researches. Besides that, researches also note the growing character of absolutely ephemeral form of participation – flesh-mobs. Mediated communications reduce real face-to-face connections, but " lack of social connection brings a diminished sense of trust and reciprocity that leaves us more vulnerable to social disorder and inadequate governance"[32]. Moreover, people even acts not like they want, but in expectations of, for example, blog's audience. They just lose their real " Self", because they intentionally try to form their identity based on the interests of the others. Because of non-reproductive character of communication – people always try to gain more communications, communicative events. Especially it's well showed in the example of entertainment. It's important to understand, that

the ambiguity is the basis of media's immersivity[33]. Due to that, mediatization is also understood as « an expansion of the opportunities for interaction in virtual spaces and a differentiation of what people perceive to be real»[34]. There is great disconnection between consciousness and mediatized reality. People lose interest to social (conventional) practices, but we know that social institutions, like « families and communities offered strong bonding social capital ties, contributing to the development of identity»[35]. But it's important to mention, that young people lives in time of the institutional transformation, which doesn't let them to socialize in traditional way - they are developing in communicative practices (entertainment, fashion, virtuality and that's not all). As some European researches show - « young people are not sovereign members of the community because they are still practicing the skills to rant their entrance into adulthood... two-thirds of all grown-ups in the Western world are failed adults, if the norms of adulthood are those of the traditional labour societies, that is, stable and accumulated working careers, economic autonomy, traditional family life, security and independence»[36]. During last 20 years people generally vote less around the entire world[37]and it happens mostly because of young people, which are not interested in politics as social institution. One of the most fundamental reasons of that is the permanent " involvement" in entertainment practices that reduces political participation[38]. ConclusionThe main principle of social reality, in our opinion, is the social foundation of communication. As we have already mentioned - « there is no communication without a social practice which determines and ratifies it»[39]. There is a research which clearly

demonstrated, that communicative practices must be based on the social ones: « the computer-mediated network has a positive influence on strengthening social contact, community engagement and the attachment of local community members... However, the research was examined based on the pre-existing local communities rather than the communities created and formed online»[40]. The most of the young people don't have such foundation, that's why their behavior indicates the decline of social capital. But it's much more important that they don't reflect the absence of the social practices. These practices (or institutions) are communicated and "routinized" to them. There are no appropriate connections between reality and consciousness, that's why there is can't be any individualization process. They try to form identity on the basis of communicative practices, as a result they don't care about actual social structure and don't realize that the only feature that makes us unique (or distinctive) is our consciousness.